

Co-Counselling International (UK)

Co-counselling Teachers' Manual

John Heron

1978, revised edition 1998

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See also my:

- [Co-Counselling Manual](#)
- [Co-Counselling Teachers' Manual](#)
- [Co-Counselling Teacher Trainers' Manual](#)
- [Intensive Counselling](#)
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Foreword

This manual is intended for experienced co-counsellors attending my co-counselling teacher training courses; for experienced co-counsellors who want to revise and get to grips again with the basics of co-counselling; and for anyone well versed in personal development methods other than co-counselling who wishes to get a sense of the range, subtlety and effectiveness of the co-counselling approach. Anyone involved in the development of co-counselling is welcome to use it in any way they see fit.

I. Basic ingredients of a fundamentals workshop

The purpose of this section is to itemize all the elements of a basic training course in co-counselling and to comment on them from the teaching point of view. These elements are:

- [Leadership style](#)
- [Theory and free discussion of theory](#)
- [Explanation of basic principles of method](#)
- [Explanation of basic working techniques](#)
- [Demonstration of techniques with yourself as client before the group](#)

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Leadership style

1. The teacher has presence, charisma, authority of being.

- She has attention out at all times with the group as a whole, is aware of the changing kaleidoscope of individual responses, of alterations of mood and energy in the group, of the fluctuating play of patterns and distresses, of the changing level and qualities of attention in the group.
- She is attentive all the time to the persons, the potential humans present: her tone of voice, content of speech, gestures, organization of time, all these are directly addressed to the being trapped within the patterns.
- She is light, easy, free, warm, brightly intelligent, never intimidated by any person's distress pattern, always staying elegantly outside the clients' distressed evaluation of their distresses, never colluding with the clients' patterned account of their patterns.
- She is never thrown by invalidation and attack upon herself, upon the process, the method, or other persons in the group. She sees only patterns at work, persons unwarily dramatizing their hidden fears and angers.
- She is creative and flexible, adapting and modifying all plans to relate them to emergent realities and energies in the group.

2. The teacher combines two styles of leadership: the authoritative or directive and the facilitative.

- The directive style means that the teacher expounds theory, answers questions, takes unilateral decisions about the planning of the programme, the order in which principles and techniques are introduced and how they are to be introduced; she takes charge of the group dynamics.
- Towards the end of a workshop or series of classes the teacher may adopt a more facilitative style of leadership, eliciting from the group suggestions about what activity or series of activities seem to be appropriate for a whole or part of a meeting.
- This may be minimal in a fundamental course, but it does introduce the members to the idea that co-counsellors are peers and in a community of peers decisions can be made on a consensus basis.
- But from the outset the teacher is a facilitator in a more fundamental sense, encouraging people to be inwardly autonomous, to take charge of their emotions, to be responsible about choosing or not choosing when and how to work on themselves, to take their own

growth and development in hand. She creates a climate where persons are excited to feel that their autonomy, their onward expansion of being is honoured, enhanced and delighted in.

- The directive style gently but firmly interrupts patterns and elicits discharge; the concomitant deep facilitative style simultaneously draws out in people the sense of their own worth, their own inner freedom, their own ability to understand themselves and foster and cultivate their own remarkable potential.
- The crucial turning point in a fundamentals workshop is when - as a result of the two interacting leadership styles - the participants start to take charge of their emotions, which means:
- They can notice when they are shut-down, sunk, swamped, and can take a light direction to get their attention out.
 -
 - They can see when they are about to act out/project/displace/dramatize distress emotions and can choose instead to discharge them or take other rational action.
 - They can take charge of the discharge process - go in and elicit discharge, work with a good balance of attention (some attention in the "adult", outside the distress emotions), come out and get back into present time fully.
 - They can reach out effectively to help others with any of the above processes.
 - They can celebrate, validate, delight in, affirm themselves and each other.

3. Culture setting statements. There are certain points which I consider it important to make immediately after a round of introductions and before the exposition of theory. Making these points is for me an important way of setting the culture of the group, and for establishing my leadership style.

- The workshop is a training workshop. Its purpose lies beyond it: people who have skills to co-counsel together in their own homes after it is over. My role as teacher is therefore to be self-eliminating as responsibly and rapidly as possible.
- A creative tension usually develops between the need to cover the basic training schedule, and the emergent needs of people in the group to work on themselves with the support of the whole group and myself as counsellor. This tension we can use fruitfully as we shall see.
- Because this is a training workshop we are not here to examine on-going here-and-now interactions in the group as in an encounter or sensitivity training group. Yet within the training format we shall again and again meet each other in a very real way in present time, as we share more and more of our human vulnerability with each other.
- My fundamental purpose in all I do is to create a safe, supportive, secure climate in which people can discover, reveal and work on their deepest hurts if they so wish. In my experience people who have been hurt emotionally will not expose the wounds for healing unless they feel secure from further attack.

- Hence we do not use heavy unsolicited attack techniques. But co-counselling can provide very elegant and effective ways of dealing with persistent interpersonal tensions between people in a group like this. We can give space for these later in the workshop if there is any need for it.
- At no time will there be any pressure from me, and hopefully from anyone else in the group, on anyone to do anything she does not freely choose to do. Your right to work or not to work on yourself will be absolutely respected. In my experience if human beings really feel they have been given this kind of moral and psychological space, then they eventually experience a great purely internal pressure of a commitment to growth, change and discharge.
- Co-counselling is not a solemn business. We shall all be laughing a lot, however serious the mood may seem right now. Laughter is a very valuable kind of discharge. But maybe more important, perhaps when all the distress is away, there is just the laughter of delight in being.
- Old distresses often come up quite spontaneously in a workshop like this. They may suddenly arise unidentified and unannounced. If this happens to you, feel free to take a risk and when there is an appropriate moment ask for some time and attention from the group and myself to work on what is happening to you. The first person to do this will make a very great gift to the rest of the group, because she will have given us all permission to be human with each other.
- I shall start off with an exposition of the theory about human beings that underlies co-counselling practice. I start with it because I don't believe in personal growth that is conceptually blind.
- Confidentiality is fundamental. It is a basic principle of co-counselling that the **content** of any client's session, whether the client is working as one of a pair or with the whole group, is confidential to that pair or group. Such confidentiality is an absolutely necessary condition for establishing that kind of trust that will enable us to share deeply with each other.

Theory and free discussion of theory

1. Present theory at the beginning, as a rationale for subsequent practice, as a secure scaffold for subsequent practice, as the basis of a contract of the group to work with you ("If the theory seems sufficiently plausible, stay and test it out in practice. If it doesn't seem plausible to try out, have your money back and go").
2. Present theory as a working hypothesis, a non-dogmatic conjecture for group to test experientially. Present it as in principle open to revision.
3. After presentation of theory encourage group members to express their confirmation, approval and support of it, their doubts, anxieties and uncertainties about it, their questions and requests for clarification. Give time for intellectual analysis and discussion of theory.
4. Always meet a just intellectual point at its own intellectual level even if there is obvious distress attached to the making of it.

