



### TO THE EDITOR...

Letters should be marked clearly 'Letter for publication in *The Psychologist*' and addressed to the editor at the Society office in Leicester. Please send by e-mail if possible: [psychologist@bps.org.uk](mailto:psychologist@bps.org.uk) (include a postal address). Letters over 500 words are less likely

to be published. The editor reserves the right to edit, shorten or publish extracts from letters. If major editing is necessary, this will be indicated. Space does not permit the publication of every letter received. Letters to the editor are not normally acknowledged.

## Roll up, roll up for the great EMDR debate

**T**HE article on eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing ('In the blink of an eye', March 2002) brings new hope of recognition to rolled-up newspaper therapy (RUNT). Your more knowledgeable readers will be aware that I discovered RUNT accidentally one day when I observed that my feelings of gross inadequacy were ameliorated by hitting myself repeatedly over the head with a rolled-up newspaper. Being

an inspired maverick with no need for the empty trappings of 'scientism' (trappings such as validation, replication, etc.) I immediately patented the idea and founded the RUNT Institute to market training courses to an astounded world.

The fact that scientific studies have failed to substantiate the effectiveness of RUNT I can only ascribe to inadequate methodology. Researchers have been biased, or have misunderstood the multimodal nature of RUNT,



focusing only on the use of rolled-up newspaper and failing to take account of the counselling and behavioural elements, which were hastily grafted on to RUNT in an attempt to make it more respectable in the 1990s. The fact that carefully constructed

studies have failed to show any advantage of rolled-up newspaper proves this. Economic factors have also caused some to use the *Daily Mirror* instead of the *Sunday Times*.

No matter, I shall shortly submit for publication a comprehensive review of RUNT. I shall expect, of course, that like the EMDR article, it will be published without third party comment (I'm not completely daft, you know).

**Robert A. Forde**  
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Clevedon  
North Somerset

### Not a hit through the covers

**T**HE *Psychologist* is the main forum by which the Society communicates with its members. Approximately 35,000 issues are shipped to members every month, and this ensures that *The Psychologist* is a surprisingly powerful forum.

Unfortunately it is also the test bed for some 'experimental' examples of artwork for its cover pieces (see e.g. September 2001 and March 2002). Why not ask contributors to the articles to submit examples of artwork for the cover of *The Psychologist*? This would not only raise its professional impression (and of the Society) but would also save the Society money in art fees.

#### Carl Senior

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National Institute of Mental Health  
Section of Cognitive Neuropsychology  
Bethesda, MD



**The Editor, Jon Sutton, replies:** Authors are in fact often asked for suggestions on cover illustrations (and were in the two cases mentioned). Psychological concepts are not always the easiest to illustrate, and we always welcome readers' views on our covers and alternative designs we could have used.

**W**HILE appreciating that *The Psychologist* is not a standard academic journal, I was nevertheless somewhat surprised and not a little disappointed to see space being given to an uncritical 'sales pitch' for EMDR in the March issue. While Shapiro acknowledges that the treatment she originated has been the subject of 'much scrutiny and debate', reference is then only made to one aspect of this debate; that is, the identification of EMDR's active ingredient. By failing to provide at least a handful of references to major areas of contention in relation to EMDR, the article does a disservice to interested practitioners and

academics. Papers by Herbert *et al.* (2000) and Rosen *et al.* (1998) would allow readers to at least start to make a more balanced appraisal of EMDR.

**Robert J. Edelmann**  
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#### References

- Herbert, J.D., Lilienfeld, S.O., Lohr, J.M., Montgomery, R.W., O'Donohue, W.T., Rosen, G.M. *et al.* (2000). Science and pseudoscience in the development of eye movement desensitization and reprocessing: Implications for clinical psychology. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 20, 945-971.
- Rosen, G.M., Lohr, J.M., McNally, R. & Herbert, J.D. (1998). Power therapies, miraculous claims, and cures that fail. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 26, 97-99.

**The Editor, Jon Sutton, replies:** See p.242 for the first of our 'Counterpoint' articles. Along with the letters page, we hope that this format serves to boost the role of *The Psychologist* as a forum for discussion and debate. We strive to achieve this within issues where appropriate and practical, but debate across issues is a vital part of our approach.

