

When Pills Are Bad Medicine

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What businessman can say he has not been upset when his wife won't accept his explanation for being late for dinner, his secretary neglects to alert him to an appointment, or everything goes wrong on the golf course?

This, say the psychologists, is what is known as a "situational stress."

Unfortunately, more and more people simply reach for a "benny" or a "barb" in the mistaken belief that this is the way to ease the mental pain.

According to a survey by the Institute of Life Insurance, an estimated one fourth of the adult U.S. population has turned to mood-changing psychotropic drugs such as amphetamines and

barbiturates. These psychotropes will account for about \$750 million in prescriptions this year alone.

Are we talking about hippies? Here's what the Institute says:

"Some of the more frequent users of these drugs—originally prescribed to relieve temporary 'social stresses,' to help lose weight or check fatigue—are middle-income adults, often executives and businessmen, and in some instances, they obtain the pills illegally, through bars, gas stations and restaurants."

The Social Research Group, also digging into the problem, found that "persons with family incomes of \$10,000 and over, and men in managerial positions, showed a higher level of prevalence of use than any other occupational group."

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Too much reliance on these pills can be insidious. The Institute notes:

"The executive who overindulges will often feel he is doing better at work when, in fact, he may be inclined to be more careless in his paper work and administrative planning.

"He may well imagine he is doing a bang-up job on the company budget when on the contrary, he is inclined to be less attentive. When his euphoria leaves him, he is often likely to become irritable, sometimes even unstable."

And as one sociologist puts it, "The pills often give an impression of enhancement that far exceeds performance."