5. But always interrupt intellectual analyses and discussions, when they become repetitive, compulsive and aggressive/defensive. Then, if appropriate, switch from discussion to a **little light** counselling of the underlying distress ("little and light" especially if the counselling is unsolicited, but a little unsolicited counselling is in order since the intellectual pattern pushed out in a group is often an unconscious call for help).

6. Have periodic review sessions during the workshop to go over the basics, to enlarge and expand the basics, to introduce new concepts:

- By further exposition sessions.
- By spontaneous discussion, question and answer sessions.
- To clarify practical sessions: during your demonstration counselling, after your demonstration counselling, during group feedback after mini-sessions.

7. Provide teaching material reading lists:

- Directly on co-counselling.
- On related growth movement developments.

8. Cultivate an awareness in the group of the distinction between rational enquiry and competitive intellectual "games".

9. Co-counselling comes of age when clients have liberated their occluded intelligence to the point at which they can awarely and responsibly review the theoretical assumptions in terms of which it has been liberated.

10. Sound theory provides guidelines for aware responsible release of distress emotions; theory review sustains the discharge process - chronic distress patterns by their very nature will tend to occlude and obliterate the theory that challenges them most.

11. Introductory theory includes:

- **Human potential:** an account of basic human capacities for loving, understanding and choosing.
- **Human vulnerability:** types of distress through interference with emerging human potential.
- **Human patterns:** the distorted behaviour resulting from cumulative repressed distress; intermittent and chronic patterns; patterns acted out against others and patterns acted in against oneself.
- **Human discharge:** types of discharge; effects of discharge.
- **The rigid, non-cathartic society:** repressive child raising; repressive nature of all our institutions.
- **The purpose of co-counselling:** to undo the effects of a rigid society, to enable persons to release distress, break up patterns, manifest their true potential, celebrate their capacities, move toward the foundation of a new society.

Further important topics to cover during the workshop:

- The difference between dramatization and discharge.

- The distinction between the person and the pattern.
- Cognition and discharge; post cathartic insight and re-evaluation.
- Integration of insights; goal-setting and action-planning.
- The chronic pattern clarified.
- Analysis of distress recordings: victim, oppressor, rescuer and rebel.
- The difference between discharging distress, redirecting it and transmuting it.
- The beauty and power of celebration; how it complements the discharge of distress.
- Body work, birth work, primal work.
- Sex-positive theory, sex-negative theory, sexual activity and co-counselling.
- The difference between sex and nurturance.
- Discharge and spiritual practices; co-counselling and human spirituality.
- Concept of community, social life, social change and co-counselling.

Explanation of basic principles of method

For details of the following see: [Co-Counselling Manual](#) (Heron 1998)

- Role of client.
- Role of counsellor.
- Concept of free attention.
- Three different contracts.
- Permissive and non-permissive counselling (see below: [Co-Counselling Sessions 5](#)).
- Discharge.
- Balance of attention, getting attention outside of distress as a pre-condition of discharging it.
- Celebration and discharge as complementary.

Explanation of basic working techniques

1. Present the following together as an interacting group, as techniques primarily for the client to use on herself (for details of techniques see: [Co-Counselling Manual](#) (Heron 1998))

- Literal description.
- Repetition.
- Association.
- Contradiction.
- Psychodrama/acting into.

2. Some points about contradiction.

- Distinguish between self-validation that has a strong contradictory effect on self-deprecation patterns, and self-validation - in words, sound or movement - that is felt as a celebration. The former is for discharge, the latter in principle for its own sake.

Contradiction and direction-holding work on distress. Celebration affirms one's personal presence and power away from distress.

- Relate body-work (mobilization of energy) to the contradiction of "bodily patterns", physical rigidities, loosening up of the body as a way of loosening up repressive controls.
- Clarify the dynamic polarity of light - heavy discharge, generating free attention by the use of light, elegant contradictions that precipitate laughter, alternating with the discharge of deeper fears, griefs, angers.

3. Some points about psychodrama. Clarify four things the counsellor can do in the client's psychodrama.

- Give free attention only.
- Say provocative phrases: echo the oppressor's pattern.
- Negative accommodation: act pain and dying when the client discharges primitive rage.
- Positive accommodation: speak out of the true humanity, the positive emotions of the person in the counterpartal role.

4. Ways of starting and ending a session: the importance of starting with what is on top; of coming back into present time, ending on a note of celebration,

5. Free attention spectrum.

6. Scanning: positive, negative or mixed, categories of experience.

7. Discovering hidden projections: checking for identification.

8. Direction-holding.

9. Insight: the importance for the client of giving space for verbalizing post-cathartic insight and re-evaluation of the past and its relation with the present.

10. Regression by reverie: the client closes her eyes and lies on her back, holds up forearm resting on elbow, lowers it slowly on to the floor as counsellor counts down from 10 to 0, suggesting deeper and deeper relaxation to the client. When deeply relaxed in her reverie the client enters the childhood spaces opened up and works with the emotions disclosed. This is best done if the client beforehand identifies a current problem or area of patterned behaviour in her life now, and then uses the regression and reverie techniques to uncover its origins in early experience. A powerful and effective method.

11. Celebration of self and other as a growing theme throughout the workshop or series of classes: validation of, rejoicing and delighting in qualities, behaviours, appearances, modes of being.

Demonstration of techniques with yourself as client before the group

1. Show how patterns can distort the client's work; show the wrong way to do it, then the right way .

- Analytic patterns.
- Mechanical repetition patterns.
- Trying hard, doing it well/succeeding, "getting down to the heavy stuff" patterns.

- Solemnity, serious, "life is responsible/intelligent/suffering" patterns.
 - Self-deprecation patterns.
2. Show how patterns can distort the counsellor's work:
- Compulsive interruption and take-over patterns.
 - Giving advice/interpretation patterns; "negative feedback at the end of the session" patterns.
 - "It's my responsibility for the client to have a good session" patterns.
 - "My client has to discharge to prove to me that I am a good counsellor" patterns.
 - "I won't intervene at all because I am afraid of making a mistake" patterns.
 - "I'm determined you won't avoid my free attention" patterns.
3. Work as a client before the group when you need to do so (when shut down, without enough attention to facilitate the group).
4. Work as a client before the group for demonstration purposes: show how a self-directing client uses the techniques. But don't do this too early on in a beginners' group.

