

Sorting out singles life is his work

By Lisa Simon
staff writer

The stereotype of a young, curvy woman in a bikini or a muscle-bound hunk behind the wheel of a convertible are misconceptions about singles, according to Bruce Tabashneck, a social worker and Detroit singles expert.

"The reality is that singles come in all packages," Tabashneck said. "There are young, attractive singles, singles over 40 that are overweight, and singles that are in their 60s and widowed."

A respected information source to many metro-area singles and singles associations, Tabashneck also leads group workshops and does private counseling.

Tabashneck is conducting a series of workshops at Jensen Associates, a private clinic at the corner of Orchard Lake Road and 11 Mile in Farmington Hills.

The workshops involve "training people in interpersonal and relating skills," Tabashneck said. Workshops are generally conducted in a three-part series.

THE FIRST SEGMENT is entitled "Making Relationships Work — Men and Women Together." It includes a discussion of how to make a relationship rewarding and key issues that concern singles like commitment, honesty, trust, sexual fulfillment, sharing life and career goals with another person, and how to have fun as one half of a couple.

"Communication in Relationships — Men and Women Understanding Each Other" is the name of the second segment. Here, the importance of communication is explored, as well as effective techniques for dealing with frustration, anger and any of life's conflicts.

The final segment, "People: Where They are, How to Meet Them," is a daylong workshop where each participant finds out about the places to meet people that share similar interests and values. This segment is specifically geared to making meeting people easy. It is also an occasion to review all the interpersonal skills presented throughout the workshop.

EACH PERSON has five notable relationships, according to Tabashneck. They are: the one each individual has with himself, friendships, relationships with organizations, spiritual relationships through religious affiliation and a one-to-one love affair.

Tabashneck's stress on interpersonal and communication skills indicates his strong belief that change must come from within oneself. Society, other people, geography or being overly fussy cannot be blamed for an individual's singleness. Singles must adapt to modern trends and their chosen environment.

Tabashneck admits single life is more difficult today than it was for previous generations.

In the past, society was more closed, people socialized in their neighborhood centers or through religious institutions and family. Modern times are much more isolating.

Today it is more difficult to meet others in a comparable socio-demographic group.

"There are no natural meeting places people have to drive to meet other people, plus, apartment living is often very impersonal."

The older generation is often hindered in modern society by past learned methods of socialization. Both men and women have grown up with defined sex roles.



Bruce Tabashneck discusses the pros and cons of the single life with Erlene Berry.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

MANY WOMEN wait for the phone to ring and hope that Mr. Charming will call, said Tabashneck. The reality is that modern times require more "risk-taking and assertiveness" for women. In turn, men may be threatened by assertive women and have their own fears about a macho image they feel they must live up to.

These are the sort of hindering situations and attitudes Tabashneck helps people tackle.

After arriving in Detroit in 1976 to work as a probation officer in the Detroit municipal court system, Tabashneck recognized the need for singles to have occasions to meet one another outside of singles bars and dating services. Tabashneck himself was a concerned single at the time.

Tabashneck takes credit for organizing what he calls the "first non-bar, non-profit singles" happening in Detroit."

In an eight-week course at Margyrove College, "Living the Single Life," Tabashneck explored the concerns and opportunities for singles in the city of Detroit.

"There was an overwhelming response, it was remarkable."

Since this first workshop in 1978, Tabashneck has conducted workshops all over the city and on various metro-area campuses including Macomb Community College, Oakland University and the University of Michigan.

Tabashneck said that he "knows of every singles group, organization and happening in the city at all times." He has also appeared on local television, in radio interviews and on Sonya Freeman's radio show.

As Director of Adult and Family Services at the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit, Tabashneck initiated and nurtured the Community Network for Jewish Singles, a series of singles organizations differentiated by age and interests.

Tabashneck said that the workshops he conducts help individuals "gain insight into their actions and begin to make necessary changes." The more an

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Something To Think About

BOB ROCK

SHARING MEMORIES

A "visitation" or "vaka," or what others refer to as "calling hours," is a practice which allows family and friends — in the presence of the Viewable Body — to express together their feelings about the deceased.

This sharing experience is nearly always important to the survivors. When the survivors do not share their grief, they face their grief alone. When they share their grief, "one touch of sorrow makes the whole world kin."

Of course the survivors should have the opportunity to express their own emotions, in their own way. At the same time, it can be very enlightening and helpful for the family to hear what the deceased has meant to others. The visitation seems to provide a proper setting and climate for such sharing. A setting and climate which generally does not exist in any other way at any other time.

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Dr. Robert W. Ellis of Farmington Hills has been elected a director of the Detroit Chapter of the Michigan Society of Professional Engineers (MSPE). Ellis has been dean of Lawrence Institute of Technology's School of Engineering since January 1984. During his three-year term as MSPE director, Ellis will assist in establishing programs for the Detroit Chapter of the

MSPE and will represent Detroit's professional engineers as needed.

Ellis has been professionally active in a number of leading national and state engineering organizations, including serving as national chairman of the American Society for Engineering Education's Relations with Industry Division.

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