



BY ANNA MEIER
Columnist

Looking for something to do this Saturday? How about wrapping your fraternity brother in toilet paper and lighting him on fire?

Apparently that sounded like a good idea to some members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity at the University of Kentucky two weeks ago when they nearly burned the fraternity house down while playing a practical joke.

The members reportedly involved in this incident were 19 and 20 years old — old enough to go to college and live independently, for the most

Talking About Our Generation: Fraternity brothers' pranks give society bad image

part, but not old enough to know not to cover a friend in a flammable substance and throw a match at him. The member who was set on fire did have the sense to stop, drop and roll, but of course, in doing so, he lit the floor of the house on fire. When the police came in to question the men, the one responsible for his fiery friend pretended to be asleep, then got up to scream obscenities at an officer and punch him in the face. After that he staggered to the front of the house where another fraternity member made threats to kick him in the face.

Stories like this make me seriously question the basic common sense of people my age. The lessons we learned as children don't seem to be sticking for some reason. I also

wonder sometimes if the sort of mob mentality that comes with being part of a large group of men might just wear away at the ability to make good decisions. Instead of the younger members looking up to and emulating the older ones, it seems to happen the other way around until all that's left is a giant group of children enabled by the ability to consume copious amounts of alcohol.

As a member of the Greek community, I appreciate guys in fraternities. Without them there would be no parties, no one to celebrate Greek Week and homecoming with and simply no male counterpart to balance out the sorority women. That being said, the interest in fraternities here at Truman has been slowly decreasing the past few years, with organiza-

tions taking smaller pledge classes each rush season.

I think incidents like the one in Kentucky might have something to do with it. Although we know and love Truman frat guys individually, it does seem that when they get together and are left to their own devices, stupid things tend to happen. Creating a slip 'n slide in the middle of the kitchen floor, jumping down a set of greased stairs, stealing another fraternity's dog and renaming it, throwing a big screen TV onto a bonfire — the list goes on and on. The actual members themselves are smart, but the group mindset eats away at the capacity to turn down the opportunity to do things that are inane and absurd.

Maybe incoming freshmen see things like that

and get discouraged from being part of a group with these kinds of hobbies. Maybe some young men are turned off from the idea of going Greek because they're afraid they will be the one costumed as a mummy with a roll of Charmin and set aflame. Unfortunately, things like this receive attention in the news and give fraternities a bad rap. The media doesn't pay any attention to the positive activities fraternities participate in, like Teeter-Totter-A-Thons or cycling for charity or barbecuing for Hole in the Wall Camps.

It's hard to say, though, at the end of the day if fraternities are just an excuse for men to act like children for four more years — or five or six. Although I know not all members of fraternities act like overgrown

adolescent pyromaniacs, some of them regrettably are, and even more sadly, they clearly seem to be the ones that attract the most notice. Because I am not a member of a fraternity myself, there's not much I can do for them except encourage the men who are capable of retaining intelligent thoughts in the midst of their Greek brothers' ludicrous ideas to speak up for themselves.

Fraternities have gotten enough negative attention as it is. Just type "fraternity initiation" into a Google search, and the top stories are about hazings gone wrong, hell weeks and a "buttocks branding." It's time for the members of fraternities to start acting like the men they are and quit acting like the boys that are giving them a bad name.

MEDITATIONS OF MICHELLE: Stop fighting strong emotions

BY MICHELLE MARTIN
Columnist

Feelings are powerful and complex creatures that can easily make or break your day. However, in today's rational society, we like to believe that we can "think away" emotions, because we assume feelings are unnecessary and fluffy obstructions to achieving our goals.

I once knew a person who swore never to vote for a female president because of a belief that women are inherently more emotional than men and thus would make rash decisions.

Feminist sensibilities aside, I think people who dismiss emotions are missing out on some of the most rewarding aspects of their own lives. After all, why do we do anything in life? Why do we get married, chase dreams or spend time with friends? Because we like these things. They make us feel good. All things considered, we live for emotions.

That said, emotions often guide and inspire us but occasionally can hold us back from our full potential. Haven't you ever let a negative emotional

response influence your actions and ended up suffering for it? If you ever became bashful and tongue-tied when chatting with an attractive member of the opposite gender or if you ever lashed out against someone who didn't deserve it, then you understand. Sometimes feelings of heart-break, devastation or hopelessness can shroud everything in despair. Normalcy starts to seem like a faraway illusion.

No matter what you're dealing with — stress, hopelessness, fear, frustration — I can tell you with certainty there's a way out, even when it all seems impossible to deal with. Trust me, I've been there many times. When you're in the midst of an overwhelmingly difficult emotion, you have a few choices.

You can use some sort of mental trick to bend you out of your negativity, or you can let go of it. Transforming fear into excitement and tracing your emotions

back to a source are

a couple helpful tactics, but I find that sometimes the effort you use to disentangle yourself will only feed the fire.