Demonstration/intensive counselling of group member in front of group

1. At the start of a workshop suggest to people the possibility and power of working in front of the group (with the counselling support of you the teacher) on spontaneously emerging distress, or on blocked distress. Remind the group of this possibility during the early stages.
2. When distress spontaneously starts to release in a group member ask her if she would like to work on it. Ask her to choose to work, to take the responsibility for the decision. If she is ambivalent (wants to, doesn't want to work) keep inviting and encouraging her to take the opportunity until she gives an unequivocal yes or no. If she says finally and clearly 'no', respect her right to maintain her defences, to choose another time to work.
3. The teacher needs to free herself of any compulsions for group members to work on themselves, to discharge, or to be in the group. Discharge comes freely when the teacher is free of such compulsions and anxieties, creates a safe supportive climate, generates free attention in the group and waits for spontaneous discharge and for people to choose to work.
4. Create space in the programme for people to work with you in front of the group. The total attention of the group plus your skill can release major distress, can open up major areas of work for the client. Persons can work on emerging distress or on distress they feel is blocked.
5. Since the client is inexperienced you the teacher use an intensive counselling contract with the client. Explain to the group that this is **not typical** of experienced co-counselling, when the client is largely self-directing (except for non-permissive counselling; see below: [Co-Counselling Sessions 5.](#))
6. If spontaneous distress comes up early, then demonstration counselling can precede [Explanation of basic working techniques](#), above. This is helpful since the group have seen the techniques in use before the explanation. In introducing the techniques you can refer back to their practical use.

7. After demonstration counselling, you may want to ask the client's permission to talk technically about the session, or you can sometimes do this while the client is discharging in your arms (e.g. in case of continuous fear discharge).

8. Some pointers about demonstration counselling:

- Use the polarity of light and heavy, moving between the poles lightly, swiftly and elegantly.
- Cut quickly with good timing from level to level, e.g. from the presenting distress to underlying distress, (e.g. by asking for earliest memory of the presenting trauma, or "who are you really saying this to?" etc).
- Bring the person out in a light direction, on celebration of self, on present and future time techniques.
- Work with all the presenting cues: slips of tongue, gesture and posture, whatever the client says or does that carries any kind of emotional charge.

9. Disadvantages of demonstration counselling:

- May leave spectators de-skilled.
- Does not exhibit client self-direction.

So an alternative teaching model is for the teacher to do no demonstration counselling and let skills in being a self-directed client (with occasional counsellor intervention) build up slowly.

10. Advantages of (skilled and effective) demonstration counselling:

- Creates a powerful wave of triggering discharge through the group: so gives members much available material to work on in their own sessions.
- Shows the instant power and effectiveness of the very simple techniques: creates confidence in the method.
- The group can be asked to view it as if it is one skilled person working on herself.
- Combines very well with explicit training of clients to be self-directing in their sessions.
- Generates security: that any intense discharge can be accepted and handled by the teacher and so, by extension, by each other.
- Is very important for bringing a chronic pattern into relief, enabling the client to discharge on it, to see the gap between the chronic and herself as person, and enabling the group to see this too.
- Can give the client who is working, access to major areas of hitherto occluded distress and start off a major growth process.

11. Avoid intensive *unsolicited* counselling in depth. It offends the principle that the client has the right to choose intentionally whether to work or not. Clients need to build up skill in taking charge of their emotions, of the process of discharge, of becoming responsible for working or not working.

12. But unsolicited counselling of a very light, easy kind, of short duration, is often appropriate in group discussion or group feedback session, when a person lets a pattern show in the way she

talks about the issue under discussion, and when the group has been exposed to the basics of the method. Such spontaneous counselling needs to be quick light, relaxed always breathing respect for the person and acknowledging her option to withdraw at any point. It helps the person get some insight (through laughter discharge) into the distress that is distorting her thinking in the area under discussion.

Mini-sessions

These are short co-counselling sessions of from three to fifteen minutes each way. They may be structured by the teacher (in terms of techniques and subject matter) or structured by the client.

1. They can be used as practice and training sessions for particular techniques or combinations of techniques, with the teacher specifying these as well as some type of subject matter: literal description, repetition, association, psychodrama/acting-into combine well for such a session. Contradiction may fill another mini-session, checking for identification another, and so on.

2. Such training mini-sessions need to be followed by sharing and feedback in the large group, to share gains and benefits, to clarify technical difficulties in either role, to learn from each other (but excluding negative feedback to or about clients, see below:

[Feedback sessions with the whole group](#)).

3. The argument against structured training mini-sessions is that they go against the principle that the client is in charge, works creatively in her own way with what's on top. On this principle the teacher would explain and demonstrate the different techniques, but provide **unstructured** mini-sessions for clients to use whatever techniques seem appropriate to what's on top.

4. The argument for them is that they guarantee that each person has gone through the motions of all the basic techniques (even if discharge is minimal) so that there is **a wide repertoire more available** for creative use in later self-directed co-counselling sessions. Also experience shows that in a well designed programme discharge can flow freely within structured mini-sessions.

5. Unstructured mini-sessions can be used to clear mounting levels of restimulation in the group, after some provocative topic or event has caused general agitation and tension.

6. If structured mini-sessions are used then the teacher also needs to provide unstructured mini-sessions in which clients can practise working with what's on top.

7. Unstructured mini-sessions can also be used to deal with high levels of simultaneous or readily available discharge in the group: e.g. multiple triggering effect of someone working on some dramatic material in front of the group.

Feedback session with the whole group

1. These are necessary as a matter of course after **every** structured (training) mini-session, after early unstructured mini-sessions, and after all the longer co-counselling sessions in class or between classes: to share gains and benefits, to clarify technical difficulties in the role of both client and counsellor, to maximize learning in the group.

2. To counteract self-deprecation patterns, and criticism-of-others patterns, each member can be invited in feedback sessions to do one or more of the following, especially the first:

- To appreciate her successes as a client.

- To appreciate her successes as a counsellor.
- To appreciate her partner as a client.
- To appreciate her partner as a counsellor.

3. Group members need to be encouraged to raise and discuss technical difficulties about the method in the roles of both counsellor and client. The teacher can deal with the difficulties raised by explanation, demonstration on herself as a client, or by counselling with the questioner so the latter can have direct experience of how it goes well.

4. Where an ordinary contract has been used, it is necessary in the early stages to encourage clients in the feedback session to give some honest (but supportive in manner) feedback to the counsellors about the quality of their interventions: too many, too few, too interfering/distracting, too tentative/hesitant?

5. It is never appropriate for counsellors to give negative feedback to their clients, since this practice offends the principle that the client is in charge, and can invalidate and hurt the client when she is especially vulnerable (after opening up the areas of her emotional hurt) and so can inhibit client growth in self-directing competence. The counsellor does not know best: it is ultimately the client's judgement and insight about herself that counts.

6. Unsolicited light counselling during feedback. See above:

[Demonstration/intensive counselling of group member in front of group](#), number 12.