## Render unto Caesar...

**A**S a practising Christian and psychology undergraduate I find Donald Smith's explanation of religion unsatisfactory (Letters, March 2002). Reducing religion to a series of learnt responses and stating that people only believe in God to 'reduce inner tensions' is to misunderstand the notion of religion. He uses the example of feeling protected from harm if a person believes in God, yet it is clear that in many religions believers are often persecuted and are certainly not protected from harm.

Practising a religion may lead to a 'mixture of behaviours, thoughts and feelings' occurring. However, do not underestimate the cause of these reactions. As a believer in God, I find it impossible to believe that my faith is a result of learnt

behaviours rather than personal experience of a living God. Although, as psychologists, it is our job to explain human behaviours, it may be that there are some things that cannot be explained by theory and hypothesis. Let's not forget the complexity of the human brain, our thoughts, emotions and behaviours. We don't fully understand these things, why not consider the possibility that someone else does and even had the power to create our bodies and brains? God and the belief in God, therefore, could not merely be a behavioural reaction. An angle for further research may be to look at religion as real, rather than trying to explain it away as a way of making us feel better about ourselves.

**Rachel Ackerley**  
8 Austin Street  
Northampton

## The playground middle ground?

**A**NTHONY Pellegrini and Peter Blatchford ('Time for a break', February 2002) aim to persuade policy makers not to cut into children's school break time any further. As a response to growing

concerns over antisocial youth behaviour, and to American politicians calling for special programmes to teach social skills, these authors have an unwarrantable faith in break time as 'the' forum for

## Ethical considerations

**T**HE article by Trish Joscelyne ('Professional practice guidelines: Time for a change?', April 2002) raises issues that the Society has been aware of and has been taking steps to address for a number of years.

The Society acknowledges fully its responsibility to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and ethical professional practice and its obligation to take corrective action when appropriate. In 1999 the Society set up a task force to review the complaints and investigatory procedures into the conduct of members. As a result of its work and of the requirements of the Human Rights Act, the Society's investigatory procedures were overhauled, new staff were recruited and new procedures were adopted.

As part of the overhaul the Society established an Ethics Committee to promote good ethical practice and to encourage ethical debate within the Society. The

committee's membership includes representation from the Divisions. Part of the committee's remit is to produce a code of ethics.

The code, which is now nearing completion, sets out the ethical principles values and standards of behaviour which should guide all members of the Society. The committee has paid particular attention to issues concerning boundaries and relationships, confidentiality and records. The ethical code will dovetail with the Code of Conduct. Prior to adopting the code in its completed format, the Society intends to consult with the Divisions. Members will be encouraged to provide their comments and suggestions for amendments or improvement.

Finally a further spin off from the task force's work was the recognition that the current Code of Conduct is in need of revision. The Ethics Committee and SCPEO are working actively on this important piece of work.

**BPS Ethics Committee**

children learning positive social skills. Whilst I agree that break time offers a rich venue for a variety of psychological research, to present it as a site for challenging antisocial youth behaviour is naive.

Rather than viewing break time as an 'extended classroom', a more productive approach to improving children's social behaviour may be offered by allowing break time to extend into the classroom. In the UK and USA we should have educators who are capable of facilitating social skills programmes that allow children's peer interactions to remain intact whilst ensuring guidance towards positive social consideration. The subordination of adult guidance, as supported by Pellegrini and

Blatchford, is among the reasons for parents opting for home education (Petrie *et al.*, 1999). If school is to play a proactive part in imbuing children with positive social skills, then the events of the playground would be most useful as part of a classroom-based middle ground.

**Wayne Thexton**  
Division of Psychology  
Staffordshire University

### Reference

Petrie, A., Windrass, G. & Thomas, A. (1999). *The prevalence of home education in England: A feasibility study*. London: Institute of Education.

## DEADLINE

Deadline for letters for possible publication in the July issue is **31 May**

# Faire comment?

**A**S Chair of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) it is with some surprise that I read the article 'Dyslexia – Seeking help to negotiate the maze' by Peter Faire (March 2002).

The principle and process of facilitating voice and dialogue is essential to, and underpins, the practice of professional psychologists. In fact, listening to and working in partnership with parents is central to the practice of educational psychologists (EPs) and is enshrined in the new SEN Code of Practice. *The Psychologist* is to be congratulated for supporting this principle. However, it is equally important to present a balanced viewpoint and this has not been achieved.

