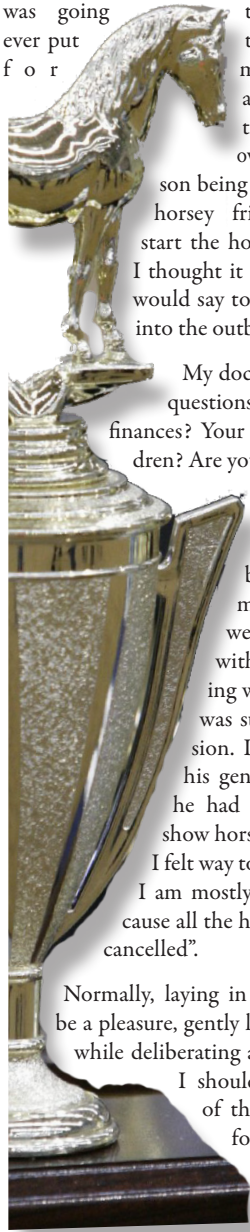


# No shows, no go

The effects EI have had on the emotional wellbeing of a horse show enthusiast, as told by Melitta Tyzzer

**A**m I the only one that has suffered a mind and body numbing form of depression? Not having enough energy to drag yourself out of bed in the morning? Why should I? I don't have any horses that need preparing! Have you found it hard finding the enthusiasm to heave a couple of biscuits of hay over the fence to feed your turned out show team, who incidentally were going to be the best you had ever put f o r



me has been not being able to fully describe the extent of my anguish over an entire show season being cancelled to my non-horsey friends. "Didn't they start the horse racing last week? I thought it had gone away", they would say to me, just three weeks into the outbreak!

My doctor asked me a list of questions: "Do you worry over finances? Your marriage? Your children? Are you lacking energy? Are you stressed at work? Have you gained weight? Have you been impatient and moody? My answers were all: 'Yes, yes, yes!', with my doctor confirming what I already knew. I was suffering from depression. I was hoping that on his generic list of questions he had one asking if I had show horses. But he didn't, and I felt way too silly to say, "I think I am mostly feeling this way because all the horse shows have been cancelled".

Normally, laying in bed at night would be a pleasure, gently lulling myself to sleep while deliberating about weather or not

I should change the colour of that chestnuts makeup for the next show, or use black instead of clear on the greys feet. But thanks to you EI, all I have to think about is what to make for the kids lunches in the morning, and what boring non-horse related bills I have to satisfy with my next pay cheque. It's a blessing to be able to enter the world of horsey la la land in your own mind to escape the troubles of life. I must say my daughters guinea pigs have never looked so healthy after I gave her all the unused bags of Hygain Show Touque to feed them.

Two months into the outbreak, I decided to let the three kids do Little Athletics for the summer. It runs every Saturday for the duration of what would have been the show season. The downside to this was that the kids had to have parental supervision for the whole day. Not that I have any

grievances about supervising my kids, but they're off on the track the entire time, looking like a needle in the hay stack of cloned kids all wearing the same uniform, making it impossible to distinguish who is who. Great, now I had to sit and make idol chit chat to non horsey mothers whose lives revolved around the price of laundry powder and ham at the local supermarket. I don't even need laundry powder, I have no rugs to wash!

There was some light amidst the clouds of unrealized dreams, occasionally the phone would ring and it would be a horsey friend. We would chat and talk about the champion we just turned out

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down the back paddock, that never had a chance to prove himself as a yearling, and how we had to stick a soap and oil filled syringe up the two year olds anus to save him from a bout of colic. Much more important than the price of ham. For that moment in time and sometimes for the rest of the day I would feel happy.

The most agonising thing has been silently feeling guilty about the way I was feeling. My family is healthy and we have a roof over our head; we don't have machine gun laden Tali Ban lurking the streets of our town. I shouldn't be feeling like this! While I had no interest in politics and most other current world affairs; it was the reports on the news about children with terminal illnesses, countries at war, people in pain and suffering losses, whole families dying in earth quakes and drowning in floods, the mother who woke to find her five year old son covered in blood after being savaged to death in his bed while he slept, that made my disappointments pail in comparison. My goodness, if I were to tell these people of my woes what would they think of me, of my horsey crusade.

People choose many varied paths in order to achieve their life goals, to keep themselves motivated and happy about working hard, and to provide the finances to achieve these goals. When a restraint is put into place to stop you doing what you love, I guess it takes away a part of your identity and over time your passion and will to battle through. I feel for those horse enthusiasts that didn't have what they needed to continue on. Maybe they found contentment in living a more simple life, with less ups and downs, less dirt in their fingernails and no feed bills!

It wasn't until only a couple of months ago, when my 13 year old came home from school and announced that she had a boyfriend, her first, that really got me thinking. Perhaps my parents are right. Maybe it is true that one day I'll look around and see my kids all grown up and wonder where did that time go. "Enjoy them while their young" they say. Quickly I started to pull myself together and managed to get over the disappoint-

ment, that had plagued my happiness since before Christmas. But I still felt as though something was missing. It wasn't the fact that I had no new show photos to put on my web site or no wins to celebrate. It wasn't even that I had no shiny new trophies to put on display. I wasn't missing the contact with the animals themselves as they were standing 8 feet from the back door. What I was really missing was the time spent with my kid's, husband and other like minded people some of which I am very fond of. Nothing beats waking up at 4 in the morning with three very well behaved kids and a very cooperative husband. Being so organized, that all you have to do is make sure the family is warm and well fed and your not leaving any horses behind. Taking off on the well planned and much anticipated drive to a show. Seeing all your mates, and others, and relishing in the joys of fierce but friendly competition. Seeing your kids execute the maneuvers and ring craft techniques you have been teaching them and seeing the horses you have chosen to share your life with and represent you, do well. Driving home exhausted, but never too tired to talk and enthusiastically debrief intimately with your family on every class entered, plus some. Then sitting at home that night and watching the hours of video footage I would have taken, during the day. How precious these are becoming with huge changes already noticed in my children's size and capabilities after five years of them competing.

Work will have no chance of ringing me on the weekends and asking me to do extra shifts once this show season starts. Should I start knocking them back now? Nar, better not. I'll need the extra money to pay for fuel to get to the shows. Does anybody want to be a diesel?

If your wondering what became of my daughters first new found boyfriend, well my husband shot him and strung him up by his feet, on the front fence as a warning to all others.

It's all too easy to forget how lucky we are and to take for granted what we have. The ability to safely engage in family activities of your choice should be fought for.

My husband said to me last night "What are we going to do about the fuel when the shows start?" I gave him the stare of death and he got my answer. Its not going to be easy for many competing in this 08/09 show season, me included, to keep on top of the extra fuel burden. Never should we forget that others at a show love this pass time as much as you do. Let's all take the time to pack an extra mug to offer the competitor parked next to you a cup of coffee from the old dented thermos and a Tim Tam for breakfast, if you can afford a packet.

Bring it on!