7. Some issues to raise during feedback sessions:

- Did you relapse into a chatty conversation?
- Did the counsellor slip into compulsive intervention, compulsive take-over, compulsive questioning, compulsive interpretation, compulsive advice-giving, compulsive how-I-solved-it, patterns etc? See above:
[Demonstration of techniques with yourself as a client before the group](#)
- Was the counsellor's attention wandering all over the room (poor eye contact), or masked by shock and disapproval or embarrassment etc.?
- Did the client slip into some typical client patterns? See above:
[Demonstration of techniques with yourself as a client before the group](#)
- Has the client grasped the difference between the change of gear required when shifting from **talking about** some problem/pattern/ distress to **working on** it? Talking about is safely defensive, working on is unfamiliar and leads to discharge.
- Did you remember to clarify the contract at the start of the session?
- Did you remember some of the ways of starting a session?
- Did you keep equal time? Did the counsellor have a helping pattern and give all her time to her needy client?
- Did you remember to come back to present time by the appropriate simple techniques at the end of your session as client?
- Can you appreciate yourself as client for all the basic working techniques you used in your sessions?

- Moving into psychodrama, with repetition, is a basic way of working. Did you hold back from it, avoid it?
- Contradiction with repetition (direction-holding) is a basic way of working? Did you hold back from it, avoid it?

8. These and similar issues need to be raised gently, supportively, and with a light, relaxed, humorous touch, so that group members can respond and work through their initial technical difficulties with the laughter of insight.

Group work

1. Theory session, exposition, discussion, question and answer with the whole group. There need to be several of these during the workshop, to repeat the basics again and to introduce further concepts. See above: [Theory and free discussion of theory](#)

2. Feedback sessions with whole group. See above: [Feedback session with the whole group](#)

3. Explanation and demonstration of techniques before whole group. See above:

- [Explanation of basic principle of method](#)
- [Explanation of basic working techniques](#)
- [Demonstration of techniques with yourself as client before the group](#)

4. Intensive counselling of a group member before the whole group. See above: [Demonstration/intensive counselling of group member in front of group](#)

5. Direction-holding rounds in the whole group. Each person takes an equal number of minutes. On early rounds the teacher can help the people who get stuck by giving them a good direction. On later rounds the teacher may want to let people learn by trial and want error, so she does not intervene when people get stuck. But the teacher does need to intervene when one person lets a pattern take over the direction and all the others model on this. In general I think it is best to intervene more often than not: give people good directions and let them get the feeling of when such directions work. Direction-holding involves the sustained use of contradiction in one or other of its forms; it is not to be confused with celebration. Later on, when the basic skill is in place, direction-holding rounds can also be done in several small groups, without any teacher interventions, using the format in 6 next.

6. Clients-in-turn rounds in small groups. Everyone takes a turn. Each person takes equal time and works in any way on whatever is on top. Each client can:

- Choose to be entirely self-directed.
- Choose any one (and only one) person in group to be her active counsellor.

7. Structured discharge in small groups. People take it in turn (equal time) to do some simple exercises (e.g. tell your father/mother what you liked most about his/her way of loving you.) There are unlimited numbers of such exercises. They can be introduced periodically after members have got some feeling for the basics.

8. Unstructured discharge in small groups. Members sit in a circle and give each other free attention until some one starts to work. The worker chooses either to be self-directing or to ask

one (and only one) other person to be their counsellor. Three or four people may work one after another, entirely spontaneously during an hour. Can be powerful and moving.

9. Structured not-for-discharge small groups. Each person has a turn and takes equal time to do one or other of the following:

- Think aloud creatively on the frontiers of her thinking.
- Creatively visualize and describe her or the world's future in 5, 10, 100 years time.
- Do some personal goal-setting and action planning.

What each person says is not discussed or responded to by other group members, who give supportive attention.

10. Unstructured not-for-discharge small groups.

- Special topic discussion groups. These are about any counselling-relevant topic group members want to explore. Each group can give a summary report back to the whole group,
- Experience sharing groups. Members informally share gains and benefits of the co-counselling sessions, things they have tried as client and counsellor, and found effective. Or they share the gains and benefits in their everyday behaviour that have resulted from work on themselves in co-counselling.
- Task groups. Later in a beginners' course, it may (or may not) be appropriate to involve people in some degree of planning. Small task groups seek a consensus on planning a session or part of a session. Small group views are collated in the whole group.

11. Celebration sessions (verbal and non-verbal) in small groups. People celebrate their humanity and capacities, in words, movements, dance, song, music, art forms, etc.

12. Bodywork sessions in the whole group. The whole group does some physical movement together to release bodily energy, break up physical tension and rigidities, liberate breathing and so make emotional discharge more available. Jumping, yelling, hyperventilation, shaking and stretching the limbs, acting into fear and anger. There are innumerable options here with many different sorts and combinations of exercises.

13. Birth work in the whole group. One person at a time re-enacts her birth, with the rest of the group providing the necessary containment and support. As well as re-integrating the birth experience itself, this can also open up much early infancy material. It needs skilful handling to enable a person to stay deeply in the experience of dark pre-birth places, while keeping some attention outside them; and to help the person contact and re-experience the post-natal infant places, to work in them, then come back into present time in a celebratory style. Profound in its affect on all concerned. Only for group members who clearly feel ready and want to do it. On a five day fundamentals training, I sometimes take one or two volunteers a day through their birth.

14. Meditation sessions in the whole group. These are for generating free attention, for celebrating spiritual identity and altered states of consciousness.

15. Lean ritual in the whole group. A lean ritual is free of any explicit theology, and uses the primal meaning of basic words and gestures. Thus the group stand in a circle with arms reaching upward and say 'Above', then kneel to touch the ground and say 'Below', then cross their hands over the heart and say 'Within', finally reach out to take the hands of those on either side and say

`Between'. Innumerable versions of a lean ritual can be designed. Lean ritual generates a subtle sense of shared sacred space.

16. Opening circle in the whole group. The classic opening ritual. People take it in turns to get attention out on a recent good experience. Don't let a beginner stay with a pattern of being too sunk to share a good experience. Flip her out of it with some light counselling "Did you manage to get your left sock on this morning?"

17. Closing circle in the whole group. The classic closing ritual. As and when moved, people celebrate self, or appreciate another person in the group. Interrupt pseudo-validations ("I like your face when you don't let the corners of your mouth drop") by getting feedback from the recipient; and by asking the speaker what positive impressions she is enjoying, and then to express them without any qualification.

Co-counselling sessions

1. Sessions from 30 to 60 minutes each way. 45 minutes each way is a good length for a five-day workshop. With an ongoing class, co-counselling sessions will occur mainly between classes.

2. In a five-day workshop I use mainly training structured mini-sessions in the first 3 days. Then I switch to self-directing co-counselling sessions of 45 minutes each way on the last 2 days.

3. Feedback in the group is important after all the early sessions. See above:

[Feedback session with the whole group](#)

4. In an ongoing group I make it a condition of membership that each person has at least one out-of-class co-counselling session per week between classes. Pairing with others is largely determined by available free time, geography, etc.

