

Platt Bridge. April - June 1992

The Aim of this Course was to increase members self esteem so that they would begin to implement changes to a more healthy way of living. The course title was, 'Cut the crap - are you really prepared to take yourself seriously?'.
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The Objectives were:-

1. To examine relaxation, smoking, relationships, eating, and sexual behaviour, in a flexible person-centred manner, responsive to the developing and changing needs of the group.
2. To introduce practical ideas from complementary therapies to promote 'self-help' health care.

The Group - initially consisted of 8 young women. 5 completed the course. The 3 who did not left because one had just had a baby, one found paid work, one moved to Golborne.

Sessions There were 7 two hour sessions, led by Pauline Veal, a trained counsellor, hypnotherapist, and a recent graduate of the Person-Centred Expressive Therapy Institute, Santa Rosa, California.

Content

Relaxation Training was done in each session. Initially the group found this difficult, and there was much giggling. By the penultimate session, they had really learned to relax, and looked forward to this activity. Methods taught included whole body muscle relaxation, the five breath technique, hypnotic relaxation, and the tree of life.

Smoking was only tackled obliquely, since Relationships & Family

Violence turned out to be a much more live, current, and urgent issue for the group.

Relationships & Violence were dealt with over two sessions. Violence in the home was being experienced by several group members, either as victims of a violent father or partner, or as protagonists, in their 'hitting' of their own children and toddlers. The issue of anger was thoroughly explored.

One member found the work too emotionally demanding, and left the group for parts of sessions, but also returned and completed the whole course. Another had practical help from other group members, outside the group, in getting rid of a partner who was abusing her and her children.

One very revealing comment from a group member talking about her child:

'I really wonder how ----- feels when I'm hitting him'.

Self awareness was growing.

Sexual Behaviour was not a popular topic - group members knew the vocabulary of safe sex, but were not keen to examine sexuality in any depth.

Eating The sessions about healthy eating and body image were hilarious, enjoyable, and valuable. Members had clear ideas about why diets dont work, and talked about family eating patterns and budgeting. They made practical, negotiated menus for a group weekend away. They had a chance to try out, and laugh at the Diet Cookies 'Eat Cake & Lose Weight' - which they pronounced disgusting.

Their conclusion was that healthy eating was an important means of loving and caring for themselves.

Complementary Therapies

The group found the movement and art therapy work difficult. It was probably introduced too soon in the course.

The Aromatherapy & Massage sessions were successful and enjoyable. Members learned the uses of essential oils, and to give a hand, a face, and a back massage. They were given bottles of essential oils to use at home.

Conclusion

Although the Eating & Aromatherapy & Massage sessions were the most enjoyed by the group members, the sessions on Violence were probably the most valuable, in exploring a difficult area, and having immediate practical outcomes.

On such a short course - there could only be an introduction to very complex issues. However it did give group members a chance to experiment, and increase self awareness.