

## #PSYCHOLOGY

### Be Kind To Yourself

If you're like many people who put unfair pressure or expectations on themselves, you may know these kinds of self-critical thoughts well.



Imagine you've been planning for a high-stakes situation, such as a difficult conversation with a friend, an important sports game, or a presentation for your company's leadership team. You've spent months rehearsing what you'll say or do. But then, once you're in front of your friend, the game starts, or you face your colleagues and superiors - you choke.

No words come out. You stiffen and miss your shots. Anxious, embarrassed, you're terrified you'll lose your friend, get dropped from the team, or miss your chance at the promotion. Afterwards, you ruminate somewhere private to cry or squirm, or both.

As you stand there, tears flowing and stomach churning, you're hit with a flurry of thoughts: "I'll never speak to me again. / I'll never get picked for the team again. / I'm never getting promoted."

How did I mess that up when I practised for so long? What made me think I was worthy in the first place? I'll never succeed at anything.

If you're like many people who put unfair pressure on themselves, you may know these kinds of self-critical thoughts well. This doesn't mean you like them, but they've frequented your mind nonetheless.

#### Self-criticism Doesn't Work

When we respond with self-criticism in moments of emotional pain, we're making a deliberate effort to reduce our suffering. In terms of evolution, self-criticism developed as a response to social emotions, such as shame, humiliation and guilt, with the purpose being to increase our sense of control, self-protect from others' judgment, redirect our anger, and motivate ourselves to change our behaviour next time. In short, self-criticism is an evolved strategy to stay part of the in-group in order to survive.

People believe that the harsher they are on themselves, the more motivated to change - and consequently accepted by others - they'll be. If they just push themselves harder in the face of painful emotions, they'll come out the other side stronger. If they hold themselves to impossible standards, they're sure to meet them eventually. Their overarching belief is that self-criticism, in all its forms, means getting better, working harder, and achieving more.

But it's not that simple. Self-criticism doesn't increase your sense of control, but rather tricks your brain into feeling in

control. Instead of protecting you from others' judgment, self-criticism subjects you to your own. While it may redirect anger, this means emotions are suppressed rather than expressed. And while some will say they need self-criticism to motivate themselves to change, this goes against a core tenet of behaviourism: that punishment is not as powerful as reinforcement.

Fortunately, there's a smoother, less travelled road you can choose to take, and it's the antidote to self-criticism. This is self-compassion.

Psychologist and self-compassion expert Kristin Neff explains that self-compassion is being open and moved by one's own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, non-judgmental attitude toward one's inadequacies and failures, and recognising that one's experience is part of the common human experience.

In short, self-compassion is being an ally to yourself rather than an enemy. Self-compassion involves three closely connected components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

Self-kindness is as it sounds: it's the act of treating yourself kindly rather than with harsh criticism. Common humanity involves acknowledging that humans are flawed works-in-progress who are all connected to each other. If only through the fact that they all struggle in some way. Finally, mindfulness is the process of neither pushing away nor clinging to any thought or feeling - it's the experience of simply observing everything as it is.

Those higher in self-compassion judge themselves less, experience less depression and anxiety, use more adaptive coping strategies, are motivated to grow for intrinsic reasons (as opposed to for social approval), are more self-accepting, feel more socially connected, and report greater life satisfaction. Compared with those low in self-compassion, people high in self-compassion also fare better physically: they experience fewer symptoms of illness, lower-intensity pain and better-quality sleep.

These benefits are attributable, at least in part, to self-compassion's ability to deactivate the body's threat system (which is associated with insecurity and defensiveness) and to activate its self-soothing system (which is associated with feelings of safety). Self-compassion triggers the release of oxytocin, a hormone that is involved in regulating stress and calming the nervous system.