5. Beginners need to build up skills in being self-directed clients, hence I recommend free attention only contracts or normal contracts in co-counselling sessions. With these two contracts the counsellor is permissive in two different degrees. With the third type of contract, the intensive contract, the counsellor is non-permissive, interrupting intensively and skilfully the client's patterns. But this is only appropriate for more highly skilled co-counsellors.

6. In a workshop, co-counselling sessions may be:

- Free choice.
- Random selection. Each person is given a number. Numbers are shaken up in a bag and picked out blindly in pairs. A good method.
- Pairing an explicit criteria. E.g. some one you have not co-counselled with yet; or some one you feel uneasy with.
- Pairing by the teacher. I don't recommend this. It is too paternalistic: the teacher often operates on blind, inexplicit or questionable criteria. If it is done, the teacher should make the basis of pairing explicit to the group and then deal with the restimulation of the group.

Dynamics of discharge in the group

1. Many would-be teachers are concerned about their ability to generate discharge in the group. This is not a problem. Discharge occurs:

- When there is a sufficient level of free attention in the group as a result of exercises that go away from distress and are intended to generate free attention. These exercises can be verbal, non-verbal, done in pairs, by everyone at the same time in a large group. They include meditation exercises suitably introduced.
- When there is an appropriate level of trust, safety, support, mutual caring among members of the group. An important component and generator of this is that the teacher is seen as trustable, as warm, empathic, genuine, with an air of authority, confidence, skill and presence, also that the teacher quite explicitly affirms the principle of voluntary growth within an atmosphere of trust and safety, makes it clear that there is no pressure - everyone is free to choose to work or not.
- When there is a high degree of permission-giving with respect to discharge: by a clear, penetrating, moving presentation of theory; by explicit statements that it is human, worthwhile and healing to discharge; by encouraging people to transcend their old conditioning and give themselves permission to discharge when the distress rises in them.
- When there is, after a suitable degree of free attention has been generated, a session of mobilizing energy through vigorous body work, especially hyperventilation, acting into fear. During and after body work, the teacher needs to watch carefully for signs of emergent distress, then help the person work with it, if that person chooses to do so when asked.
- When one person gives herself permission to work in depth, then many others will be triggered to a greater or lesser degree. By identification, they are put in touch with their own related distress which moves toward discharge.
- When eventually members take charge of the co-counselling process and build up skills as self-directing clients. In any workshop or on-going course there is always this turning point when members of the group make a commitment to the discharge process and realize their growing competence to take charge of it.

In any group of people committed in principle to their own conscious development, when the safety level is sufficient to start to thaw out their defences, their distress willy-nilly starts to press toward discharge. It is never a question of pushing from outside for discharge, but simply of creating the conditions within which the pressure comes from inside, from the unresolved tension of the distress itself. Human beings need and want to feel loved enough for them to start to get rid of their hidden pain.

2. There are four basic ways into discharge:

- **Passive imagination.** The client identifies with someone else's work in front of the group, and because of similar material in herself, is triggered into discharge. This is catharsis in the spectator of human drama. Some naive group members think their discharge is nothing to do with them, but just a feeling for the suffering of the other, but sooner or later they discover that what they are discharging on is their material projected on to the other. This phenomenon of triggering through passive imaginative identification with the discharge of another is very common and very powerful in group work. The teacher needs to be ready to cope with multiple simultaneous discharge, anything from 5 to 15 people going at once, usually grief work with sobbing. One approach to this is to let them all

discharge together, supporting each other with arms around each other in a physically contiguous group, then bring them out into present time on a positive, celebratory note. Also invite them to spend some time on catching and sharpening up post-cathartic insights.

- **Active imagination.** The client is working directly with her own imagery - her memories, sudden associations, insights. She is healing the memories by subtly opening up their charge of emotional distress and releasing it. Her overt activity is largely verbal, with the addition of light active body work, i.e. use of gesture, posture, facial expression, tone and volume of voice. This is where the basic working techniques apply: literal description, repetition, association, contradiction, above all psychodrama, (the client re-enacts scenes from her past and discharges their repressed distress). This is the main-line approach in initial co-counselling training, since it enables the client to identify and deal with what is on top, and so to work on what she is ready to handle. Thus the discharge process has a relatively non-disruptive affect on daily living, and shows immediate benefit in terms of the break-up of minor behavioural rigidities and restrictions.
- **Active body work.** The client initiates and sustains mobilizing the body and its energy through hyperventilation, loud sound, trembling, shaking, kicking, thrashing and so on. This is the direct contradiction of bodily rigidities, somatic controls on distress. The entirely self-directed client will often forget this possibility, or practise it very briefly and half-heartedly - because of the extreme resistance of body armour to being disturbed. Even where the self-directing client does go at it vigorously, she will invariably and automatically hit a cut off switch long before she gets near any material she may not be ready to handle. But active body work can be a potent means of loosening up controls and making distress available for discharge, especially if done by everyone in a group simultaneously, when there is undoubtedly a very strong group effect, as well as a purely individual effect. In this situation, of course, the teacher is directing what the members do and how long they do it for, and so needs to be especially sensitive to and watchful for anyone who suddenly is internally confronted by an uprush of distress she can't cope with (e.g. she bolts out of the room, or looks terrified, clutching hands round her head). Such a person may need to be eased right out of the exercise and the upcoming distress into present time. Sometimes, however, she can be encouraged, by maintaining a balance of attention, to accept the discharge of the distress and so acquire a sudden strength and confidence in her ability to work on herself.
- **Passive body work.** The client is passive and the teacher applies lighter or stronger pressure on tense musculature, or uses long levers on spinal joints, as in osteopathic techniques. With appropriate technique, the client's muscle tension is interrupted sufficiently for discharge to occur. The body is like a steel trap that holds the emotional pain trapped within it; but by skilful intervention from outside the trap can be sprung to let the pain out. As in all good counselling, timing is of the essence of this approach, and I wouldn't recommend you to do it unless you are particularly deft and skilful in working on the body. Bad timing makes the physical intervention from outside seem like an intrusion; whereas good timing finds the sudden opening of a chink in the armour and is welcomed by the client as an aid to release. It is sometimes argued that this kind of

interventionist body work is incompatible with the client-in-charge concept of co-counselling. I think this is an error for the following reasons.

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- I have argued above (see above: [Demonstration/intensive counselling of group member in front of group 10](#)) for the use of intensive counselling by the teacher in a fundamentals class. Another reason not mentioned there is that it provides a model for the later adoption - when the beginner has acquired the basic skills in being self-directing as client and is becoming much sharper in picking up cues as counsellor - of non-permissive counselling within the intensive contract (see above: [Demonstration/intensive counselling of group member in front of group 5](#)). Really skilful intensive or non-permissive counselling deftly and elegantly interrupts every control pattern so that the client inescapably comes to grips with fundamental material to work on. The counsellor here is working on the principle of "always interrupt a pattern". There is no good reason, in applying this principle, to separate psyche from soma and verbally interrupt only psychological, behavioural rigidities: the somatic rigidities can be interrupted too, provided there is great skill in touch, location of touch and timing. And it is essential that beginners should realize from the outset the nature and meaning of bodily rigidity, and the effectiveness of interrupting it from outside.

