



## CO-COUNSELLING

# Introduction

David Jones

---

Co-counselling has two features which were central to the Human Potential Movement of the 1970s and are to a lesser extent still valued today: self-help, and 'emotional discharge'. Ruth Green describes the early days of co-counselling, but with a greater appreciation of boundaries and the potential for transgression than the Human Potential Movement itself showed 25 years ago. John Talbut is excited by Co-counselling International, an organisation 'without the need for all the conventional trappings of organisation', and by the encouragement of catharsis in what he says is 'a society that is anti-cathartic'. His comment that 'a lot of therapy' shows an 'unwillingness to work with emotion and a failure to deal with power issues between therapist and client' will strike a chord with some readers of *Self & Society*. Bernard Springer writes about John Heron's attempt to create a paradigm shift. Jo Saunders describes the structure

and functioning of Re-evaluation Counselling, the system from which Co-counselling International emerged.

Throughout these articles we can see the interplay between the subversive or counter-cultural aspects of co-counselling therapy and its more controversial tendency to deny that people who become attached to a particular approach also become attached to, and dependent on, a leader, sometimes very strongly. Another negative aspect lies in its conceptual muddle about feelings and emotions. Co-counsellors don't usually acknowledge that although we can learn more skilful and appropriate ways of accessing and expressing (or discharging) feelings, such as anger and fear, we cannot do the same with emotions. Attempts to discharge emotional states, such as rage and terror, lead to re-traumatisation. This may sometimes have a place in therapy, but is a very different process from the discharge of feelings. However, in spite of these limitations I believe experience of co-counselling to be a must for anyone who works with people.

---

### Further Reading

Rose Evison and Richard Horobin, 'Co-counselling', in John Rowan and Windy Dryden (eds) *Innovative Therapy in Britain*, OUP, 1988

David Jones, *Innovative Therapy: A Handbook*, OUP, 1994

*David Jones is the commissioning editor for Self & Society.*