

PROFESSIONALS ANONYMOUS
(A Branch of Persons First)

WHY PROFESSIONALS BECOME SEVERELY, PROFOUNDLY AND MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED
--AND WHY WE SHOULD BE SYMPATHETIC AND TOLERANT TOWARDS THEM

- *The long years of segregated educational experience and high salaries imposed upon professionals have removed them from having to deal with the day-to-day facts of the real world.
- *Professionals are labelled persons (Ph.D., Specialist, Manager, Therapist, etc.) and are expected to behave in conformity with the label. They are not perceived by others as typical, ordinary people.
- *They are excessively dependent on relationships with a small, segregated group of people who share the same or similar handicaps. They are deprived of socially integrating social experiences.
- *Due to isolation, they are impaired in their speech development and communication skills, thereby gradually losing the ability to communicate with members of the broader community. This reinforces the social isolation of the professional.
- *They have difficulty expressing warmth and normal human emotions, not because they are inhuman, but because they have been deprived of the normal experiences and relationships which nurture emotional development in most of us.
- *Professionals are excessively influenced by their peers, and have few opportunities to experience appropriate consequences of their behaviour in ordinary settings and circumstances with ordinary individuals.
- *They are not unable to develop and change, but are merely delayed or slow in learning from typical experiences because of their long history of social isolation, coupled with frequent reinforcement of maladaptive and inappropriate patterns of behaviour.
- *They are oversensitive and underconfident due to their lack of success experiences in the outside world, from which they frequently retreat. Obviously, presentation of punishment, criticism and other aversive consequences for their behaviour only serves to reinforce the professional's typical patterns of withdrawal, avoidance and inappropriate aggressive behaviour. Clearly, punishment is an ineffective means of modifying deeply entrenched professional behaviour. More humane means will have to be developed to modify manifestations of professional behaviour.
- *Because their experiences are different - and less fortunate - than ours, professionals cannot be expected to quickly grasp even the more obvious aspects of human behaviour and day to day events in the real world. We must be tolerant of them as they struggle to grasp concepts and ideas which are readily apparent to most of the rest of us.
- *Because they are handicapped by the condition of professionalism, most persons who are professionals will require above average support and assistance even to deal with the day-to-day responsibilities of the real world. We believe that the human interests of professionals should be represented by ordinary members of the community, who, in the context of a freely-given relationship, will choose to represent

the professional's needs and interests as his or her own. Without effective advocacy on their behalf, it is probable that most professionals will continue to lead lives of isolation and loneliness, dependent for their basic relationship needs on a diminishing core of like-minded but similarly devalued people.

- *Professionals are childlike and dependent, relying as they do for approval on a narrow cadre of professional managers and administrators who by and large share the same disabilities and handicaps which they do, often in an even more intense and disturbing form.
- *Professionals are trapped within a system they did not make, which slots them into pre-existing positions - many in institutional settings - which have little or no relevance to the professional's pressing needs for personal autonomy, growth and development. Positions for professionals should instead be tailored in accord with the strengths and needs of each professional as an individual, and appropriately documented in an appropriate Individual Career Plan (I.C.P.) developed on the professional's behalf by his own Nondisciplinary Team.
- *The social network of professionals is highly restricted. Professionals suffer from non-separation of the vocational function. In other words, they are dependent on relationships with their coworkers for much if not most of their personal/social needs outside the vocational setting. Therefore, they tend to become excessively dependent for their personal needs on relationships with people called "clients". As a result, these "clients" frequently find relationships with professionals to be very exhausting. People who enter into such "client relationships" with professionals are subject to "burnout", particularly because professionals typically seem ungrateful and tend to show little progress, even over the duration of many sessions. Client burnout is further frustrating to the professional, who typically has little insight, and often responds by seeking out relationships with new clients, where the same maladaptive behaviour patterns will be recapitulated. The professional is trapped in a cycle of nonproductive relationships which is essentially self-perpetuating.
- *Finally, it can now be seen clearly that professionals are cast into a lifelong "ascendancy career" which begins to re-shape and dominate every aspect of the professional's life. The fact is, the professional is in a "double-bind" situation (q.v. Bateson) from which the mode of extrication is not immediately apparent. If on the one hand the professional fails to assess, publish, prescribe and ascend, he or she is likely to become abandoned and forgotten, rejected even by his peers. If, on the other hand, the professional does ascend into the condition of manager, administrator, consultant or policy-maker, the person will inevitably become increasingly isolated from knowledge and experience of the contingencies of the day-to-day world in which most of us live. Thus, isolation and reinforcement of the condition of professionalism itself is the inevitable end of the ascendancy career of the professional. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that maladaptive or bizarre behaviours and emotional problems are a typical condition of professionals. It is for all of these reasons that we must learn to treat professionals with compassion and tolerance, understanding and accepting their unique and special needs.

