

By JARED SANDBERG

## Dread of Sunday Night Even Afflicts People Who Like Their Work

ON SUNDAY NIGHTS, Caleb Weintraub gets the blues.

The studio-art professor says he likes his job, but the imminent end of his freedom from workday obligations makes him less personable and outgoing on Sundays than on any other day of the week. Luckily for him and his family, his Sunday-night slump isn't as deep as it used to be when, through tears, he would tell his mother, "School is worse than eggs!"

People who suffer from the Sunday-night doldrums don't necessarily dislike work, but they sure don't like the thought of it. For many of



Carl Wiens

the afflicted, the pre-Monday funk is yet another workplace echo of grade school. The only difference between this one and fire drills, cafeteria trays, bullies, teams and report cards (a.k.a. performance reviews) is that it happens every week, and yelling "Force field!" won't protect you.

To this day, Prof. Weintraub tries to squeeze as much weekend out of the weekend as he can. "I know if I

sleep, the next thing I know I'll wake up and it will be Monday," he says. His favorite night of the week isn't Friday but Thursday, because then he can still anticipate the weekend before the clock has started running on it. Come to think of it, he says, his Sunday nights really begin on Saturday, when he realizes the weekend is half over and the workweek is looming.

FOR SUNDAY SUFFERERS, it can be hard to seize the day when they have already snatched it from themselves. "We're always living about 18 hours ahead of ourselves," says William Bridges, an author and consultant on business transition.

Leave it to the Buddhists to figure out that time shifting is a root cause of unhappiness. "We live in our expectations, not our experience," Mr. Bridges notes. "Buddhism emphasizes learning mindfulness of the moment. That's the answer as much as anything."

Not all of us have that kind of enlightenment handy, but Francine Maroukian is pretty close. The food and culture author prepares during the week for the angst that will befall her on Sunday. Whenever she hits a suspenseful moment in a book, she stops reading and saves it for Sunday night. She also makes sure

she'll find comfort in her apartment. "Lighting is critical," she says, and "never underestimate the healing power of melted cheese. There's something soothing about eating it."

"Rearming for the new week can produce anxiety and a sense of loss," confirms psychologist Gary Hayes of the New York management consulting firm Hayes, Brunswick & Partners. It's a result of the loss of momentary control that we gain on the weekend and then all but surrender during the workweek.

For one former Wall Street analyst, who had to catch a 4:45 a.m. train every weekday, Sunday nights seemed to start early in the day. "There was anxiety building up through the afternoon," she says. "It was just impossible to relax and enjoy anything. If I wasn't home, it would make me more anxious." Even Mondays were better than Sundays, she adds, "because the nonsense had at least begun." She found some relief by switching jobs. Now she's in marketing, and while Sundays are still tough, they're not nearly as bad.

HEALTH RESEARCHER Anna Nicholson copes by spending some of her Sunday morning preparing for Monday morning: She reads over her work e-mail, makes sure the house is clean, packs her bags for the gym, and even lays out clothes for the next day. "Funny thing is," she says, "I don't necessarily pick out my work clothes on any of the other weeknights."

But that doesn't mean she can change her ways. In fact, if she goes away for vacation, she'll return on a Saturday so that she can go through her preparation ritual. "It's tricking yourself," she says. "It's trying to be in control."

Sunday night television shows are a refuge for some. Lawrence Savell, an attorney at Chadbourne & Parke, says he spent his youth watching "Mission: Impossible," knowing that "when the show ended, that meant my weekend was over, it was time for bed."

As he got older, his Sunday slump became less severe, but when he had kids, he relapsed. "On the couch with 'Mission: Impossible' at 11 has been replaced by in the rocking chair with boy and milk at nine," he says, "and the Sunday night blues are a lot tougher than they were before."

But not for everyone. Harj Dhillon's bouts with Sunday nights used to get ugly, particularly when he worked in jobs he didn't like. But these days, his Sundays are difficult for different reasons. He has small children who seem to know, despite many statements to the contrary, that he can be interrupted at their convenience.

"No one is checking my Palm Pilot to see that I have to watch football from one to four on a Sunday afternoon, followed by a nap," he says of his family's incursion into his Sunday agenda. "Work has guardrails, stop signs and etiquette," he notes. "Home is barely contained entropy."

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