

Hydrophobia: Egan will help you take a dive

By BYRON ACOHIDO
Of the Emerald

Anybody afraid of water would find himself in a nightmare here in the land of liquid sunshine. But phobias are real, as any psychologist will tell you, and there are people who shudder at the sight of a swimming pool or even find it difficult to take a shower.

Sean Egan, a doctoral candidate from Ireland, thinks he has found a way to cure people suffering from hydrophobia. All he needs is for a few "patients" to sign up for the P.E. department's beginning swimming course.

Egan will be conducting a treatment method called "systematic desensitization" aimed at overcoming the fear of water. The method has been used successfully in overcoming other types of phobias such as fear of height, fire and

people, but, according to Egan, it has yet to be applied to fear of water.

"This is a behaviorist's approach," Egan said, describing the treatment in terms of psychology. "Behaviorists believe everything is learned, including fears, and if you can learn something you can unlearn it."

The treatment consists of three segments which a person moves through at his own pace. First, tapes are used to teach the subject to relax various muscle groups. According to Egan, a recorded voice will direct the person to relax different groups of muscles until the entire body is totally at ease.

"Physiologically speaking you cannot relax and be tense at the same time," says Egan, "So if you relax you can't be tense in a situation."

The next step, then, is to build a "heirarchy of scenes" in the subject's mind. This means getting the person to

relax while imagining being near a body of water. After learning to relax in the imagined situation, the student can progress to the next scene which brings him or her closer to the water. Eventually, the person would be completely relaxed while imagining being completely submerged in water.

The final state of "systematic desensitization" is essentially the same as the second stage except that the situations are carried out in real life.

Egan, who also holds down a job as programs director at the Oakway Spa, has already had some success with one hydrophobic this past summer. After applying desensitizing treatment, Egan says encouraging progress was made.

"This guy couldn't put his head under water at all," he says. "It took him two weeks to relax with the tapes and another three weeks to get through the next two stages. Now he can dive right to

the bottom and swim the length of the pool."

Why do people suffer from phobias? Egan says there are two psychological approaches to the question.

"Freudians say it's because you didn't get enough affection as a child or because you have a sexually oriented problem deep down in the unconscious mind, and once the individual recognizes what his problem is, then he's okay."

"But this is not true. The individual may know what his problem is, but he still can't get over it. Whereas, the behaviorist isn't worried about why it all happened, he's worried about changing it."

If water is your hangup, Egan is anxious to help. Anyone interested should get into Beginners Swimming CPE 143 which is offered at 9:30 Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Convention attracts student

By JACKMAN WILSON
Of the Emerald

What goes on at a national convention of the Young Socialists Alliance?

Brad Wiedmaier, an architecture student at the University, traveled to Milwaukee over Christmas vacation to serve as a delegate to the five-day event.

The convention marked the 15th anniversary of the oldest socialist revolutionary youth group in the nation. Delegates heard speakers, including Peter Camejo, Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate, and drafted a number of resolutions on domestic and international affairs.

Wiedmaier says the YSA considered "rebuilding a movement for passage of the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) that was militant and independent of the Democratic party" a high priority.

The YSA also supports the pro-busing struggle in Boston, where Wiedmaier says "the ruling classes have decided to move against desegregation." Wiedmaier concedes busing is not the

perfect answer to racial inequality, but adds "racism is even more irrational."

"We think that the majority of people are oppressed," Wiedmaier says. The YSA is a Marxist-Leninist organization, and support of the ERA and busing is explained in terms of class struggle.

Wiedmaier says a revolutionary party such as the YSA can support Peter Camejo's electoral campaign without compromising its revolutionary ideals. "The reason we participate in the election,"

Wiedmaier says, "is because that's when most Americans are thinking about the political process. It would be non-revolutionary to pass up a chance to educate people."

Another critical issue for the YSA is trend towards higher tuition at colleges and universities. Wiedmaier says tuition increases are racist because the first people who are forced to leave school for financial reasons are minority students. "We think there is money enough for education for everyone in society," Wiedmaier says.

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