

## Back Treatment

*Here's another puzzle from the formidable construction team of Bob Fink and Jerry Miccolis.*

**SOMETIMES, WHEN WE'RE DEEPLY PUZZLED**, we don't know whether we're coming or going. It can be a real pain. Luckily, there's a type of therapy that may help if you find yourself in such pain while solving this puzzle.

There are nine symmetrically placed entries in the grid that, upon sufficient reflection, you will find have something in common. Within each of those entries is a letter whose occurrence you may find odd. Those letters, in grid order, spell out the helpful therapy ([A] in the blank below).

Additionally, there's an "Easter egg" (a merely tangential phenomenon, very loosely related to the main theme but not actually part of it) lurking in plain sight, represented by two other symmetrically placed entries in the grid. Bonus points will be awarded if you identify those entries ([B] and [C] in the blanks below).

There are four proper names (plus another entry partially clued as one) and a hyphenated word in the grid—everything else is an ordinary English phrase or a word playable in Scrabble. As always, be wary of punctuation, which has been known to deceive.

Thanks to Tom Toce and Eric Klis for est-solving and editorial suggestions.

### Main Theme:

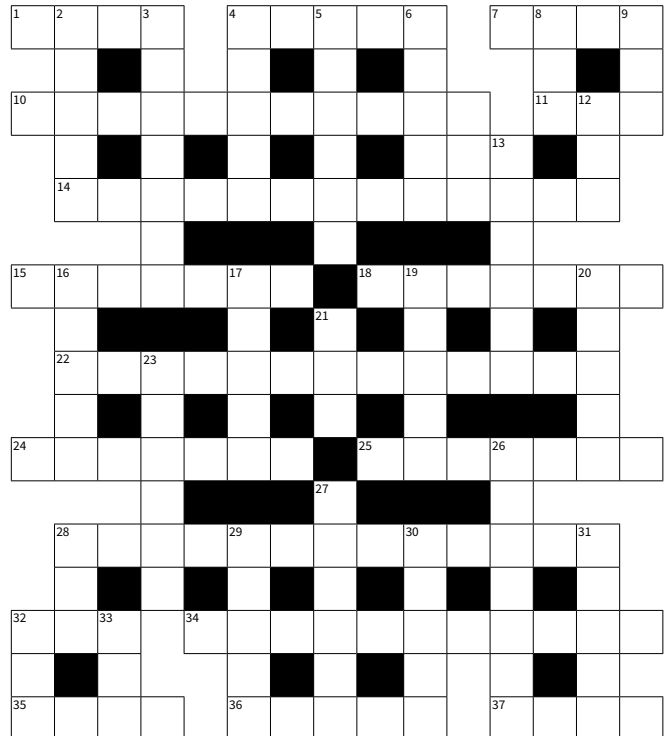
\_\_\_[A]\_\_\_ Therapy

### Bonus "Easter Egg" Entries:

\_\_\_[B]\_\_\_ and \_\_\_[C]\_\_\_ (its \_\_\_[A]\_\_\_)

### Across clues

1. Bitter tenor Domingo rejects Palestine Liberation Organization (4)
4. Playing red, so lay down more green? (5)
7. Hizzoner expects local municipality leaders to lead (4)
10. Crazy French friend, Mother Weir, makes initial introduction? (5,2,4)
11. Unlimited praise for Japanese vocalist (3)
14. Soviet rioters agitated, "Get up and cast your ballot, man!" (4,2,4,3)
15. Overlap hit among hit (7)
18. "Embrace carbs!" holds meaning for one running around a track (7)
22. Revolutionary is at war, awaits inquisition regarding my spying of turncoat (3,2,1,3,1,3)



24. First-seed Spinners' pile of cash (3,4)
25. Squat in thong uncomfortably (7)
28. Naked frump following interminable drums to Hawaiian cooking pit, before four characters possessed by her murder, leads to my insistent muttering for liquor (3,3,1,6)
32. Hope to get a short haircut (3)
34. Gosh! A saw not even England's Arn can draw? Gee! (4,2,5)
35. Massage, so it's said, causes misery (4)
36. Pill dispenser supplied by wrongdoers? (5)
37. Do away with Eastern tour (4)

### Down clues

2. Arctic fish, having digested me, produces stool (5)
3. Lures Mark with greed, say (5,2)
4. "Something to Talk About" singer will rank highly on the radio (5)
5. Fast watch with added voltage (6)
6. Enlist short physician at back of boat (5)
8. Vanity displayed in new edition of GEO (3)

TOM TOCE is an FCAS and a senior manager at EY. He is a member of the Jeopardy Hall of Fame. Solutions may be emailed to [ttoce@nyc.rr.com](mailto:ttoce@nyc.rr.com). In order to make the solver list, you should send him your solutions by August 1, 2023.

