

York's EGO series

Three-day workshop on Open Marriage

By ROSEMARY McCracken

For the sum of \$155, couples can participate in a weekend opportunity to enhance their intimacy.

Sy Silverburg, 31, general practitioner in downtown Toronto, stresses it is totally the individual's responsibility for what he gets out of the weekend, held once monthly at the Silverburg's farm in the Collingwood area.

Open Marriage, sponsored by York University's Centre for Continuing Education, is part of a series of courses, lectures and workshops termed Education and Growth Opportunities (EGO). EGO specializes in "exploring and developing those areas of our personalities that were stunted or warped while we were busy being adults".

ACT LIKE COMPUTERS

Silverburg's initiation in personal growth happened three years ago when he participated in an Introduction to Encounter (EGO) workshop which, stated Silverburg, "emphasized awareness of how people all get into behaving in socially accepted ways which may not have anything to do with how we feel. We all act a lot like computers."

"Role playing is particularly ap-

parent in couples. One of the main problems in marriages is socially predetermined roles. I became aware of a lot of unused potential in Introduction to Encounter, and was determined to apply similar techniques on a couple-oriented basis."

Silverburg, graduate in medicine from the University of Toronto, said the most common role played in marriage was the male-female role, in which men and women are supposed to conform to society's images of masculine and feminine behavior. Husband-wife roles, which include doing and behaving as husbands and wives rather than as people (such as rigidly defined husband-wife household duties), follow hand-in-hand with male-female roles.

INDIVIDUAL GROWTH

While workshops in encounter and communications are hardly uncommon in Toronto-University of Toronto gives a three-day workshop in communication, and the YMCA offers emotional learning courses—there are a few marriage-oriented attempts toward individual growth. The YMCA offers a course in male-female relations, but this is for individuals who have problems relating to the op-

posite sex.

The couples Silverburg and his wife, Barbara, work with are not necessarily in trouble. "We try to differentiate between growth and psychotherapy, and deal with people who are dissatisfied with their lives rather than persons who have emotional problems."

Basing their philosophy of marriage on Nena and George O'Neill's book, Open Marriage, the Silverburgs, through a combination of encounter, sensory awareness, transactional analysis and Gestalt techniques, attempt to allow couples to experience the possibility in an open marriage for both partners to exist and grow as individuals.

Friday evening, the workshop begins on a casual note by attempting to get some idea of the couple's expectations for the weekend. Tension and anxiety are eased by relaxation exercises for both the body and the mind, based on the principle that the person who has not learned to relax will lose a great deal of energy through nervous tension.

COUPLE COMMUNICATION

Saturday and Sunday are geared toward couple communication. Exercises are employed to break tension barriers between partners. Basic movement exercises are used on the premise that movement is a powerful method of communication: advancing, retreating, nodding and pointing all can reveal ideas or emotions.

The workshops ends on Sunday with

a final group-sharing-session in which individuals verbalize and attempt to integrate their experiences during the weekend.

"Open Marriage tries to illustrate that you yourself are responsible for your life and that there is not some super power controlling your destiny," Silverburg said.

Silverburg stressed that open marriage is not mate swapping. "It is a relationship between two people based on equality so that each member can grow."

"The concept of open marriage is counter to our society's belief of 'togetherness'. In order to become that much of a unit means giving up a lot of one's individuality, giving up everything of your personality which is not complementary to the other person. How often have we heard someone say, 'for the sake of the relationship, I'll give up my friends, my habits? It is totally unrealistic to believe any one person can fulfill the needs of any individual.'"

HUSBAND-WIFE TEAM

Barbara Silverburg conducts the weekend workshop jointly with her husband.

"When we deal with couples, Sy and I can really learn from them," she said.

"Before Sy became interested in personal growth, we were good friends, but like most couples, we hid much of our feelings from each other. Then Sy came home from the Introduction to Encounter workshop and started pouring out his feelings, and it was great. Now, a lot of the things we tell each other are painful, but it's so good to be able to be completely honest."

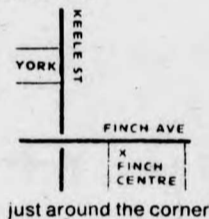
Mrs. Silverburg conducts small sessions for women in her home, in an attempt to increase self-awareness and personal growth. These sessions, according to Mrs. Silverburg, are not consciousness-raising—I'm not into women's liberation but are focused at increasing individuality in women who must stay in the home.

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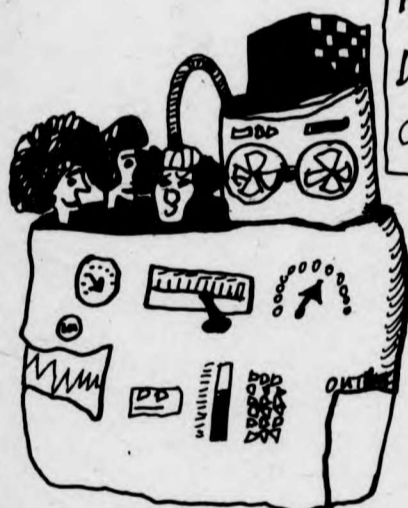
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Interested students should apply in writing, stating qualifications, to the Business Administrator, York Student Federation, Room N111 Ross Building, York University, Downsview M3J 1P3, no-later than 5 p.m., January 31, 1974.