# You can't get emotional about coach's job, it will come to an end: Mickey

## #INTERVIEW

Affable Mickey Arthur, who has coached four Test-playing nations, has "tried to be as open and upfront as possible." Moreover, the 54-year-old has "never tried to be somebody" he is not. For Mickey, "the trust of players is paramount and can never be taken for granted"



Lokendra Pratap Sahi  
Senior Journalist

John Michael Arthur, or just Mickey Arthur, is a vastly experienced coach. Few can match his CV, which includes working with four Test-playing nations. Having played over 100 FC matches and scoring in excess of 6,500 FC runs surely made it easier for Mickey when he began wearing the coach's hat.

Mickey (54) spoke to this Columnist for around an hour from Derby, where he has dropped anchor professionally. Mickey's wife, Yvette, and their three children are in Perth. Excerpts...

**Q: South Africa, Australia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka... And, now, head coach and director of cricket at Derbyshire. Has been a remarkable journey, Mickey...**



John Michael Arthur.

**A:** Indeed, yes. I look back on each assignment with pride and affection, having worked with four National teams at different stages in my growth as coach... Derby called me late last year and the County has had a good 2022, often punching above its weight. Restructuring was needed and that has been done... I'd, of course, always wanted to coach in England.

**Q: How different is it to coach a National team as opposed to coaching a County?**

**A:** Slight difference, most definitely. With National teams, it's more tactical. Away from International cricket, it's more technical and probably more hands-on. If you're with a National team, the players are already developed. If it's a team in domestic cricket, the players are still developing. However, the principles and philosophy of coaching remain the same. Only the challenges vary.

**Q: You've been working with International players for almost two decades. While the principles and philosophy of coaching haven't changed, what about newer challenges?**

**A:** Cricket and the players have evolved from the time I began

coaching National teams (May 2005). Today, the influence of white-ball cricket is much more pronounced. The pace has changed and, as a result, the Test format has become attractive. The brand of cricket is more appealing... Look, all three formats have something unique to offer.

**Q: It's interesting that you mention philosophy in the same breath as the principles of coaching...**

**A:** (Passionately) My core belief has been to create an environment for excellence... For the players to have the best facilities, the best knowledge for fitness... An environment where they can grow. That's my philosophy of coaching.

**Q: Have you admired a coach?**

**A:** The late Eddie Barrow. I tried to implement his philosophy while doing things my way. The environment has to be great, else even the best plans won't be implemented.

**Q: I've spoken to Jake White, a former Springboks coach... In Australia, I made it a point to interact with AFL and Rugby League coaches... In England, I've spent time with some football coaches...**

Fascinating that the principles of coaching are the same.

**Q: It's rare for a coach to work with four Test-playing nations... What did each assignment teach you?**

**A:** A few words on each National team would be in order... **SOUTH AFRICA:** Graeme Smith and I evolved together, trying to become the best version of captain and coach, respectively. It was my first exposure to International cricket and a rich learning experience. With South Africa, it was more about developing the team and a leadership style. I was fortunate to work with incredible players.

**AUSTRALIA:** When I took the job, I thought I could coach the way I went about things in South Africa. But I had to be patient, observe and then bring in the style I wanted. Australia to accept.

**PAKISTAN:** Because of the difference in culture, I had to initially sit back and study the environment. I had to give myself more time before working on specifics with Pakistan.

**SRI LANKA:** Little bit of the same as in Pakistan, but the culture in Sri Lanka is different to what I'd been exposed to in South Africa and in Australia. If I have to rate myself, I'd become the best version of the coach I could be when I took up the job (December 2019).

**Q: Will you elaborate on the 'best version bit'?**

**A:** I became more confident of the methods used. I was more confident of delivering, making the players buy into what I wanted to encourage... With South Africa and Australia, I'd focused on high performance. With Pakistan and Sri Lanka, I did have to push and prod... Certain aspects are strictly non-negotiable where I'm concerned: Fitness, punctuality, grace... Little things can make a huge difference.

**Q: Did you get a free hand in all Test-playing nations?**

**A:** In most places... Certainly at the start in South Africa... In Australia, there were too many layers and levels... As for Pakistan and Sri Lanka, I did get a free hand, but you've got to produce results. In both places, I had the space to operate.