There is no acknowledgement of the seriousness with which dyslexia is considered amongst the profession. The recent and summative publication *Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment – Report by a Working Party of the DECP* (1999) was produced by a working group of and on behalf of the Division. The report examined a very wide range of theoretical explanations for dyslexia, described modes of assessment and the implications for concepts of special educational needs.

Nor does the article contain any considered understanding of the complexity and breadth of educational psychology assessments, which attempt to understand individual children in the context of their learning environment. It is important that thorough and 'open' assessments of a young person's possible additional needs are conducted rather than 'closed' ones constructed around a simple and limited frame of the question 'does this young person have dyslexia or not?'

Peter Faire writes to seek views of educational psychologists on 'whether they think the provision for dyslexics is adequate'. Most educational psychologists would wish for better provision for dyslexics, as they would for all the children they work for and with. Can I suggest that *The Psychologist* commissions another piece on this subject in which an evidence-based account of the practice of LEA employed educational psychologists is offered? I am more than happy to ask members of the DECP for their input to this.

**Kairen Cullen**  
Chair  
Division of Educational and Child Psychology

**The Editor, Jon Sutton,**  
*replies: We would be happy to receive an article: a variety of viewpoints helps The Psychologist to serve its function as a forum for discussion and debate.*

**O**VER the past few years, science has led the way towards greater awareness and provision for dyslexic learners. Good educational practice internationally has

proven that, when identified early and taught appropriately, many dyslexic learners make excellent progress and lead fulfilled lives.

In line with this, policy at the level of central government has changed ensuring that guidance is available to local education authorities and schools alike. Some educational authorities, such as Swansea, have publicly stated that they have trained and placed one specialist dyslexia teacher in every school in the county. In such a way, they have ensured that there is expertise on site. Not only do individual dyslexic learners receive the help they need, but all schools have an ethos of 'dyslexia friendliness' into which all staff are encouraged to buy.

However, the vast majority of areas in the country do not have such provision and the results of that deficiency can be dire. We know that the psychological effects of being misunderstood or badly treated may in many cases lead to low motivation and poor self-concept. In some cases it may even lead to poor or deviant behaviour. Teachers find themselves battling with children and their parents,

as they unwittingly make unreasonable demands upon children whose needs are inappropriately addressed. These children are often unwanted in schools as they are 'seen' by some as lowering the standards and preventing schools from reaching their targets.

The level of stress in relation to these children is often very high. Even in 2002 the British Dyslexia Association hears of cases of young people threatening to take their own lives as they feel misunderstood and see no hope for any sort of future. In some cases it does happen. When science and good practice have taught us so much, someone needs to be made responsible to ensure that these children have their needs met. There is an issue of accountability.

Peter Faire has described the experiences of many parents and should be listened to very carefully. Educational psychologists and others responsible for the attitudes and provision a child experiences must be made aware of the need for change. There is much that can be done without stretching the budget, which is, I am sure, at the root of lack of provision.

Perhaps it is time to reconsider the role of educational psychologists, who are highly skilled and have a great deal to offer. With a minimum of training, working closely with SENCos and school staff, they could contribute a great deal to ensuring that all children are learning and are truly included in our education system. Who better than a psychologist to appreciate the full impact of failure to learn? Who better to ensure that change is effected?

**Lindsay Peer**  
Education Director and Deputy Chief Executive  
British Dyslexia Association

## Self-esteem, risk and teenage pregnancy

**T**HE report by Professor Nicholas Emler 'Self-esteem takes a bashing' (News, February 2002) highlighted low self-esteem as increasing the likelihood of an individual becoming pregnant as a teenager. High self-esteem, normally associated with risk taking, would be expected to inhibit teenage pregnancy. Yet he regards teenage pregnancy as a 'risky behaviour'. Are the circumstances surrounding a teenager becoming pregnant properly classified as 'risky'?

