

Counselor says divorce means rebirth

"Divorce can be a vehicle for a better life," said Claire Orsini of Farmington Hills. "We must stop seeing it as punishment and look at divorce as a process. It is not an ending but the rebirth of an independent single person."

Ms. Orsini, a divorce counselor for Anderson Counseling Associates, Farmington Hills, is leading a seminar on creative divorce for the Continuing Center for Adult Counseling and Leadership Training at Oakland University in Rochester. The five-session seminar began Sept. 23 at Meadowbrook Clubhouse located off Adams Road south of Walton Boulevard.

Ms. Orsini based on Mel Krantzler's book, "Creative Divorce," all over Michigan. She has worked in community colleges, universities, community centers and is the only certified leader for creative divorce in Michigan.

"THE PERSON in divorce moves through three main stages," Ms. Orsini explained. "The first stage is the realization of the death of a relationship. Next, he or she proceeds through the mourning period where the death is recognized and accepted in the emotions. And finally, the rebirth of a new and independent person occurs."

"During the mourning process or

stage two, there are several natural responses to the situation. Some people go through all of them and some go through some of them, and sometimes the responses overlap. They all are a part of the normal process of divorce," Ms. Orsini said.

"First comes a feeling of relief, relief that a decision was finally made. This is closely followed by shock and surprise. The person might say, 'I can't believe this is really happening to me.'"

"Next, is an emotional release or an outward expression of grief. This takes form in tears, drinking or promiscuity.

"Another step is physical distress with anxiety which causes some people to overeat and others not to eat at all. The questions a person might ask himself are: 'How am I going to get along without someone to take care of me? Will I lose all my friends? What will happen to the children?'"

"ANXIETY THEN goes into panic. There is something drastically wrong with me. Doesn't the pain ever stop? I've got to do something, all I think about is divorce. Extreme fatigue is experienced during this phase," Ms. Orsini continued.

"Guilt, real or imagined, begins to set in. 'What did I do wrong? If only I tried harder. What am I doing to the children?' This is a self-examining stage. This self-deprecation moves to hostility and projection on others. It is the spouse's fault, the marriage counselor's fault, the attorney's fault or the mother-in-law's fault.

"This is a good time for professional counseling," Ms. Orsini explained. The divorcee needs help to sort through his emotions.

"Laziness begins. Family and friends expect the person to get back to normal, but he or she is tired, worn out with no energy.

"HOWEVER, GRADUALLY the process of overcoming the grief nears the end as adjustments are made and the mood brightens. The readjustment to reality tends to take more time if the marriage was of long duration. But eventually the person realizes he or she is doing new and interesting

things and feels good about himself," Ms. Orsini said.

relationships with the opposite sex.

"Our seminar helps people in divorce take a look at where they are in this process, and how they can begin to look at life in a creative way."

"We also deal with helping the parent help the children who go through their own grief process and with new

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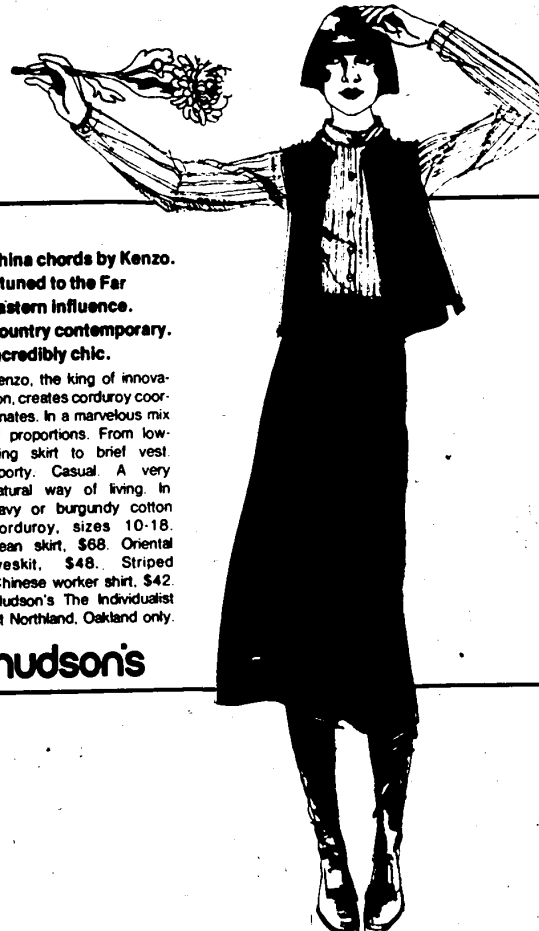
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