

Singles adjust to life on their own

By LORRAINE NELSON
Of the Emerald

Current statistics indicate that eight out of 10 marriages in Oregon end in divorce. For Lane County, the figures are higher.

No one reason can be cited for divorce, according to Linda Sherman and Polly Jamison, University doctoral candidates in clinical psychology.

But Sherman speculates, that a changing society, new roles for women and different rates of growth between partners in a marriage could be contributing factors.

Sherman and Jamison are currently involved in a Separation Adjustment Program conducted by Stephen Johnson, a University associate professor of psychology, and Peter Alevizos, a research psychologist. The program is designed to explore adjustment to single life.

All participants in the program attend a weekend counseling workshop — a three-day intense, engineered experience geared toward personal growth.

The workshops center around "disengagement" — letting go, saying goodbye to one's partner — and social interaction.

To help "singled" individuals become more in touch with their feelings, assignments for social contacts are given during the workshop. The assignments are tailored to where each participant is in the disengagement process.

Sherman says the workshop elicits a feeling of sharing among participants when they realize there are other people going through the same experience.

The first workshop was held July 14 and attracted 18 participants, the majority of them from Lane County. The second session will begin on August 11. To register for the workshop or for more information, call 686-4960.

The program is part of an on-going research project on post-separation adjustment started by Johnson, a man "singled" four years ago. The research was first funded by internal support at the University, then by a small research grant. In 1976, Johnson received a three-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

In his book, "First Person Singular: Living the Good Life Alone" (1975), Johnson describes separation as "perhaps life's most difficult assignment."



Emerald graphic

He says that "intense and disturbing emotional turmoil is the common experience."

"The feeling of being overwhelmed by unfamiliar, unexpected, and frightening emotions is normal, the fear of being totally unable to meet new and even old responsibilities is normal; the fear of losing complete control is normal; the fear of a breakdown, of going crazy is normal," Johnson says.

Johnson has collected data on post-separation adjustment in California and Oregon. Information from "singled" individuals who participated in a group therapy session in Eugene last year was gathered along with material from people who have undergone no treatment at all.

Contact will be maintained for one year with this summer's workshop participants, and the three groups will later be compared.

Sherman says the researchers are looking for the best way to help people adjust to separation.

They want to know if a treatment program is better than time, and if so, what kind of program.

The researchers have identified three common stages experienced during the adjustment period.

- There is the "crisis," where life abruptly changes and "everything is different, everything is new," Jamison says. The average length of a "crisis" is about one year.
- The social adjustment period, where people need to get involved in new relationships, but forget how to date or don't know what is socially appropriate. Sherman says she is out to dispel the myth that singles bars are the only places to meet people.
- The "Who am I?" personal growth period.

"Many people find they have an opportunity to grow they didn't have in their relationship," Sherman says. "It's a growth-provoking experience."

Many people experience personal problems and they tend to blame the other person for their problems, Sherman says. "Blame is really important," she says.

"However, many of those problems come up again, when the other person is not around, and you discover that you come in to the relationship with those problems."

DUFFY'S



Special Encore
Performance

The Gong Show

August 5

Limited seating so come early
The fun starts at 8 — Don't miss it!

The Gong Show

THERE IS A
DIFFERENCE!

OUR
40th
YEAR

PREPARE FOR

MCAT
LSAT · GMAT
GRE · VAT · DAT
OCAT · SAT
NAT'L MED BDS
NAT'L DENT BDS
NURSING BDS
ECFMG
FLEX
VQE

Stanley H. KAPLAN
EDUCATIONAL
CENTER

CLASSES BEGIN

Sept. 30 MCAT...8/15, 9/13
Oct. 7 DAT...8/10, 9/10
Oct. 14 SAT...8/15, 9/13
Oct. 21 GRE...8/14, 9/19
Oct. 28 GMAT...8/27, 9/26
Nov. 4 SAT...8/26, 9/22
Dec. 2 LSAT...10/7, 10/24
Dec. 2 SAT...10/30
Dec. 9 GRE...10/15, 11/14

Free Orientation
The Galleria,
600 S.W. 10th
Portland
222-5556