Risk involves both an element of uncertainty and requires one of the possible outcomes to be detrimental to overall well-being. Teenage pregnancy may be both a more probable outcome and one more advantageous to the particular person's inclusive fitness than might commonly be thought. A teenage girl might engage in sexual activity with a regularity and disregard for contraception that makes pregnancy an almost inevitable outcome. More importantly, due to her particular socio-economic circumstances, the

pregnancy and successful confinement may be advantageous life choices when viewed from an evolutionary perspective. For instance, to some girls acquiring a good job or nice home before having children are unrealistic prospects. Low self-esteem will make such a goal appear even more distant.

In affluent societies it has become the norm for women to

have children much later in life, when they are financially more able to support them. In the Western world this has led to a declining birth rate. Waiting for an affluent mate before having children makes no sense if, for some women in our society, there is little chance of acquiring one. To delay conception may itself be viewed as a maladaptive behaviour, since a woman will

lose her attraction (strongly linked to youth in females) and suffer a decline in fertility as she gets older. The currently accepted view that teenage pregnancy is a social problem does not mean it is necessarily an individual tragedy.

The mechanism whereby low self-esteem increases the chances of a teenager becoming pregnant may be complex and involve weighing up the future cost/benefits of delaying pregnancy. But we must be cautious about labelling such behaviour as risky without giving thought to the individual circumstances surrounding such action.

**Eleanor Strain**

*43 Colbourne Road  
Hove*

**P**ROFESSOR Emler (News, February 2002) is intrigued as to why teenage pregnancies are associated with low self-esteem when risk taking behaviour is associated with high self-esteem. He should look no further than Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1995). Levinson (1986) makes

## Knowing when to pull the plug

**W**HAT a pity to see so many academic psychologists barking up the wrong tree trying to 'rationalise' the decision-making process ('Decisions, decisions', February 2002). None of us needs training in decision making. What we need is help after a decision has been made.

I learnt this when I worked for a highly successful entrepreneur who put about five new products on the market a month. He relied on rumour and gossip to provide him with smattering of information, and then would decide, almost out of the blue,

to give a new product a 'whirl'. It was what he did after making his decision that set him apart from the rest. If this man's decision-making process was mercurial, his performance tracking was entirely rational. He was absolutely fastidious about collecting realistic, quantitative feedback on his products after their launch. He developed an exquisite eye for 'pulling the plug' on any poorly performing product at exactly the right time.

It is a pity the management of Rolls-Royce did not benefit from this man's expertise. As John Maule and Gerard Hodgkinson mentioned in their

article, this company failed after a decision had been made to launch a new aero-engine. What the article failed to emphasise was that it was not the decision to launch that was at fault, but rather the lack of effective tracking necessary to 'pull the plug' after the new engine failed.

I have a hunch that most of us act more like Rolls-Royce executives than wily entrepreneurs, and this is why our lives are such a mess! Because of incompetent performance tracking we either wallow in the mire of failed outcomes, or bounce from decision to decision changing

our commitment far too early. We remain in awful jobs, in stale relationships, and with last year's hairstyle. But we fail to finish new projects, we give up on our diets, and move our money around like squirrels with hazelnuts. In short, we don't know when to pull the plug.

So, please, you academic psychologists, stop barking up your barren decision trees, and start applying yourselves to the more useful and subtle art of performance tracking.

**Diana Barker**

*20 Rue Charles Peguy  
Coarrazze  
France*

specific reference to contraceptive behaviour of teenage girls. Low self-esteem leads to lack of perceived control in sexual encounters. Levinson concludes that 'they do not think that they can stop the sexual activity that they enjoy or be contraceptively protected on a consistent basis. They release their inhibitions and don't consider the consequences of their actions'. Basically, they don't

feel they have any control over their lives. A bit like being a psychology graduate really!

**James Saunders**  
Flat 2, Park View Lodge  
21 Culmington Road  
Ealing

**References**

Bandura, A. (1995). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Levinson, R.A. (1986). Contraceptive self-efficacy: A perspective on teenage girls' contraceptive behaviour. *Journal of Sex Research*, 22, 247-369.

were to sneak her my copy she would only need to pay £13. But if she were a first year undergraduate the equivalent subscription would be £13 including *The Psychologist*.

An equivalent US high school subscription for the APA, including the APA equivalent of *The Psychologist*, would be approximately £15. So why does the BPS not encourage a similar interest amongst UK A-level psychology students by having

a low level of subscription? Why should such students have to pay four times the undergraduate student rate?