**Q: Revealing that you had the**

**freedom in Pakistan, where foreign coaches may not always be well received...**

**A:** The local vs foreigner debate will continue, but Shahryar Khan and Najam Sethi, the first two Board chairmen I worked with, allowed complete space. Later, Ehsan Mani.

**Q: With the benefit of hindsight, would you have done something differently with the National teams?**

**A:** At each place, I was at different stages in my career, different stages of development. With South Africa, I was basically learning on the job... Australia... Yes, I would do certain things a lot differently... Maybe, even with Pakistan and Sri Lanka. That said, the philosophy I hold dear wouldn't change.

**Q: When you talk of 'different stages of development' as coach, there must still have been a common thread...**

**A:** I tried to be as open and upfront as possible. Never tried to be somebody I am not, never tried to hide behind a face which wasn't mine. The trust of players is paramount and can never be taken for granted. Just being the person and coach I am would be the common thread.

**Q: As coach, you naturally build a rapport with most players, some may even become friends for life. Hard to sever ties?**

**A:** Every coach knows that, one day, it will come to an end. So, you can't get emotional about the job. Nevertheless, it's hard to break off. Most of my players are still in contact with me. A bond develops.

**Q: South Africa, Australia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka... Which assignment was the hardest to switch off from?**

**A:** The only time I was sacked was by Australia and that end (June 2013) was abrupt... Looking back, I had the best time with Pakistan. Yet, when my contract was not renewed (July 2019), I felt I'd taken the team to a certain level, but much remained to be done. It was the same when my two-year contract with Sri Lanka ended, last December.

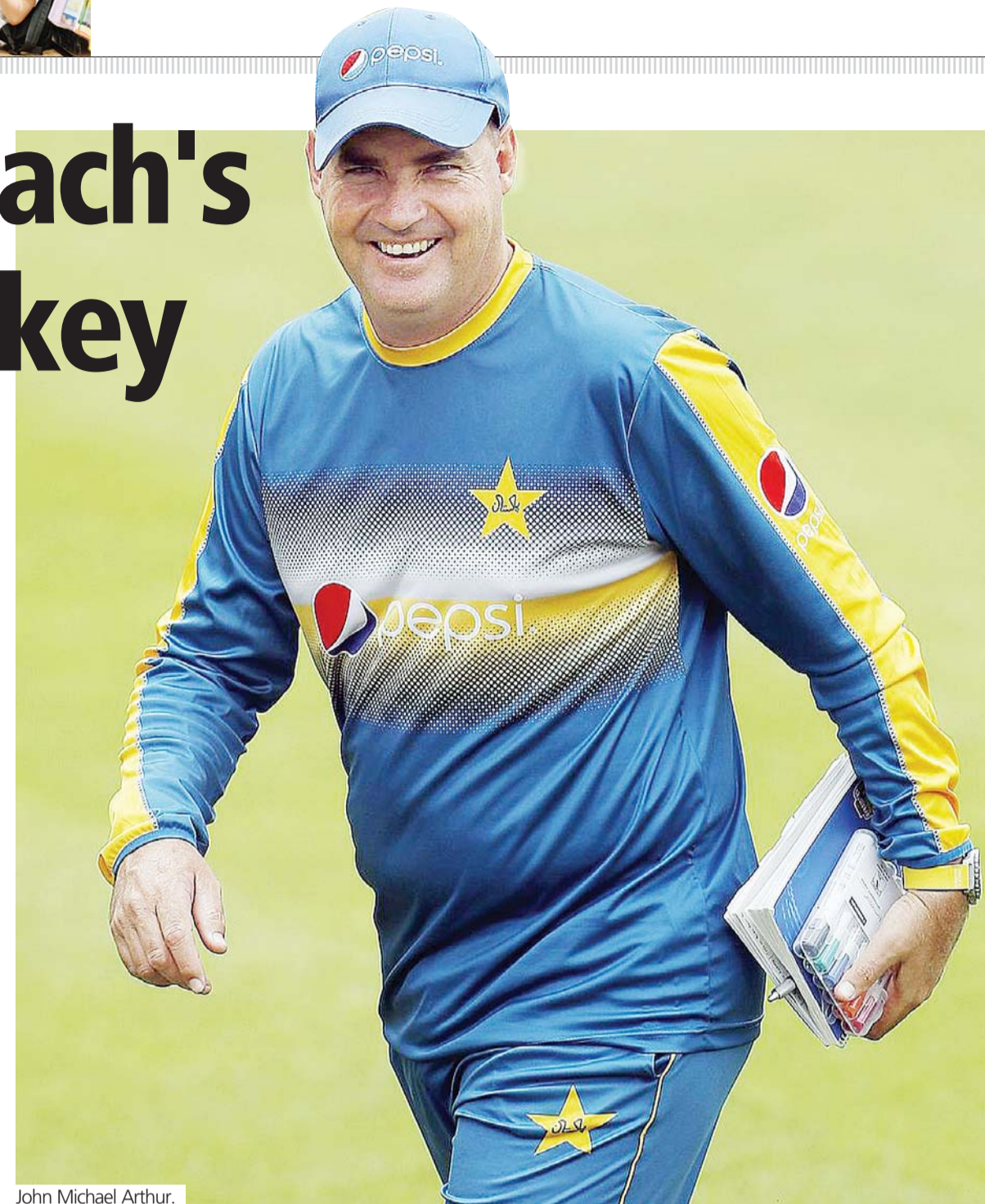
**Q: I understand you'd been confident of a renewal with Pakistan. What happened?**

