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## REPORTER'S DIGITAL HOW-TO

By Charles Bowen



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### Forget the Pop Psychology

Get the Real Stuff at Web4Health

For as long as I can remember, pop psychology has been part of pop culture. From the dinner table to the water cooler, we have bandied about terms like "mood swings," "eating disorders" and "anxiety" as if we had a degree in the stuff. Most of us don't.

The Web can bring us into contact with people who *do* know what they're talking about. Since last summer, a powerful site from Britain called Web4Health has been providing answers to hundreds of questions about post-traumatic stress syndrome, obesity, child guidance, workplace stress, sleeping problems and more. Funded by the European Union, the project fields questions and publishes answers from a team of psychological and psychiatric experts from a number of European countries.

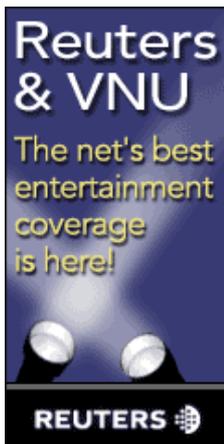
Visitors to the site can send in their own questions directly to an expert and review previously answered questions organized around topics ranging from addictions and psychotherapy to depression and phobias. Also, users are invited to take part in a variety of ongoing forums in which visitors discuss their issues anonymously, and seek advice from experts. In addition, the site features a list of recent discussions that are currently in progress, and questions that have recently been answered. And the site is quite international in its approach, offering its data in Greek, German and Swedish in addition to English.

To check it out, visit <http://www.web4health.info>, where the home page presents over a dozen clickable categories, including addiction, anorexia, bulimia, child care, depression, healthy living, instability, mood swings, obesity, phobia, psychiatric drugs, psychotherapy, relations, sex, sleeping problems, stress symptoms, workplace and more. Clicking on any of the broad topics produces a screen's worth of subtopics. For instance, if you choose "mood swings," the resulting screen has answers to questions relating to diagnosis and symptoms, causes, depression and other illnesses, classification and epidemiology, suicide and related subjects.

Also, you can search for answers in the site's growing database. Either click on the "Search" link at the top of any screen or see the data-entry box at the top of the main screen. Enter a simple question in one sentence and click the "Submit Question" button to start the search.

Other considerations for using the Web4Health.info site in your writing and editing:

1. If you write a story about the site, you might want to point out to your readers that they also can submit a question. Click the "Ask the Expert" link at the top of any screen to reach an online form that can be filled out and submitted. Note that questions and answers will be published online and



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readable by everyone. The site does have guidelines on how to protect anonymity.

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2. The site also has a public message board moderated by staff experts. Click the "Discussion" link at the top of any page for the latest.

3. For the newest developments and additions on the site, see the main page, where the right column links to the most recent discussions and the latest questions, with their dates and subjects.

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