Once, one of my co-workers was in a ridiculously bad mood. After muttering plenty of insults behind customers' backs and giving away lots of glares, he started to say to himself, "I really need to calm down. Man,

I should really get over this. It's getting ridiculous." But he couldn't quite seem to do it. If anything, he just grew more furious. I told him that he could just be making himself angrier by trying to stop it, that he should just accept the anger

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so he could forget about it more easily. He nodded and said I was probably right. Let's think about it for a moment. If you are getting sad that you're sad, worried about being worried or insecure about being insecure, how on earth is that helping you?

The most lasting method I have learned to deal with overwhelming emotions is by relaxing — by simply accepting whatever is going on inside of you instead of incessantly worrying about fixing it. When I stop worrying about my bad feelings and stop trying to find a way out, they simply fade away. But this gets tricky, because if I tell myself I'm going to relax my feelings away while really I am only telling myself this to see if the feeling disappears, then it won't work — I'll just keep worrying! I must accept negativity without pretense or agenda, something completely counter to our "go get 'em" culture. From a spiritual perspective, the suffering you feel actually is teaching you and guiding you. You will eventually turn that pit of despair into an equally affecting glow of happiness when you stop trying to



resist it. Let it in, let it do what it has to do and it will fade away instead of continuing to bang obnoxiously at your door.

Observe yourself regularly to measure your success. Emotions are sensations within the body, not just imaginary wisps floating around in your head. Anger appears in a different part of the body than joy or sorrow does. I feel sorrow in my throat and anger more in my chest and forehead, for example. Note the sensations and look at your pain as objectively as you would an aching back. Both of these hurts are trying to tell you that something is wrong, so paying attention to what they tell you is important, unless you can't control the situation causing your distress. In that case, let go. Let go. Repeat as needed.



BY ELIZABETH NECKA
Columnist

Doing what it does best, scientific research might just have found a cure-all therapy that will help thousands of people.

My elderly great-grandmother started hallucinating about two years ago, yelling at dogs that weren't there and comforting crying children invisible to everyone else. When my cat got older, he started compulsively licking one portion of his back in his ritual cleaning. So when my great-grandma started acting weird, both the doctors and my family didn't really think much of it except that she was going a little bit senile. After all, she was 93 years old. Rightfully so, she probably had a few screws loose.

Her condition quickly degraded from light family humor to a full-fledged stroke. What we didn't know, and doctors couldn't have predicted, was that my grandmother wasn't getting enough oxygen to her brain. She was about to suffer a massive stroke — one that wouldn't kill her, but would rob her of most of her ability to move and entirely of her ability to talk.

It's been a rough two years since the incident. My family is relatively close, and we really feel the loss of her spirit, even though she is present in form. Imagining how she must feel, trapped within her own body and unable to communicate, is

The Truman Experiment:

New therapy method re-teaches speech as music

devastating.

The science of what is happening within her body is difficult to explain. Every person's brain has both a Wernicke's and Broca's area in the left hemisphere dedicated to the comprehension and formation of language, respectively. My grandmother's Wernicke's area seems to be nearly perfectly intact — she chuckles at jokes we tell her or rolls her eyes when we complain about family drama. However, her Broca's area is responsible for sending electrical impulses to her tongue and lips to sculpt the way her voice escapes her mouth, and it's not doing its job. This upsetting condition, named non-fluent aphasia, occurs in approximately 12 percent of all stroke patients. That's nearly 70,000 non-fluent aphasics a year.

For years these patients have been tucked away in nursing homes with trained nurses to take care of them, like my grandma, and have been written off as lost causes. My family refuses to accept that as the answer. Her speech therapist and my family repeatedly show her pictures of common household objects or family members and try to re-teach her English vocabulary, but to no avail. Heart-warmingly and sadly, the only phrase we have successfully re-taught her to say is "I love you."

This is simply intolerable, and I'm not the only one who thinks so. Researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School revealed research last month that indicates song might help these victims re-learn speech. Simply stated, the brain's right hemisphere is responsible for

music comprehension and formation, in a similar vein as the left side's role in language.

Dr. Gottfried Schlaug described a new form of therapy, called Melodic Intonation Therapy at the American Association for the Advancement of Science conference in February. Schlaug helps stroke patients by singing them a tune or a melody and teaching them a steady rhythm to tap along with. Then, the therapist will make a statement to the tune and stroke victims will repeat it back. The victims understand the phrase's meaning, but would not be able to speak the words normally. When set to music, however, their verbal utterances that are otherwise grunts suddenly become crystal clear.

Although conclusive research is not yet available on the long-lasting effects of the therapy, Schlaug reports results that inspire hope. Many of his patients can now make basic demands such as "I am thirsty" and express basic facts about

"As a general rule in life, I like to think that there's more than one way to reach a solution. Schlaug's research suggest that our brains agree, and that the brain is the world's best problem solver. It also suggests that music and language are much more closely related to one another than one might originally perceive. This lends insight into current research on how musically inclined people empathize and emotionally connect with others differently than the tone-deaf."