3. Body work, active or passive, may loosen affect before imagery: catharsis occurs for some while before the person uncovers the imagery and insight related to its genesis. Or the imagery and affect may come together; or the imagery may precede the affect. When body work has surfaced some material, the client may then choose to work on it with the basic techniques given under active imagination.

4. For the client, birth re-enactment is a special mixture of active imagination, active body work and passive body work.

5. The active imagination way into discharge may, of course, include a greater or lesser or zero degree of intervention and suggestion of a verbal kind from the counsellor. But where the counsellor does make suggestions, the client still has to choose to act on them.

6. The golden rule applies: first encourage clients to be largely self-directing with a little help from their beginner peer counsellors - in their training mini-sessions and longer co-counselling sessions. At the same time, in working with you in front of the group, you can demonstrate intensive counselling - to help them grasp the extent of occluded distress and for the various other reasons given. In advanced co-counselling training workshops you can run training mini-sessions for counsellors to practise intensive counselling.

Screening

Some people are too distressed to start off as co-counsellors. That is, they cannot sustain giving aware, supportive imaginative attention to another person - they have difficulty in being a counsellor, their attention wanders, or they interrupt the client's work in inappropriate and distracting ways. In such maladaptive behaviours they compulsively and repetitively draw attention to their own plight in a manner that does not allow the discipline of co-counselling

training to proceed. Such persons need highly skilled one-way counselling until they have worked off enough distress to be able effectively to take charge of the co-counselling process.

In principle some degree of screening is necessary. Here are some approaches to screening.

1. Pre-course publicity. In the handouts which advertise and give details of the basic co-counselling training course, make it as clear as possible, in appropriate language, that it is not a course for the heavily distressed, those whose behaviour and state of mind is distorted by distress to a socially disabling degree.
2. Give an introductory lecture a week before the start of the practical training and make the same point as in 1. in the lecture. The basic criterion, for those enquirers who have not as yet experienced co-counselling, is: can I conduct my occupational and personal life with a degree of order and balance that would be considered "normal" by the prevailing conventions of the day?
3. Discourage recently trained and enthusiastic co-counsellors from sending all their heavily distressed relatives, friends and acquaintances to future courses. Help to generate in a co-counselling community the principle of enrolling those who are in good, rather than those who are in bad, psycho-social shape. There needs to be a very large number of the best functioning people in co-counselling before there will be sufficient human and other resources to handle the worst functioning people. To try to help prematurely the worst victims of the old system will forever subvert the establishment of a viable alternative system.
4. Require all those who enrol for a course to have a personal interview with you between the introductory lecture and the start of the first training session. Some things to check out and do in the interview:
 - Check the degree and frequency of socially disabling distress-distorted states of mind and behaviour over the past five years (severe depression, suicide attempts, social withdrawal, destructive acting out, etc). If there has been too much too recently, screen out,
 - Check the use of psychotropic drugs: antidepressants, tranquillisers, and others. If there is heavy current reliance on them, then screen out. The discharge process encourages a person to dispense with the drugs (rightly), but this in turn can release a flood of distress which requires emergency skilled counselling which is inappropriate for a beginner's milieu.
 - Invite the person to talk about good things going on in her life currently, to talk about past and recent successes in any field, to appreciate herself, her qualities and capacities. How she responds will give you some idea of the weight of invalidation she carries. When a massive weight of invalidation moves forward to crush any kind of possibility of responding positively to these questions, then screen out.
 - Ask the person just to give you free attention for ten minutes while you review the events of the day or use the time in any other appropriate kind of way as client. This will give you some idea of the person's ability intelligently and awarely to give free attention to another person. If her attention is hopelessly distracted by internal tensions, then screen out.
 - Remind the person of the concept of a pattern (she will already have been introduced to it in the lecture), then ask her to identify one of her own. This will give you some idea of her degree of self-insight. If she is quite unable to cope with this, then screen out.

- Ask the person about her job, her domestic life, to find out if she has some social maturity. Is she coping? Is she, at any rate to some significant conventional degree, in charge of her life? If not, then screen out.

To "screen out" means to explain to the person that the co-counselling training course, is not, in your judgement, the most appropriate setting for her personal development at this time. Then propose a constructive alternative, for example, becoming a one way client of some professional counsellor, growth tutor or therapist.

This kind of screening is always problematic. It seems wise to acknowledge that if you use the interview methods, then even if you apply them consistently to the very best of your ability, you are likely to make an occasional mistake. A single interview is a poor sample of a person's state of being. The reactions to your interviewing might have been very different if the person had come a week or a month later. When in serious doubt, screen in, not out, because you can then fall back on the next item, if need be.

After the practical training sessions have begun, gather in the greatest possible amount of feedback about the early practice mini-sessions. If you come across someone who has a chronic inability to sustain giving attention as counsellor, in mini-session after mini-session, then take that person to one side, and advise them to leave the course, offer a refund, and suggest alternative approaches. Explain simply why you are asking them to leave. This can be done in such a way that it is **not** just another damaging rejection on their lonely pathway of distress. This procedure applies to anyone who in any way persistently interrupts and distorts the training process without awareness of what she is doing.

II. Design of a fundamentals workshop

- [Temporal design](#)
- [A five-day workshop](#)

Temporal design

1. Forty hours

For some years many of us have considered that 40 hours is the minimum training period for co-counselling: that is, 40 hours actual training time spent in a fundamentals workshop or class. This can be covered in several ways: a block five-day workshop, 5 or 6 single day workshops at weekly intervals; two long weekend workshops; 3 hour weekly evening classes for 14 weeks.

2. Five-day block

I have used this time-structure for some years now. It has both strengths and weaknesses. Positively, it allows, if well facilitated, for the build-up of a powerful dynamic within the group and within the individual: discharge is copious and much material surfaces for individuals to work on. The power and depth of the growth process, and the ability of persons to take charge of it, becomes evident for all to see. Negatively, it is an island experience, separated off from the everyday routines of the rigid society. The individual may deal with this extreme disparity by encapsulating the experience, sealing it off, so that there is minimal transfer back into everyday life. In particular, the five-day block does not give the participant any training in regular co-counselling-at-home with the back-up and support that a weekly class provides. A person tries co-counselling-at-home after a five-day workshop, finds that the early sessions are (inevitably) a pale

shadow of the co-counselling sessions within the high-energy ambience of the workshop, and so gives up through discouragement. Hence it is important, if this design is used, to provide participants with full details of local ongoing groups and encourage them to start to participate in these - such groups can provide the support needed for the early stages of co-counselling-at-home.

