

carolynhax
tell me about it

How can she find happiness with a smug guy like this?

DEAR CAROLYN:

My girlfriend graduated from college virtually skill-less a few years back, expecting to become "big-time career woman" because she had a B.A. from an American university. Reality set in, and now she is mi-hizz-erable! She is stuck in a job where she's doing the same thing as 19-year-olds. She has no clue whatsoever what she would like to do with her life, though I think I figure into the equation. We just bought a house in a beautiful town, we are in love with each other, we have a great time, but it's impossible for her to come home at night and say she had what even resembles a tolerable day. Pile on the fact that, though I don't make that much money, my job offers me fulfillment down to my very soul and afternoons off to boot. She asks how my day was, and I say, "Great! I did lots of cool and different things at work, then I got off early and paddled my kayak and went shopping and laid around for a while. Look how tan I'm getting! How was your day?" and she starts to cry. Not fun.

Happy Living With Sad
in Colorado

DEAR HAPPY:

Some people do graduate from American universities with no skills and go on to become big-time career women. Just a little something to make her cry harder.

But only if you put it that way. Between hoity degrees and (most) big-time careers lie a lot of years of boring, frustrating, lower-rung, jab-myself-with-a-stapler-to-remind-myself-I'm-alive kind of jobs. They're as necessary as they are soul-sucking; they're what weed out the people who just want big-time careers but aren't willing to put in the work. In most cases, at least, the people who appear to waltz right into their big-time careers in fact simply served their lower-rung time concurrently with school.

You have fulfilling work, true — but, remember, you're happy not to get paid much.

Obviously people feel better about their stapler years when they know it's only one or two levels on a purposeful climb, and your girlfriend lacks even that reassurance. Hers is still a climb, though, and it still has purpose: to find out what her purpose is. A goal that vast and va-

Quick fixes

Medical spas offer beauty treatments to clients on the run, but physicians advise choosing carefully

By **Nerissa Pacio**
Mercury News

Clients of Morphosis Rejuvenation Studio in San Jose can make a beauty pit stop to zap away acne, smooth pesky wrinkles and plump skinny lips — all between shopping and grabbing a latte.

"We like to call them lunchtime treatments," says Linda Levenson, a nurse practitioner and founder of Morphosis at Santana Row. "There's virtually no down time. You can get something done, put on your makeup, and go back to work. It's like running another errand."

Medical spas such as Morphosis are a fast-emerging category in the spa industry and in aesthetic medicine, proliferating in shopping centers and strip malls in the Bay Area and across the country.

For those looking for quick, relatively affordable results without going under the knife or having to take time off, these spas, also called "medspas" or "medi-spas," have taken non-invasive cosmetic procedures into an elegant, day spa setting.

With many offering luxury ambience, convenient retail locations with walk-in services and special discount packages, more and more people are tempted to choose a medspa over a traditional doctor's office. But despite the growing popularity of medspas, some physicians warn that there are potential safety hazards if facilities don't have the proper medical supervision.

"There's a huge demand" for medspas, says John Buckingham, founder of the Southern California-based national medspa chain Solana MedSpas and board member for the International Medical Spa Association, "mostly by baby boomer women in their 40s and 50s, whose kids are grown and who are now looking in the mirror saying 'Oh, my God, I don't want to look like my mother.'"

"They want to be pampered, they want these procedures done in a convenient place close to other stops they are

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M Is it better to visit a doctor or go to a spa for minor medical-related beauty treatments? Weigh in at www.mercurynews.com/living



High-tech procedures treat common complaints

Here are some of the non-invasive cosmetic procedures you'll see at medical spas, according to Vic Narurkar, Stanford University Medical School graduate, founder of the Bay Area Laser Institute and president of the American Society of Cosmetic Dermatologists and Aesthetic Surgeons:

Hottest breakthrough treatment

Fraxel

This high-speed laser, created by Reliant Technologies in Mountain View, isolates targeted areas of the skin to eliminate old epidermal cells and leaves surrounding tissues intact. Known to be safe for ethnic skin and recently received FDA clearance for treatment of acne scarring.

Up-and-coming treatment

PPX

An FDA-approved painless hair removal device created by Asthera, a Silicon Valley company founded by an engineer instrumental in inventing laser tattoo removal. It suctions the skin while applying a light treatment, and is more comfortable to use on the back, chest and legs than most other lasers.

Tried and true

Botox and Restylane

Botox is the No. 1 non-invasive cosmetic procedure used by Americans. Made by Allergan, based in Irvine, it relaxes lines between the eyebrows and forehead. Restylane, a dermal filler created by Q-Med in Sweden and marketed by Medicis Pharmaceutical in Arizona, plumps up deep folds and wrinkles.

Still in question

Titan and Thermage

These tissue-tightening technologies claim to use radio frequency and light devices to deep-heat the tissue and stimulate collagen. Titan is not approved by the FDA for cosmetic use. Thermage is FDA-approved, but shows variable results.

— Nerissa Pacio