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North Surrey Growth Centre

Development of Counselling Activities

A study of British 25 year olds, as reported in the Radio Times in connection with the recent Man Alive BBC2 Film Documentary 'Sex Therapy—The Newest Profession' (31.10.74) found that 57% had some kind of sexual problems.

Discussions conducted in some depth with various social groups reveal, beneath the surface of appearances, a surprising and disconcerting amount of sexual disharmony, frustration or dissatisfaction resulting in a considerable number of individuals being motivated to take up compensatory, albeit useful activities— including adult education classes—to mask their underlying hurt or inner loneliness.

Counsellors who minister to older age groups are acutely aware of widespread distress among their clients resulting from the absence of, or malfunctioning of, *loving* sexual relationships. By and large, up to now, those involved in counselling activities, be they professionals or voluntary workers, have acted as supportive, empathetic listeners aiding the disadvantaged to gain insight into their motivations and life-style situations while maintaining a certain 'distance' between counsellor and counsellee.

We are now seeing a new development in therapeutic learning situations whereby the counsellor is required to act more comprehensively—to become more personally

involved in the therapeutic process—and act as *empathetic listener, teacher and facilitator*. This places considerably more demands upon the therapist, in their training and in client/counsellor relationships. The employment of modern therapeutic processes, particularly in the field of sexual distress, requires the counsellor, whether alone, or as one of a male/female duo-therapy team, or in small supportive groups, to combine both ‘directive’ and ‘non-directive’ approaches whereby the person or persons at risk can act out, or act through, their problems, difficulties, fantasies or barriers to increased personal and interpersonal awareness and freedom of expression.

Some see this new development as the province of the medical profession or clinical psychologist, others see it as the realm of the Church in its pastoral caring role. We see it *equally* as the province of *Adult Education* for healthy creative living i.e. Adult Health Education, not only for the benefit of adult students but also for their families and future generations. We therefore see this development as an integral aspect of *Community Sponsorship*.

At the Seminar ‘Foundations of Community Health and Wholeness’ held at the Staines Adult Education Centre on the 26th October, 1974, Paul Cosway, Principal of the Staines and Sunbury Institute of Further Education emphasised that adult education was about social need; building of community; social change; mobility; increased social pressures; relationships; roles; participation; creativity and ‘*the opportunity to step outside the structured way of life that so many of us have and search our capacity, our beliefs and understandings and our ability to create*’.

These concepts of Adult Education, as applied to the development of human relationships and personal growth, reflect the specific contribution to community health and well-being of the North Surrey Growth Centre.

Members of the North Surrey Growth Centre have discussed together their proposed activities and work during 1975. These now include further developments in ‘Exploring Human Relationships’ classes and a Summer School at Royal Holloway College 14th-18th July; Relaxation and Health Education; Meditation; Massage and Body Awareness training including Sex Therapy education within the broad framework of dynamic integrative psychology (Psychosynthesis) and Transpersonal Psychology. Weekend training facilities are now available locally at the Institute and in Central London.

The North Surrey Growth Centre looks to the development of a *Community Counselling Service* in association with all interested persons, professions and organisations, both statutory and voluntary, having Caring Roles in the Community.

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We MUST understand love; we must be able to *teach* it, to *create* it, to *predict* it, or else the world is lost to hostility and suspicion.

(Abraham Maslow—‘Motivation and Personality’)

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