**A:** After the 2019 World Cup, I had a meeting with Mani and Board CEO Wasim Khan in London and came

## Read A New Book Month



When a person opens the pages of a new book, they can easily find themselves swept up in a delightful world of unique and interesting characters and stories, or maybe just compelling information. The best books, even instructional ones, guide the reader through a storyscape that builds up and shares the vision of something the author wanted to share with the people of the world. Read A New Book Month is the perfect opportunity to pick up that novel you've been meaning to start.



John Michael Arthur.

away confident I'd be offered an extension. I was, in fact, told as much. Then, when I attended the Cricket Committee meeting chaired by Wasim Akram, I realised the Board's tune had changed and the move was to get a local coach. The temperature at that meeting was distinctly different to that in London. I sensed I wouldn't get what I'd been assured of.

**Q: Your innings with Sri Lanka was the shortest - two years. Was there no discussion regarding an extension?**

**A:** Maybe, had the world been different, I would have pushed for it. As it turned out, Covid-19 broke out a month or two after I began my assignment (December 2019) and, right through, I had to stay in the 'bubble'. I went through lockdowns and spent 294 days in the 'bubble'. Owing to the threat of Covid-19, I didn't see my family for two years... I loved Sri Lanka and its passionate people, but it was a tough lifestyle for those two years. Let me add the potential there is enormous.

**Q: With Australia, were you a rigid headmaster?**

**A:** Oh, no... It's wrong to suggest that. What is correct is that certain things are non-negotiable... You know, I'm generally a good guy and my management skills have not been found wanting. It's a small world and word gets around. If you're lacking, you won't land any assignment. You have to keep evolving.



**M**y core belief has been to create an environment for excellence... For the players to have the best facilities, the best knowledge for fitness... An environment where they can grow. That's my philosophy of coaching... The environment has to be great, else even the best plans won't be implemented

Mickey Arthur

**Q: Players too existed in the same 'bubble'...**

**A:** You're right and I felt for them. As they were all together, there was never any switching off. Used to be hotel-ground-hotel... It was demanding, for there was no way of releasing pressure.

**Q: You've spoken about Pakistan and Sri Lanka... What about South Africa? Did the quota system cramp you?**

**A:** On the contrary, we used that to our advantage. We got the best quality from different ethnic groups. But, yes, I did have to operate within boundaries.

