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Letters

Distressing coverage

I was most distressed by your coverage of premenstrual syndrome ("Premenstrual Changes," SN: 12/11/82, p. 380) . . .

The illustration you chose of witches — who were probably only misunderstood women of the time — to the concluding sentence: "Normal women aren't driven crazy by their menstrual cycle, but crazy women can be driven crazier" and most of the material in the article reflect the male bias of the researchers and are totally unscientific. It's obvious throughout the article that traditional male attitudes affect their conclusions. They seem to conclude that if you let it show, you're crazy, and many women undoubtedly suffer secretly and unconsolated as a consequence of these outmoded attitudes.

I can have the temerity to suggest that, because I am a woman who has been through it, I have more right to express my opinions on the subject than these obviously bewildered theorists.

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Cover: To illustrate the ravages of acid, Peter Waters, a Library of Congress book conservator, blows apart pages from an extremely brittle volume. Techniques to slow acid decay now treat whole books — in batches of dozens, even thousands. (Photo: ©Yoichi R. Okamoto/Photo Researchers, Inc.)



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Did anyone ever take into consideration that women are under a lot of stress in these times in terms of having a lot of disconnected, unsatisfying tasks to perform (which she's always probably had more of than men) and that the physical-chemical stress of the premenstrual time added to the burden which woman normally copes with can be the last straw — just as if overloading an electrical circuit with a frayed cord — the fuse blows.

Men seem to take the stance that if she can't cope, something is drastically wrong — she's crazy — thereby making the assumption that dealing with more and more stress is desirable. Maybe woman's sensitivity to stress is meant to serve a purpose — to sound an alarm that the human race is becoming dehumanized — that the maze of atrocities man has devised for himself largely obscures any meaning in life. In other words, maybe God doesn't intend for us to become ideal stress-bearing machines . . .

I'm afraid that these men who do not hesitate

to explain away women's problems as due to their craziness suffer themselves from a preconditioning that prevents them from seeing the situation objectively.

By the way, I did not overlook the investigations of Linda Levy cited in the article but have addressed myself to the emphasis of the article. Bravo for her!

Sandra Goettings
Princeton, N.J.

One of the best

Fine pieces of writing such as "Dioxin in Missouri: Troubled Times" (SN: 1/22/83, p. 60), together with the careful research evidently done by Ms. Garmon, are but one reason to be subscribed to SCIENCE NEWS. Both informative and touching, this article is one of the best I have read in a long time — and a stern warning to whoever executes environmental policies in Missouri and elsewhere.

Roberto De León
San Juan, PR

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