

Therapists lead discussion on healthy relationships

■ Counselors skewer myths, saying communication is key

By Kara Cogswell
Oregon Daily Emerald

In the movie Jerry Maguire, Jerry wins Dorothy's heart by telling her "you complete me."

When couples fall in love on-screen, it's usually a perfect match, but off-screen, looking to a significant other for "completion" is not a good idea, University therapist Jason Greif said.

"You're probably not going to find someone who fulfills your every need," he said.

In honor of Valentine's Day, Greif and three other therapists from the University Counseling Center led a discussion about relationships in the EMU Ben Linder Room Thursday afternoon. They talked about what to expect — and not to expect — from a partner, as well as what it takes to form a healthy relationship.

About 20 students attended, including freshmen Chrystal Price and Emily Loverde.

They said the discussion made them think about their own relationship experiences. Loverde added that she liked that the therapists brought up relationship myths.

"You know in the back of your mind that they're myths, but it was helpful to acknowledge that," she said.

Greif and therapist Allison Lau discussed several common misconceptions people often have about relationships, including the idea that "fighting is bad," Lau said.

A good relationship can have conflicts, she said. What is important is that both partners have compatible "conflict styles" — meaning that they can work through the

problem together.

People often mistakenly believe that their partners are responsible for filling all their emotional needs, Lau said.

"Maybe your partner doesn't give you the emotional support you need, but that doesn't mean he's not good for you," she said.

Friends and nonromantic relationships can be other sources of support, she said.

Therapist Dan Smith, who talked about how couples can improve communication, said once couples move beyond the initial infatuation stage, women often want to start talking about the relationship before men.

"Men really are from Mars, and women really are from Venus," he said. "At least in terms of how we approach emotional (issues) and being genuine," he said.

Relationships don't usually end because one person falls in love with somebody else, he said. More often, relationships break down because partners can't communicate with one another.

Sometimes seemingly insignificant personal habits, such as leaving the toilet seat up or even hanging clothing articles up to dry in the shower, can lead to relationship problems if someone is annoyed by their partner's behavior but won't talk about it.

"If a relationship's going to survive, eventually you have to bring these things up," he said.

Couples should watch out for indications that their relationship is in trouble, therapist Carina Esteban said. Esteban, who talked about how to build a healthy relationship, said criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stone-walling between

Free relationship therapy for students is available at the University Counseling Center

Winter term drop-in counseling hours:

Monday: 9 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m.

Tuesday and Wednesday: 10 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m.

Thursday: 11 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m.

Friday: 11 a.m.-noon and 1-3 p.m.

For more information, contact the Counseling Center at 346-3227. The Counseling Center is located in the University Health and Counseling Center building.

Source: University Health and Counseling Center

partners are four signs the relationship is in "a downward spiral."

The key for couples is to balance out negative aspects of their relationship with many more positive aspects — such as joking with each other, and showing affection, concern and support for one another.

Free couples therapy is available to students at the Counseling Center, Smith said. Students in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships are encouraged to come, he said. Interested couples can stop by the Counseling Center during normal drop-in hours. Both partners should attend the session, he said.

Although creating a healthy relationship can be difficult, the end result can make it worthwhile, Lau said.

"That's why relationships are so special," Lau said. "They're one of the things in life where jumping in and taking a risk may be worth it."

E-mail student activities editor Kara Cogswell at karacogswell@dailyemerald.com.

News brief

EWEB may increase rates

Eugene Water and Electric Board customers may see their rates raised — again. The board proposed a 6 percent increase, which would mark the second increase in less than six months. The utility raised power rates 36 percent last November.

EWEB's board of directors met Tuesday to discuss ways to raise

money for the utility, which is facing a \$40 million deficit caused by last summer's energy shortage and EWEB's purchase of power from high-priced brokers this past winter.

A 6 percent rate increase would amount to \$5.00 more on a student's monthly bill, and EWEB spokesman Marty Douglass said the proposal would raise \$13.7 million over the next two years.

Additional ideas suggested by the board included freezing pay

and benefits for EWEB's employees this year, which would save \$800,000, and tinkering with accounting methods to push payment on EWEB's building and structures into future years.

The board will meet again Feb. 19 to further discuss the issue. If the 6 percent increase is improved, there will be a public hearing in March to discuss the plan, and the new rates will hit customers in April.

— Brook Reinhard



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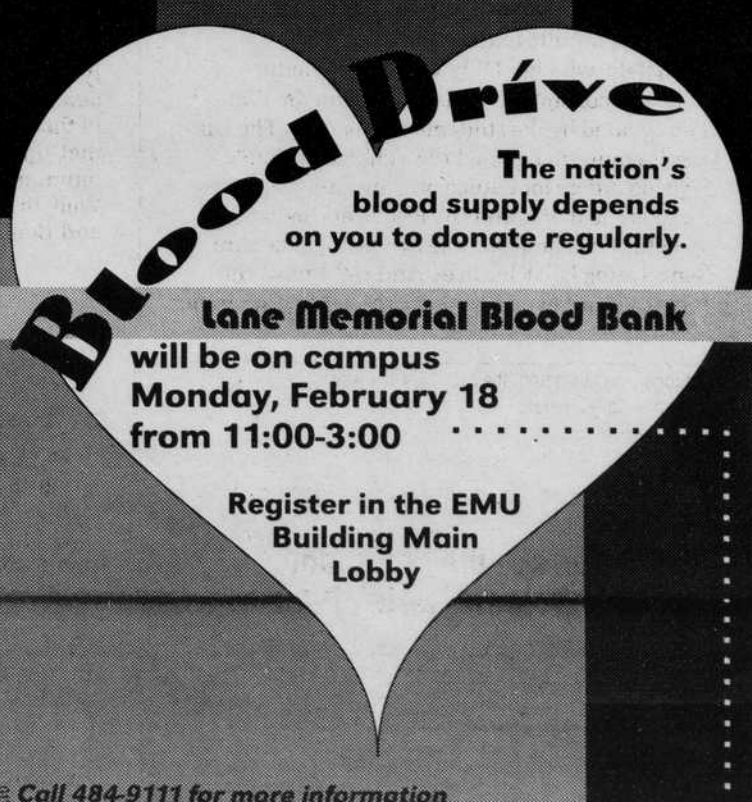
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