Professionals Anonymous is an independent, non-profit, tax-exempt charitable foundation serving and representing people everywhere who live with the condition of professionalism. Submitted below are two alternative proposals which seek to address the root causes of this pervasive and troubling social problem.

PRINCIPLES

In order to meet the very special needs of the people whom we call professionals, our organization adheres to the twin principles of Deprofessionalization and Normalization.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Deprofessionalization means making available conditions of living in the real world which make it unnecessary for any individual to live with the condition of professionalism, particularly in congregated, segregated institutional settings.

Normalization means the use of methods which are culturally valued in order to promote behaviour, interpretations and settings for professionals which are as culturally valued or "normative" as possible.

PROPOSAL #1: AN EXPERIMENTAL AND DEMONSTRATION REALWEX PROJECT

That there should be a comprehensive system of community-based services with a fixed point of responsibility which is charged with the full authority of the community to procure and otherwise arrange individualized, deprofessionalized and normalized Real World Experiences (RealWex) for persons who live with the condition of professionalism. This system should be fully accountable to the community and to the interests of every person who is a professional and every family who lives (or attempts to live) with a professional.

PROPOSAL #2 (ALTERNATIVE):

PREAMBLE

*To abandon the present-day technical approach of developing a formal, systematic program for meeting the human needs of professionals.

APPROACH

*Will identify key rural-minded citizens in each community who have very warm hearts, are sympathetic to the plight of professionals, and who care!

*Will avoid training these people.

*Will avoid unnecessary exposure of rural-minded citizens to groups of professionals (known as professional organizations), as they inevitably function to disrupt and isolate non-professional (adaptive) behaviour. Professional organizations are viewed as a symptom of the problem, and depend upon their progressively more disabled professional members for self-perpetuation. This proposal will deal with the problem of professional organizations by rendering them non-viable at their roots.

- *We will introduce and match these key non-leaders with each professional on the bases of compatibility and of severity of the condition.
- *Each professional will be made ready by placing him/her in a sensory deprivation tank for 12 hours. This will break down the professional's resistance and open the professional to new and more typical experiences. (After all, the professional has been in the service system for many years. A few additional hours of sensory deprivation will make little difference.)
- *Program staff (rural-minded citizens) will be expected to share their culturally normative experiences with each professional on a live-in basis.
- *For recalcitrant professionals, more intensive measures may have to be adopted. Increases in the intensity of deprogramming will be subject to the review of an unprofessional panel.

UNIVERSAL CRITERIA FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS

Objectives of the project will be deemed to have been met when each professional:

- *Demonstrates ability to carry 20-minute conversation with non-professional.
- *Ceases to sign name with degree identification or "Inc." appended.
- *Gravitates eye contact to within 10° of midline, with eyes open.
- *Owns rather than leases personal vehicle and personally performs minor mechanical repairs.
- *Reduces frequency of (typically unsuccessful) demands for priority treatment and special consideration in generic service and other community settings.
- *Increases frequency and duration of interactions with non-labelled ("professional", "client", etc.) individuals to greater than once per week and to greater than 15 seconds per interaction.
- *Ceases to congregate with other similarly-labelled individuals, particularly in institutional settings.
- *Increases proportion of words, particularly affirmative expressions, versus numbers and mathematical concepts in day-to-day speech.
- *Eliminates labels and other deviancy-markers from personal clothing, e.g., name tags; stethoscopes; gold-thread monograms; alligator, dragon, fox and other animal imagery; names of French men; gold pins; etc.
- *Smiles at non-professionals
- *Reduces frequency of telephone contacts with inappropriate others, e.g.: fellow professionals, stock brokers, money market analysts, travel agents, real estate agents, people labelled as "clients", employees of grant-administering agencies and foundations, etc.
- *Admits to uses of bathrooms other than for training.
- *Makes inquiries re: amount of luncheon bill and counts out own change rather than proffering plastic token.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
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