In summary, why is the BPS seemingly deterring A-level psychology students from learning more about psychology?

**Roger S. Harvey**  
57 Avondale  
Ash Vale  
Aldershot

**Norah Frederickson,**  
*Director of the Membership*

**A-level of interest**

I AM an Associate Fellow and a Chartered Psychologist and my daughter is studying A-level psychology. Her interest in the subject is becoming fairly serious, partly because as a family we have been attending the Annual Convention of the

American Psychological Association for the last two or three years. But my enquiries with the BPS reveal that if she wished to join as an A-level student this would cost more than £50, including a subscription to *The Psychologist*. However, if I

**CHAIR OF THE PSYCHOLOGY EDUCATION BOARD**

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

In February this year Council approved a major reorganisation of the Society's governance structure. One of the outcomes is the establishment of a new board, the Psychology Education Board, which will deal with all matters related to undergraduate psychology education.

Besides having responsibility for the Society's Qualifying Examination, undergraduate course accreditation and the graduate basis for registration, the new board will increase the Society's profile in secondary education of psychology. Liaison with the new Membership and Professional Training Board will be crucial in ensuring consistency of approach and criteria through psychology education and into professional training.

The new chair is likely to come from a senior academic background and have an interest in secondary as well as undergraduate psychology education. The new board is expected to hold its first meeting in October 2002 and the term of office will be three years. However, the chair is expected to be appointed before October and work with the Society's staff and the Board of Directors in establishing the new Psychology Education Board.

**For more information**

- Details of the new board structure, including the new roles and responsibilities for all the Society's boards, are available from the Society's Leicester office.
- Further details of the new Psychology Education Board, a statement of interest form and an outline job description for the post can be obtained from the Directorate Manager, Andy Burman, at [andbur@bps.org.uk](mailto:andbur@bps.org.uk) or by telephone on 0116 252 9519.
- For a detailed discussion about this new role and its duties please contact the Director of the Membership and Qualifications Board, Dr Norah Frederickson, at [n.frederickson@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.frederickson@ucl.ac.uk) or by telephone on 020 7679 7555.
- For an informal discussion about the general work of the Board of Directors please contact the President, Professor Graham Davey, at [grahamda@cogs.susx.ac.uk](mailto:grahamda@cogs.susx.ac.uk) or by telephone on 01273 678485.

Applications must be accompanied by a statement of interest outlining what you feel you can contribute to this exciting new project. Applications must be submitted to Andy Burman by **31 May 2002**.

**and Qualifications Board, replies:**  
 Roger Harvey's letter raises an important developmental issue for the Society. Currently, there is no facility for students of psychology courses at A-level or GCSE to join the Society. This is because the Royal Charter, Statutes and Rules defines students as people 'undergoing a course of instruction in psychology, with an institution recognized by the Council'. However, Council only recognises those courses at undergraduate or postgraduate level, not at FE level. The new Psychology Education Board, to be introduced this October as

part of the Society's restructuring programme, will begin to consider secondary level psychology education. Coupled with the Society's drive to cater for and recruit student members (December's London Lectures were aimed at a student audience) this could provide exciting new opportunities for the Society and for young people studying psychology in schools and FE colleges. Furthermore, students can keep up with developments via an institutional subscription to The Psychologist – A-level teachers can receive five copies each month for just £56 a year. Contact Sarah Stainton on sarsta@bps.org.uk.

**INFORMATION**

■ I GRADUATE this year and hope to get a 2:1 in psychology. At the moment I am carrying out volunteer work at a residential home for the mentally ill and will possibly be gaining work experience in some research projects at Warwick University. My interests are in **forensic and clinical psychology**. I would be most grateful to hear from anybody willing to take me on **full or part-time on a voluntary basis** in this area.  
**Lindsey Oakes**  
 3 Caterham Drive  
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 Tel: 01384 279214; e-mail: OakyLJ@aol.com

■ We are interested in using the **attention training**

**technique** developed by Adrian Wells and would appreciate feedback from anyone who has already applied this technique in therapy. We have read all relevant books and a number of journal articles outlining how to use the technique but would value information on how others have applied the technique and any problems they may have experienced. Please contact either of us with information.

