



Letters to the Editor

Dear Vivian,

I felt impelled to comment on the helpful article "Family Sexuality" by William Emerson. However in writing, I seem to be asking for help for myself, so that I may be more effective as a counsellor or befriender.

The article by William Emerson on Family Sexuality was helpful to me in coming to understand an aspect of a relationship in which I was involved which became flawed. After being widowed from a happy marriage, I met, about 18 months ago, and some three and a half years after my wife's death, a lady who attracted me. Within a very short time we had become lovers and companions and friends. I would have been happy to develop a more permanent relationship, and Chloe was not totally averse to the idea. However there was a barrier.

In Chloe's background there was a broken engagement, a divorce from a marriage in which there had been four children, and a long term relationship with another man. All these relationships were with men older than herself, and all were

flawed almost from the beginning. I was ten to eleven years older than she was, and this was not the largest gap in ages between her and the men in her life. It wasn't until I was experiencing a resistance to a prolonged, even permanent, relationship that I realised that this was a factor.

Towards the end of the close part of our relationship, Chloe expanded what she had told me of her growing up. I knew that her mother had been ill and died when she was a child (I recall age 9). As her mother's health deteriorated, her father slept in the same room as, but in a separate bed to, her. There was no physical contact as described in William Emerson's article. However, he did masturbate, apparently not as quietly as he thought. For the little girl in the other bed this was frightening and incomprehensible. She didn't even understand what he was doing until some years later. When her mother died, she was educated at boarding school, although her father continued a concerned, and overtly non-sexual, parental role. They no longer shared a bedroom.

There is, of course, the larger concern that the behaviour of Chloe's father may not be at all uncommon. One can only have sympathy for a man who was trying to lead a "decent" life and to protect and succour both his wife and his child. He would appear to have been unaware up to his death of the impact of his actions on his daughter. It may be that other parents inadvertently frighten their children through their, to the child, inexplicable behaviour.

I am concerned with Chloe. It seems to me that her emotional life carries the scar of this experience. That scar makes it difficult for her to relate to men in her life. I can perhaps explore it through questions. Is she still seeking a loving, non-sexually threatening, father? How does a man in her life help her? She is sexually attractive and would like to become more balanced in the emotional aspects of that life. How can an emotionally involved man explore with her the import of her youthful experience? Her youngest son is having bed wetting problems, and as the one parent in the family, is she likely to be threatening her son's sexual future? In her love and concern for her son, she sought advice from me as the man in her life, but would not let me participate in the practical solutions of the problem. The birth of her children has left her with physical scars on which she focuses some of her feeling of sexual inadequacy. How can an emotionally involved man help her realise that she is a loving and lovely

companion, friend and person, and that the scars she imagines are not important? It may be possible to use that imagined physical scarring to release the emotional scarring, but shouldn't it come from someone outside the physical and emotional contact that I have had with her?

We are still in contact. I still have some influence. It must be clear from my concern that I would like to restore our previous closeness, but I hope my love is big enough to help Chloe without hope of any "reward" or "favours". Helping her not hurt, so she can lead a larger life, is important.

HELP!

Yours with affection

Martin Rainwater
Winchester.

Dear Self and Society,

Thank you very much for printing my article 'Rebirthing - Its History, Theories and Practices' in the Sept/Oct '84 Self and Society. Proof-reading seems to have slipped with this article: the fourth paragraph about Leonard Orr's past history is missing; you have left in numbers in brackets, 1 to 36, dotted throughout the article - these refer to notes and bibliography, but you have not printed these notes - readers wanting them please send me an SAE.

With best wishes,

Nicholas Albery