**Q: What goes into the making of successful teams?**

**A:** Plenty... Vision, strategy and working towards protecting a particular brand of cricket... You need to put pillars in place, around which players work towards succeeding. There will always be boundaries, but the environment within must be conducive. Should bring the best out of each player.

**Q: Rahul Dravid, whom you had to plan against during your time with South Africa and Australia, will soon complete a year as India's head coach. Could he, at the end of his tenure, have the success he had as an iconic batsman?**

**A:** Dravid can... His understanding of the game is exceptional and should be remembered as an outstanding coach.

**Q: As batsman, Dravid had the qualities to emulate. Which ones would be helping him in his latest role?**

**A:** Dravid had an excellent work ethic and I'm sure he demands the same of his players. Above all, Dravid is such a nice guy and that quality must be helping in man management.

**Q: Finally... A regret you never coached India?**

**A:** Would have loved to, definitely. But whenever I could have applied, I was already working elsewhere. The chance, therefore, never came.

writetoarbit@rashtradioot.com

## #LIFESTYLE

### Adult's Dementia Risk



The link between sedentary behaviour and dementia risk persists even among participants who are physically active.

**A**dults 60 and older who sit for long periods watching TV or engaging in other passive, sedentary behaviours may be at increased risk of developing dementia, according to a new study.

The risk is lower for those who are more active while sitting, engaging in behaviours like reading or using a computer.

"It isn't the time spent sitting, per se, but the type of sedentary activity performed during leisure time that impacts dementia risk," says lead author David Raichlen, who was previously on the University of Arizona faculty and is now a professor of biological sciences and anthropology at the University of Southern California.

"We know from past studies that watching TV involves low levels of muscle activity and energy use compared with using a computer or reading," Raichlen says. "And while research has shown that uninterrupted sitting for long periods is linked with reduced blood flow in the brain, the relatively greater intellectual stimulation that occurs during computer use may counteract the

data from the UK Biobank, a large-scale biomedical database of more than 500,000 participants across the United Kingdom, to investigate possible correlations between sedentary leisure activity and dementia in older adults.

More than 145,000 participants aged 60 and older-all of whom did not have a diagnosis of dementia at the start of the project-used touchscreen questionnaires to self-report information about their levels of sedentary behaviour during the 2006-2010 baseline examination period.

After an average of nearly 12 years of follow-up, the researchers used hospital inpatient records to determine dementia diagnosis. They found 3,507 positive cases.

"Our ability to ask and answer these research questions is a testament to large-scale biomedical databases linked to medical records, such as the UK Biobank," says co-author Yann Klimkeitidis, an associate professor of epidemiology and biostatistics in the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. "They increasingly allow us to gain new insights



negative effects of sitting."

The link between sedentary behaviour and dementia risk persists even among participants who are physically active, the research shows.

"Although we know that physical activity is good for our brain health, many of us think that if we are just more physically active during the day, we can counter the negative effects of time spent sitting," says co-author Gene Alexander, a professor in the psychology department at the University of Arizona and Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute.

"Our findings suggest that the brain impacts of sitting during our leisure activities are really separate from how physically active we are, and that being more mentally active, like when using computers, may be a key way to help counter the increased risk of dementia related to more passive sedentary behaviours, like watching TV."