**Caroline Stewart**  
**Andrew Ganley**  
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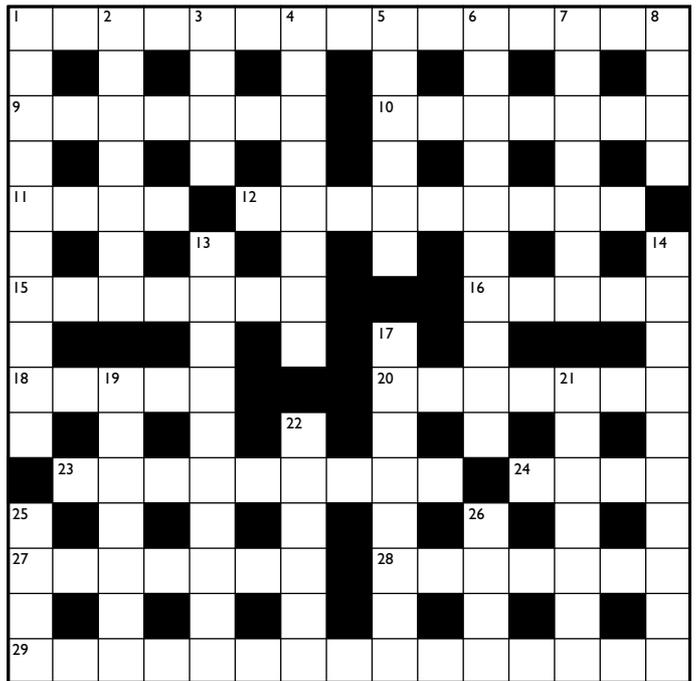
**Solution to Prize Crossword No.2**

**Across:** 1 Conditioning, 9 Rationale, 10 Canto, 11 Inlaid, 12 Sleeping, 13 Visage, 15 Estrange, 17 Sympathy, 19 Salaam, 21 Ultimate, 22 Statue, 25 Admit, 26 Imbroglio, 27 Trigger-happy. **Down:** 1 Cardiovascular, 2 Natal, 3 Ironing, 4 Imam, 5 Needless, 6 Nuclear, 7 Insignia, 8 Long-term memory, 14 Sometime, 16 Shutting, 18 Ammeter, 20 Antioch, 23 Tulip, 24 Able.

**Winner:** S. Green, London

Send entries (photocopies accepted) to: **Prize Crossword, The Psychologist, St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR. Deadline for entries is 31 May 2002. A £25 book token goes to the winner, drawn at random from all correct entries.**

**PRIZE CROSSWORD No.3**



**Across**

- 1 Confusedly, and without correlation coefficient, led them in therapy for ADHD (15)
- 9 Speaker describing bird? (7)
- 10 Books with word of introduction for the Moor of Venice (7)
- 11 Belief in vision (4)
- 12 Cheese is member involved in computerised axial tomography, initially (9)
- 15 Smuggle cars? (7)
- 16 Attempt made by the way in lover's meeting (5)
- 18 Gold garland placed back in window (5)
- 20 Target boy with a returning loss of smell (7)
- 23 Examine obstacle to deliveries (5,4)
- 24 Dismal like brain matter? (4)
- 27 Contracts for psychiatrists (7)
- 28 No vehicle taken in by a simple instrument (7)
- 29 Banged up frequently, I'm seeing the point just before it's too late (2,3,4,2,4)

**Down**

- 1 Driving force causing

movement about one

- container (10)
- 2 At that place over South America is a saint (7)
- 3 Mythical creature seen until now by one (4)
- 4 Standard weapon in a manner of speaking (8)
- 5 Took part in away match (6)
- 6 At home given greeting having sunk teeth into charged particle with unconscious restraint (10)
- 7 Increased sensitivity of partner outside work (7)
- 8 Memorandum sent up to college (4)
- 13 Cricket side given latitude to get booze from here (3-7)
- 14 Long-term girlfriend taking father to church in regular movement (6,4)
- 17 Doctor's record showing container over reserve (8)
- 19 Have the will to succeed. perhaps (7)
- 21 Spoil metal container I use for drink (7)
- 22 Tree dwarfed by Japanese gardeners? (6)
- 25 Sparkling wine in plastic container (4)
- 26 Part of leg of heifer (4)

Name.....  
 Address.....  
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