3. Weekly class

I used a 3 hour weekly evening class for 20 weeks, once a year at the University of Surrey for several years. The advantages and disadvantages are the reverse of the five-day workshop. Its great strength is that it enables participants from the very start to build up skills in, and develop the habit of, co-counselling-at-home. I make it a condition of membership in a weekly class that participants commit themselves to one co-counselling-at-home session between classes every week. Feedback on these sessions is then an important part of the training process during the class. A related strength is the build up of skill in moving to and fro between the open, flexible, caring society of the class, and the closed, rigid, alienating society of everyday. The obvious disadvantage compared to a five day workshop is the need each week to start again the slow build-up toward discharge.

A five-day workshop

The following gives a possible set of events for a five-day workshop: they are not divided up into days. This is only one way of organizing the events. What is not listed are the many spontaneous pieces of individual work that occur in this kind of workshop and that provide it with much of its power and drama.

1. Round of introductions.
2. Good and new circle.
3. Culture setting statements (see above : [Culture setting statements](#))
4. Exposition of theory and discussion. Basis for contracting in or out.
5. Explanation of basic principles of method (see above: [Explanation of basic principles of method](#))
6. Free attention exercises: verbal, nonverbal; pairs, group, solo.
7. Body mobilization techniques: in group. Some will discharge spontaneously,
8. Demonstration counselling with those discharging from the body mobilization techniques, using all basic techniques.
9. Explanation of the following basic techniques: literal description, repetition, association, psychodrama, acting into; with demonstration.
10. Structured mini-session to practise these basic techniques; feedback in the group.
11. Explanation of contradiction (distinguished from felt celebration) and direction-holding; with demonstration.
12. Structured mini-session and/or structured discharge group to practise contradiction; feedback in group.
13. Explanation of scanning, with demonstration. Relate to free attention spectrum.
14. Structured mini-session to practise scanning; feedback in group.

15. Exposition of theory: distinction between person and pattern, concept of the chronic pattern; difference between discharge and dramatization; distress that is acted out and distress that is acted in. Discussion.
16. Explain identification check; with demonstration.
17. Structured mini-session to practise identification check; feedback in group.
18. Explanation of ways to start and to end a session; with demonstration.
19. Structured mini-session on working with what's on top; feedback in group.
20. Short unstructured co-counselling session for client to start to put it all together creatively; feedback in group.
21. Talk and discussion on: sex and nurturance, sex negative and sex positive theory, sex and co-counselling.
22. Explanation of regression by reverie; with demonstration.
23. Structured mini-session to practise regression by reverie; feedback in group.
24. A series of longer co-counselling sessions of from 30 to 45 minutes each way, mostly unstructured, free choice or random selection; feedback in group. Interspersed with reminders about basic theory, principles of method and techniques; with direction-holding and other discharge groups; with not-for-discharge groups; with individual work in front of the group. All this will take up the greater part of the fourth and fifth days, which are days to put together and make workable all that has been acquired on the first three days.
25. Talk on the idea of a co-counselling community, on social change and action, on follow-up and ongoing courses and workshops, on co-counselling at home, on Co-counselling International. Discussion.
26. Farewells: high spots of workshop; closing circle.
27. Throughout: in closing circles at the end of each day, in feedback after co-counselling sessions and mini-sessions, in special mini-sessions for the purpose - the positive, affirmative celebration of self, the positive affirmative celebration of a specific other. **Celebration** becomes a growing theme throughout the workshop as people become more confident and secure in its practice.

III. Teaching options

There seem to be five basic options for the teacher:

- [Solo teaching](#)
- [Teaching with an assistant](#)
- [Co-teaching](#)
- [Multiple teaching](#)
- [One-to-one teaching](#)

Solo teaching

This is good if the teacher is a good teacher, bad if the teacher is a bad teacher. It is good for the coherent exercise of distress-free, charismatic authority that can develop a workshop or series of

classes creatively and dynamically. It gives scope for a person really to take charge of the unfolding dynamic of a workshop and to think awarely and consistently about what is going on and what needs to happen next. It can make for high intensity and spontaneity of growth-promoting happenings. It also provides a single secure and stable point of reference for beginners during their early anxieties.

Its disadvantage is if the teacher is distressed, shut-down, and unable to think awarely about what is going on. It provides no teacher-oriented feedback from another on what is going on, no second awareness for cross-checking about omissions, things not noticed. It offers only one model or exemplar. It can elicit heavy projections, both positive and negative and both together. It can degenerate into charismatic inflation creating too much dependency and subtle intimidation.

Teaching with an assistant

The assistant teacher is in a subordinate role. The assistant can do emergency counselling with someone in the circle when the teacher is working with someone in the middle of the group; can take the second sub-group when the class divides into two for any purpose; can introduce and demonstrate some of the simpler techniques; can be the client in teacher demonstrations; can give helpful feedback to the teacher on her teaching and on what seems to be going on in the group and with individuals; can counsel the teacher on the latter's class-triggered distress; can be a second exemplar to the class of an experienced client and counsellor; can counsel teacher and class member together when there is a heavy one-way or two-way projection; can contribute ideas about omissions and what needs to happen next; and so on.

There is a great deal to be gained from all this, especially where there is good affinity and rapport between teacher and assistant and they have co-counselled beforehand on any lurking restimulation in the arrangement. It is also a good form of apprenticeship for would-be teachers.

Co-teaching

There are two teachers of equal status co-operating in running the class or workshop. They can divide all the main pieces of teaching between them on some prearranged basis, but with enough leeway for each to be flexible, creative and improvisatory as the developing situation requires.

If there is a very large group, much of the teaching can be done in parallel in two subgroups, one teacher with each, following a similar schedule so that everyone is covering the same ground at roughly the same time. Some things will still be done in or from the large group, with the teachers taking turns at this.

At its best this can be an inspiring example of parity, mutual awareness, complementarity, shared and alternating creativity. At its worst it can degenerate into massive one-way or two-way restimulation and resentment, with consequent deficits for the group.

Multiple teaching

There are three or four teachers of equal status, who function the same as in co-teaching, only multiplied. This method brings out strongly the anti-hierarchical, peer principle in co-counselling.

Like co-teaching only more so, it runs the risk of confusing beginners if there is any obvious cognitive dissonance between what the different teachers say and do. Where there is strong coherence among their various words and deeds, then this approach has the great merit of clearly separating off the method from any cult of personality, of idiosyncratic charisma.

One-to-one teaching

The teacher teaches just one person in a series of sessions. This makes teaching totally peer since anyone in a co-counselling community can do this. It needs to be encouraged and practised much more than is currently the case. But I would always recommend that someone who learns this way rounds it out by subsequently attending a fundamentals class or workshop, or an ongoing group, or an advanced workshop.

IV. Community building

There is not much point teaching people to co-counsel unless equal attention is paid to building up a supportive community within which effective ongoing co-counselling can be sustained and developed. The pressures toward privatization, bourgeoisification, in contemporary society are very strong. These pressures create an ambience of apathy and powerlessness, which reduces people back into a state of alienation from their own growth and development.

