



Doctor Debug™

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Kickin' Some Bug!

"I'm gonna kick that bug right out of my life, and send all my blues away." Go ahead, sing it loud and sing it clear to the tune of the Rogers and Hammerstein song, "I'm going to wash that man right outta my hair." You don't know the tune? It's from the 1949 musical "South Pacific." Yes, that makes it old, but it is just the kind of tune that can chase away almost anybody's mild to moderate blues. Doctor Debug recommends a daily dose of silliness and singing.

Got more blues than an upbeat song can shake? Check back next month for more on major depression.

Debug Defiled, um, I mean 'Defined'

If you missed the first edition of Doctor Debug, which was published right here in Tekbug on May 13, you won't know that I have defiled the word "debug" a little differently. Oops, I mean "defined" debug a little differently. I made a Freudian slip. (Don't know what a Freudian slip is? Keep reading.)

Let me tell you, there is a little anxiety and some responsibility attached to expanding the definition of a word (in this case, to mean "assisting in finding and fixing malfunctioning elements in personal programming and neurophysiology," as in "debug a

person's dysfunctional self"). One of the consequences of fudging the meaning of "debug" happened to me last month. When I showed the first Doctor Debug to my hair stylist, she said, "I *never* read anything about computers." Doctor Debug Deflation Zone. The Doc has got his work cut out for him.

Freudian Slips

Speaking of work, I have been doing a personal Freud survey. Not a lot of people know what a Freudian slip is. Not a lot of people know who Freud was. Where to begin? Freud: founder of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis: Long definition—maybe you should look it up.

Everyone, however, knows about "bloopers." We see and hear them all the time. There are whole videotapes and DVDs full of them. Most bloopers are just simple mistakes without a lot of meaning—a forgotten word, a trip, a fall. But a Freudian slip is another kind of mistake altogether—an unintentional mistake of speech that reveals the *true* feeling or impulse of the person speaking.

My current favorite example of a probable Freudian slip is when President Bush reportedly said in a speech he was giving to a group of teachers "I'd like to spank all teachers."* We guess

that he wanted to say "thank" all the teachers, but he didn't. Why? That is open to analysis.

It is very significant that nearly every explanation of such slips uses an example of a guy slipping up. Don't women make slips? The female equivalent would be to address a guy named Dennis as "Penis" or Rick as "Prick." You get my drift? A true Freudian slip reveals what is really on our minds rather than the more civilized thing we were trying to say in the first place.

Well, Who Cares?

Psychoanalysts care. I care. You should care. Here's why.

The more we suppress a thought or feeling rather than deal with it, the more likely it will express itself in some inappropriate, possibly strange manner. Suppression produces steam. Where the steam will escape, nobody knows.

I know, we can't go around just expressing *all* of our thoughts and feelings because that would probably get us locked up. However, we all have significant reactions to people and situations that we need to discuss with someone in our life, or at least recognize and mull over. Otherwise, unpredictable things may happen.

The Freudian Send: E-mail Gone Wrong

Beware of the "Send" button if you are feeling hot or bothered. It can bite you in a truly Freudian way. E-mail brings a huge, new dimension to how far and wide our "slips" can be distributed, examined, reacted to and recorded for posterity.

Alice Kahn, co-author of "Your Joke's in the E-Mail," is credited with originating the term "Freudian Send." It is a term worth remembering.

Steam Cleaning

If you use e-mail a lot, especially at work, you have probably heard at least one horror story about e-mail sent to precisely the wrong person—for instance, the exact boss

someone was cracking jokes about.

Dissenting, arguing and poking fun have certain health benefits among consenting adults, but most likely, the person down the hall doesn't want to know what we think about their brain, breast, penis or butt size, and the boss doesn't want to know, either. I guarantee it.

Prevention is 99 percent of the cure for the Freudian Send. Sure, we can do some impressive tap dancing to try to fix the consequences of an e-mail gone wrong, but the damage will have been done. Apologies help, but they don't delete memories or saved copies of the Freudian Send.

Here are four suggestions to help prevent a Freudian Send.

1. If you are feeling hot or bothered, slow down and think.

2. Don't use the Reply or Forward button. That will keep you from accidentally replying or forwarding "To All." (Doc Debug doesn't believe in accidents.)

3. Write your e-mail message outside of the e-mail program. Review it carefully.

4. Steam clean your e-mail. Get rid of cussing, swearing and any loaded or insulting words.

The pay raise, job or relationship you save may be your own.

—*Doctor Debug*
June 17, 2002

* This quote is unconfirmed from "The Slip-Up Archive" (www.slipups.com).

Feeling bugged? Write to Doctor Debug, a psychiatrist with 27 years of counseling experience. Ask him about mental wellness, or send questions regarding personal, social, relationship, medication or sexual concerns.

E-mail sent to Doctor Debug is read only by Ron Sterling, M.D. No identities, whatsoever, will be revealed in any published answers.

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