Researchers used self-reported

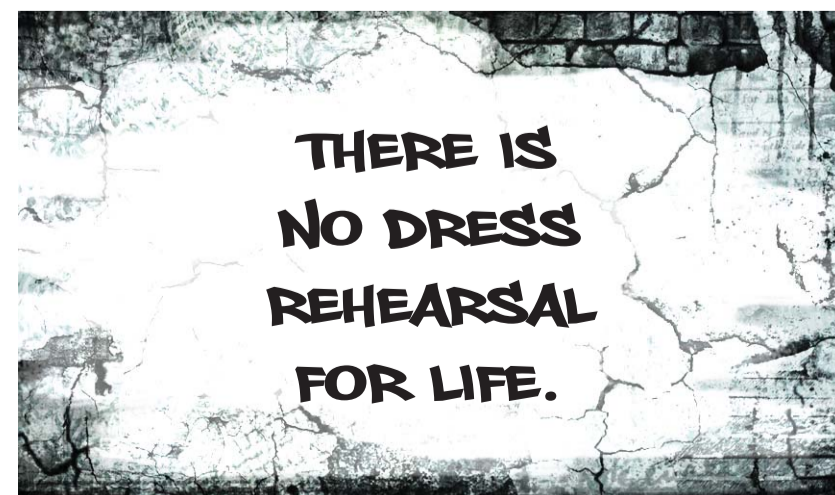
into risk factors for dementia and many other diseases."

The team adjusted for certain demographic factors such as age, sex, race/ethnicity and employment type and lifestyle characteristics such as exercise, smoking, alcohol use, and time spent sleeping and engaging in social contact-that could affect brain health.

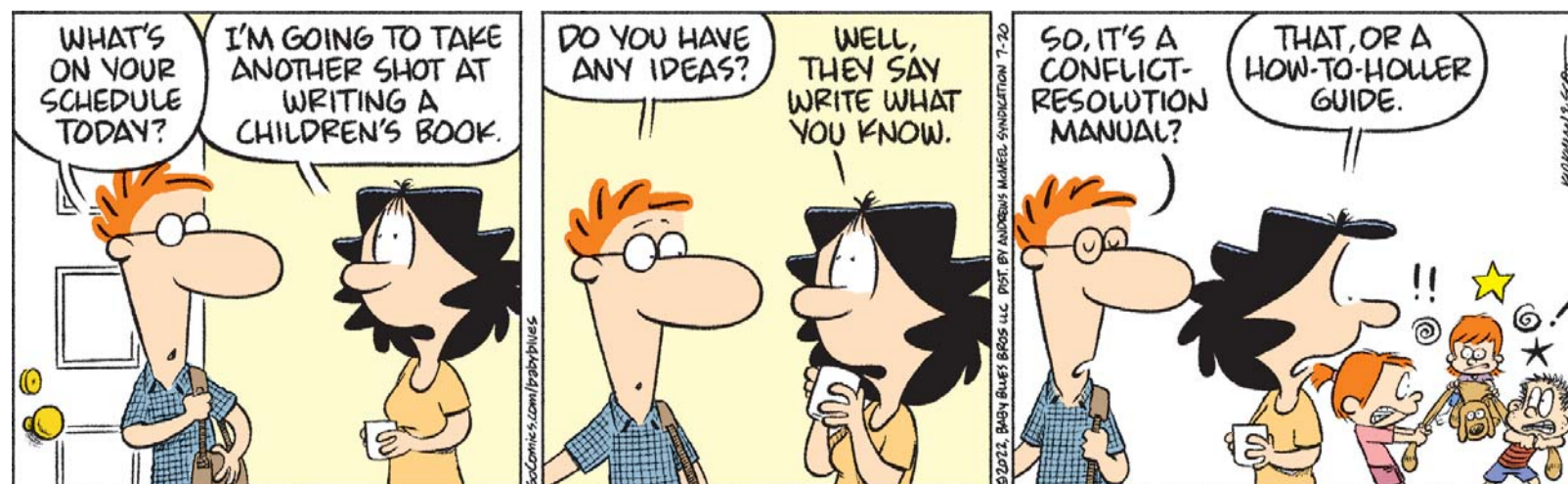
The results remained the same even after the scientists accounted for levels of physical activity. Even in individuals who are highly physically active, time spent watching TV was associated with an increased risk of dementia. In contrast, leisure-time spent using a computer was associated with a reduced risk of developing dementia.

"Our study shows that physical activity doesn't fully mitigate the risk of dementia from too much sitting in the same way it does for other diseases, however what we do write were sitting matters," Raichlen says.

## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS

