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DENNIS CULVER

THE MORNING AFTER

OUR GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE POST-ELECTION BLUES.

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Whether you wanted Barack Obama to win or not, the election's aftermath is certainly on track to be an emotional let-down after the daily twists of 3 am ads, Jeremiah Wright and Sarah Palin over the last year.

So, if you're feeling any post-election letdown because your candidate lost or because there's just not that tension anymore to keep your blood pumping, here's some advice from an expert—Dr. Jeffrey Noethe, a 38-year-old Portland psychologist.

Noethe, a registered Independent who voted for Obama, says many other recent stressors, such as the economy, the war and the mortgage crisis, are to blame for the emotional investment so many Americans have in the election results.

"In general, anxiety and depression are high, and high hopes around the election are providing a distraction from all of that," Noethe said last week. "Once the election is over, that distraction will be gone, and we will have to find other coping strategies as the newly elected officials get to work."

According to Noethe, this may be true for people on either side of the outcome in the races between Obama and John McCain; U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) and Democratic challenger Jeff Merkley; or any of the other candidates.

"The election results will provide a sense of relief for some people and added stress for others," Noethe says. "Those who are unhappy with the results may have to deal with added stress, despair, frustration and hopelessness. Those who are happy may have to face the anticlimactic reality that their problems aren't simply going to vanish."

So if you find yourself deep in depression, just remember there's always 2012. Or Canada. But if you don't feel like waiting or fleeing, here are a few of Noethe's tips for handling anxiety and depression that may come your way Nov. 5. **WU**

1 DO WHATEVER YOU CAN TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELF. Good nutrition, exercise, sleep, pleasurable activities and exposure to nature, Noethe says, both build resiliency and fortify you against stress. Seeking support from common-minded people may be especially important if your candidate lost worse than George McGovern in 1972.

2 DON'T GET STUCK CLINGING TO HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS FROM THE PAST. Once the election is over, it's over. Find ways to move forward into that new reality, even if you don't like it. A large part of human suffering stems from our unwillingness to accept what is. We resist, we refuse, we cling, and we suffer. The faster we adapt to reality, the faster we can reduce suffering. If you don't like who won, get more directly involved in the issues that concern you.

3 IT'S OK TO BE TICKED. If you're overwhelmed by your emotions, express them. Just don't rear-end the first car you see with a bumper sticker for the opposition. This is where good supports and outlets can be invaluable. Talk to friends, write in a journal, paint a picture, or talk to a professional. Don't bury your feelings and expect to be fine.

4 LEARN STRESS-MANAGEMENT SKILLS BEFORE YOU REALLY NEED THEM. Take a yoga or meditation class, read a book, learn breathing techniques, or consult with an expert. Don't wait for your symptoms to turn severe. Think of it as a pre-emptive strike—in a good way.