- 9. Smoot fences off bay from pasture (3)
- 12. Neither partner is from western Norway (3)
- 13. Simpletons start to study survey (6)
- 16. Who misplaced Intel's Core Operator Instruction Manual? (3-2)
- 17. Cockeyed after the first drawing (5)
- 19. Roast trashed a Texas player (5)
- 20. Similarly washed-out city on the Nile (5)
- 21. A rare Titian piece! (3)
- 23. Ma sees spilled seed (6)
- 26. Belvedere can joke about "Basic Instinct" (7)
- 27. Poems praising the People's Princess? They're electric (6)
- 28. Rank-sounding letter (3)
- 29. Forced burger meat down (5)
- 30. Lunar distortion of what parallels the radius (5)
- 31. Was angry the correlation coefficient declined with time (5)
- 32. Batman surrenders cash dispenser to outlaw (3)
- 33. Good day in Purchase, we hear (3)

## Solution to Previous Issue's Puzzle—The Crypto Cryptic

### Across clues

- 1. BAIT—Homophone of BATE ("Contract") add CKL for BACKLIT
- 5. DECLAIM—Anagram of "Medical"
- 9. SUER—Homophone of SEWER ("gutter") add R for SURER
- 10. ESTIMATES—Anagram of "steamiest"
- 11. INSET—Anagram of "stein"
- 12. EMOTICONS—Anagram of "Mo notices"
- 13. TARRAGON—TAR ("Debase") + RAG ON ("criticize"). Estragon, it turns out, is the French word for tarragon!
- 14. DEED—Palindrome. Add NI for DENIED.
- 17. PEER—Double definition. Add PP for PEPPER.
- 19. STRANDED—ST ("Saint") + RAND ("Paul, for one") + ED (from "Freddy divulged")
- 23. REED—Homophone of READ ("Play from a score"). Add LOCAT for RELOCATED.
- 25. TALES—TS ("Eliot") around ALE ("beer")
- 26. EDUCATION—Anagram of "I counted." Add A for EDUCATION.
- 27. SIENA—Reversal of all but the first letter in "Jane is"
- 28. TRADERS—Anagram of "starred"
- 29. SENATOR—Anagram of "Treason"

### Down clues

- 1. BAST—Anagram of "bats." Add SSI for BASSIST.
- 2. COUP—Homophone of COO ("Bill's partner"). Add RNSYR for CORN SYRUP
- 3. LORETTA—Triple definition (Loretta's "Young Lynn or Martin")
- 4. THOR—Anagram of "Roth." Add EREF for THEREFOR
- 5. DOOM—Reversal of "mood." Add TC for DOTCOM
- 6. CONE—Double definition. Add MBI for COMBINE.
- 7. ASTRO—Anagram of "Roast"
- 8. MISSED—Homophone of MIST ("film"). Add U for MISUSED
- 15. INDENT—Borders of "indifferent." Add ULG for INDULGENT
- 16. STUNTS—Double definition. Add DE for STUDENTS
- 17. PENT—Double definition (Pentecost, abbreviated Pent., is "fifty days after Easter Sun."). Add RCE for PERCENT

1	B	A	C	K	L	I	T	5	D	E	C	L	A	I	M		
	A		O		O		H		O		O		S		I		
9	S	U	R	E	R			10	E	S	T	I	M	A	T	E	S
	S		N		E				R		C		B		R		U
11	I	N	S	E	T			12	E	M	O	T	I	C	O	N	S
	S		Y		T				F		M		N				E
13	T	A	R	R	A	G	O	N		14	D	E	N	I	E	D	
			U							16	S				N		
17	P	E	P	P	E	R		19	S	T	R	20	A	N	D	E	D
	E				N		22	S		U		R		U		E	
23	R	E	24	L	O	C	A	T	E	D		25	T	A	L	E	S
	C		A		L		A		E			I		G		P	
26	E	D	U	C	A	T	I	O	N		27	S	I	E	N	A	
	N		R		V		R		T			A		N		I	
28	T	R	A	D	E	R	S		29	S	E	N	A	T	O	R	

- 18. ENCLAVE—Borders of "enclosing Soave"
  - 20. ARTISAN—Reversal of "NRA" around "as it"
  - 21. DESPAIR—Anagram of "diapers"
  - 22. STAIRS—Homophone of STARES ("goggles")
  - 24. LAURA—Anagram of "Aural"
- Solvers:** Steve Alpert, Dean Apps, Lois Cappellano, Jared Dashoff, Todd Dashoff, Christopher Dickens, Mick Diede and Jay Ripps, Pete Hepokoski, Catharine Hornby & Bruce Harvey, Ruth Johnson, Eric Klis, Paul Kolell, Ken Kudrak, Ben Lynch, Dave McGarry, Jim Muza, David and Corinne Promislow, Zig Swistunowicz, T. O. C. E. (Josh DenHartog and Sean Donohoe), Betsy and James Uzzell