

A common problem for college age males is the question, "Am I gay, or homosexual?" A client may have come to label himself as such, based on inaccurate or totally false information: "I must be homosexual because I've never made it with a girl." "Three years ago when I was a freshman, my roommate and I were drunk and got it on." After one has eliminated outright mislabelings such as these, it is most important to explore a detailed sex history in order to lead the client through a comparison of the quality and quantity of his relationships with men. Once these areas have been explored it is often possible for the client to come to a better understanding of his current situation.

Another common problem is seen in couple relationships -- fidelity, infidelity, "open marriage," etc. Many of these problem areas are no different than those of heterosexual couples. Often the desire for a permanent "home base" relationship is in direct conflict with a desire to "trick out." This conflict may exist in the same person or separately in a couple. Although some authors maintain society pushes gay couples apart, I maintain that there are few social pressures to keep the couple together. It appears that the key to a successful open relationship is a positive self-concept for each partner that is not dependent on the relationship.

Self-acceptance and socialization are probably the most common and difficult problems for gays. Unfortunately the counselor alone can do little in these areas. The client may in time feel accepted by the counselor and perhaps on a few isolated occasions have opportunity to socialize with the counselor. He may be told of gay bars and even introduced to gay friends of the counselor. However, these efforts are likely to have minimal positive input for the client.

In order for a gay to have the greatest opportunity for personal growth and socialization in a setting in which he can have most control, he should be encouraged to become involved in the activities of a gay organization, whose prime focus is not political activism. Such an organization should sponsor consciousness-raising groups, social occasions, and special interest groups such as politics, art, or gourmet cooking. The C-R group of six to ten people meeting weekly for a semester with a qualified facilitator is the best chance for a gay, especially one who has just "come out," to become more accepting of self and more sharing with others.