

Got problems? Get help at the...



By NANCY MARSHALL
Of the Emerald

There is a place for people who want to overcome fear, calm anxieties, surmount insomnia, prevent child-family problems and deal with sexual problems. It is called the Behavior Change Center.

The center, which opened in October, 1977, has three counselors — Tony Biglan, David Campbell and Nancy Hawkins. They have treated more than 60 cases, according to Biglan.

The counselors help people decide on a goal and then plan a procedure for attaining it. Biglan emphasizes that the staff "tries to relate to what the persons want to change." He says it is the client's decision, along with the counselor's advice, of what goals to set, not just the counselor simply telling them what they should change.

"People are able to make good decisions by themselves," he adds, "but the clinic is not into value judgments."

Biglan explains the procedure used in treating clients who have one of the problems in which the center specializes.

"In dealing with phobias, the most common are fears of snakes, spiders, taking tests, flying in airplanes, riding in cars and speaking to groups."

The center takes students who are nervous about tests, he cites as an example. Before anything else, counselors would find out if the student ever learned to study effectively, he says.

"If they never learned, we check to see if he had the study skills to teach him. If not, we would then send the student to the Learning Resource Center on Campus."

If the student did learn to study, but still blanks out on tests, Biglan advises counseling.

"First, we get the person to relax," says Biglan, "and counselor and client cover situations and specific things that make the person nervous. This includes daily practice sessions."

"A student might hear his professor say a test will be given on May 3, and right away the student gets nervous. Or a student might get extremely nervous five minutes before a test."

"Second," Biglan continues, "the client takes the different situations that makes him nervous and puts them in a hierarchy, from the least felt fear to whatever makes him most nervous. Clients write a list of these items."

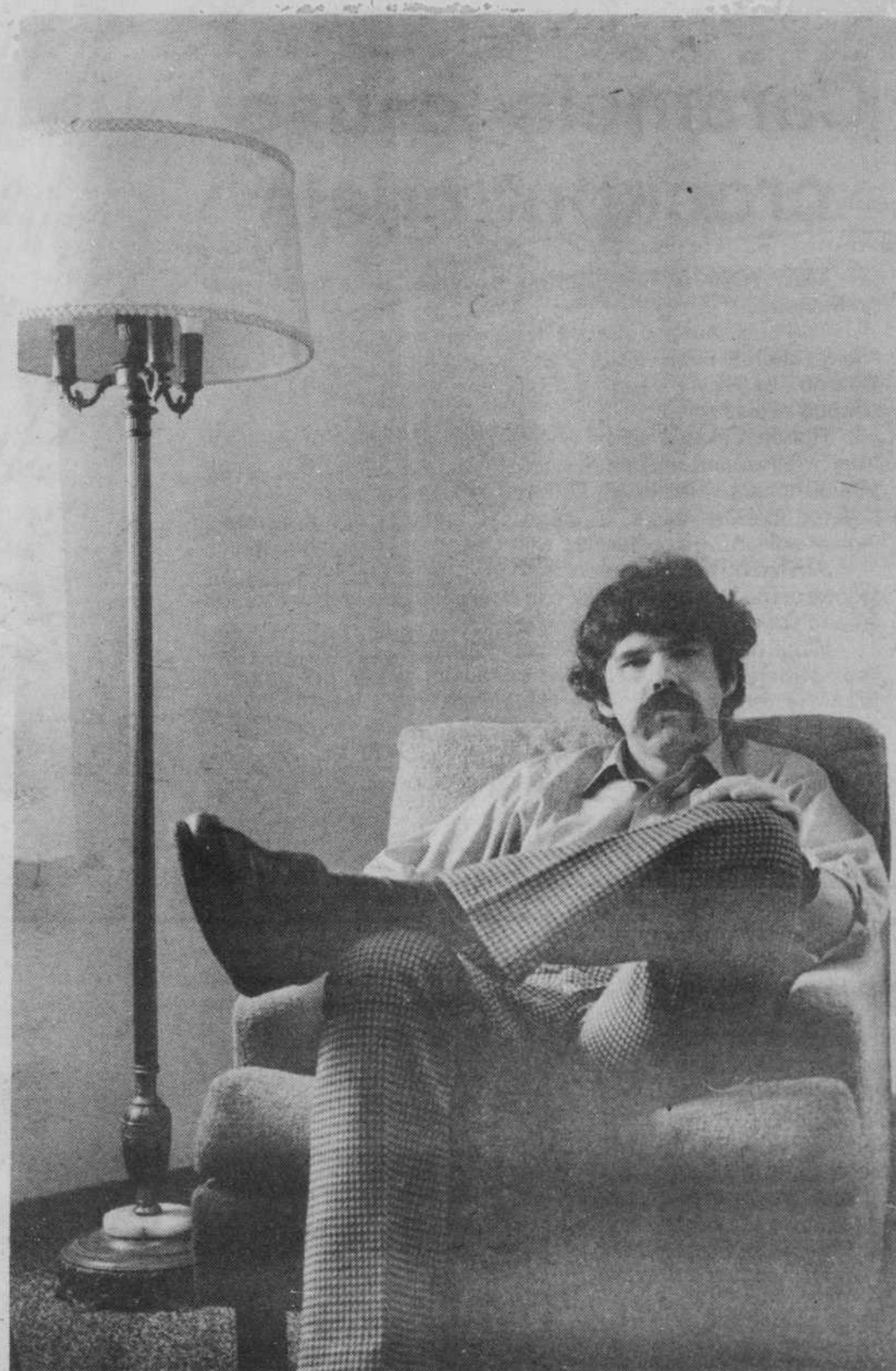
"Third, the counselor asks the client to image the fears one at a time, from the least nervous to the biggest fear."

"I might tell the student to close his eyes and try to imagine the first fear on the list by describing it to him. The student remains relaxed, imagines the fear for several seconds and if he feels no anxiety goes to the next fear on his list, imagines it and continues along down the paper."

Biglan explains that if he does feel anxiety, the counselor has the student imagine the fear repeatedly until the nervousness is gone.

So far these procedures are done in session with the counselor, except for the client's "homework" between sessions. The "homework" Biglan says, is imagining the fears at home without the help of a counselor.

"People, when they're nervous, usually think in a negative manner. For example they'll say 'I'm gonna blow this test!' This final procedure in helping the person overcome his fear teaches him to relax and think positively by saying 'getting uptight won't help.'"



Photos by Dennis Hickok

For people with phobias, anxieties, insomnia and other problems, the Behavior Change Center may be the place for them. Tony Biglan, one of three counselors, says at the center both the client and the counselor decide on achievement goals for the client, not just the counselor.

The staff at the center emphasizes four specializations (fear, child-family problems, sexual problems and insomnia) for three main reasons, says Biglan.

"One, we've had past experience in working with those kinds of problems. Two, research done on the problems indicates there have been effective procedures devised in dealing with these problems."

"Third, by specializing in these areas, the center will get better and better at counseling as they go along, thus becoming more efficient. By becoming more efficient the cost to the client will be brought down."

Biglan adds that the center will work with other problems, but it won't specialize because clear ways of dealing with them have not been developed yet.

The first half-hour of the initial visit is free for the client to obtain more information about the center. For individual treatments the basic fee is \$7 for 15 minutes and \$21 for a 45-minute session. All counseling is confidential.

The center is located at 1651 Main St. in Springfield. The number to call is 726-5563.



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