There are at least three degrees of a co-counselling community. They are three types or stages of community development. The first is where we have to begin, for the most part, It provides the minimal essential concept of community:

Type One Community

A co-counselling community as an association exclusively for purposes of co-counselling and of directly related matters. The community is thus a community only in the weakest sense: a network of persons who engage in a similar practice, and who meet from time to time to engage in and develop that practice. There are several aspects to such a community:

1. Activities directly involving co-counselling:

- The basic activity is regular ongoing co-counselling sessions in members' own homes, involving those who have done the basic training. Then we have:
- Basic co-counselling training courses: 40 hours minimum training by a competent teacher, in a five-day workshop or double long weekend workshop or in a weekly evening class for 14 weeks, or in any mixture of weekends, full days, evenings.
- Advanced co-counselling training workshops: 3 or 5 day workshops led by an experienced co-counselling teacher covering such things as intensive or non-permissive counselling, body work, transpersonal work, birth work, in depth direction-holding, advanced psychodrama, reality training, self-monitoring/objective-setting/ thinking-in-living, social change and social action, community development, co-counselling applications in diverse spheres, especially child-raising and education. And many other issues.
- Co-counselling teacher training workshops: 5 day workshops or the equivalent for experienced co-counsellors who want to train to be teachers of co-counselling. Led by the most experienced teachers available.
- Follow-up groups: for those who have done the basic training. Such a group is facilitated by a teacher and has a teaching content - to remind members of the basics of theory and practice, to help people with direction-holding and the interruption of chronic patterns. It meets perhaps weekly in repeated cycles of, say, 10 or 20 weeks.

- Independent ongoing groups: organized by any group of experienced co-counsellors; not dependent on the primary interventions of a teacher. Each member may facilitate it in turn on a rotation basis; or the group may use consensus decision-making. For co-counselling, group work, direction-holding, and whatever the group want to use it for. It meets weekly for any period of time.
- General workshops: of from 1 to 7 days, for co-counsellors who have done the basic training. Primarily for intensive co-counselling and group work. Can be facilitated by a teacher and have a teaching content (reminder of basics); or can be facilitated by one or two co-counsellors who take the initiative in setting it up.
- Theme workshops: of from 1 to 7 days, for experienced co-counsellors. The workshop uses co-counselling techniques to develop awareness and understanding in specific areas such as sexuality, role stereotyping, parenthood, obesity, creativity, politics, third world, spirituality, organizations, and so on. The workshop will also tend to develop policies and plans, related to the theme, for subsequent daily living. It will be organized and conducted by one or more competent teachers or group facilitators.
- Marathons: of one or more days, for co-counsellors who have done the basic training. This doesn't need a facilitator, just a good arithmetician. The arrangement is that each person present has a continuous 3 or 4 hours as client, with a changeover of counsellors every hour or hour and a half.
- Peer primalling workshops: of from 1 to 7 days, for experienced co-counsellors to assist each other in a group setting to re-enact birth and do associated primal re-integration work. Will be initially facilitated by at least one person with prior experience of birth work and body work. The skills can then be progressively disseminated throughout the workshop.
- Teachers' workshops: for teachers and assistant teachers of co-counselling, to share experiences, to develop skills by mutual teaching and learning. A series of these can be run on a basis of rotated facilitation.

These are some of the obvious sorts of activities directly involving co-counselling. No doubt there are many more.

2. Activities not directly involving co-counselling, but supportive of it. These are the organizational sorts of activities. We had better include structures here too.

- Allocation of roles. Persons are needed to take responsibility for - finance, newsletters, address lists, organizing/facilitating workshops and groups of all kinds where teaching is not at stake, teaching basic training courses and advanced courses and teacher training courses, facilitating community decision-making.
- Decision-making structure. A peer community has to find a way of effectively making decisions without relapsing into democratic chaos or inertia on the one hand and hierarchical authoritarianism on the other. One model is for all the community members to meet and agree on the appointment of a Facilitator of Community Decision-making for, say, a two year period. Such a person would need to be skilled in working with and knowledgeable about the dynamics of small and large groups, and the range of decision-

making procedures. My recommendation would be that this Facilitator uses genuine consultation as a decision-making model.

- On some issues the Facilitator (F) consults a small community management group of, say, the main role bearers (newsletter editor, treasurer, principal workshop organizer, a teacher of co-counselling). The management group would also be appointed by a meeting of the total community, to hold their roles for some specified period.
- On other issues F consults the whole community at a special meeting for that purpose. These would be major long-term issues of community policy.
- In both cases, having consulted others, F takes a decision which represents her own clearest thinking on the issue, where that clear thinking occurs in the light of what each other person has said. This does not mean that F simply summarizes as best she can what appears to be the consensus of views expressed. Rather she takes this consensus as a complement and aid to her own clear thinking - and her final decision may or may not coincide with this consensus. This model presupposes that the community has a great deal of trust in the integrity and wisdom of F. F can, of course, delegate decision-making.
- F is accountable to give reasons to those concerned for her decisions. Anyone conscientiously unable to accept them can say so and act accordingly. When F's decisions no longer carry community support, then she can be demoted at a special community meeting called for this purpose.
- It would be a community principle that the F role rotates every two years: a previous F is not eligible for re-election.
- Newsletter. This is a very essential part of this first sort of community, since it alone provides its members with full details of what the community is doing. So the newsletter is primarily a vehicle for publicizing workshops of all kinds in the immediate community, maybe in adjacent communities and on the international scene. There can also be reports of past workshops, papers on theory/method/organization, and so on.
- Address lists. There needs to be an up-to-date list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of all those who have done a basic co-counselling training in the community and who wish to be on such a list. Copies of the list are available to everyone on it, primarily for purposes of making co-counselling contacts. It is also the newsletter distribution list. It can further serve as a basis for any follow-up research on co-counselling training outcomes.
- Finance. Money is needed to meet, at least, printing, distribution, publicity and administration costs. This can be raised by any one or more of: newsletter subscriptions, annual community membership dues, levying a percentage tithe on all workshop fee receipts, donations, sale of literature, special fund-raising exercises.
- Primary workshop organizer. It makes sense to have someone who takes responsibility for thinking about the total range of workshops the community provides, the weighting and balancing of different types of workshop, and for prompting and encouraging the appropriate people to put on the different types. This person would work closely with F and the community management group.

- Teaching. A community has a right to exercise some control over the legitimacy of teachers within its domain. For if a teacher expects a local community to accept those she has trained as active co-counselling members of that community then it needs to be assured that they have been adequately trained. Thus accreditation of teachers somehow needs to come within the scope of community organization. See below: Assessment and accreditation procedures.
- Conflict resolution. It makes sense for the community to have in reserve some well considered procedure for resolving major conflicts between persons or groupings within the community.
- Outreach: this has two senses.
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 - Some well thought out plan for reaching out to those who have gone through a basic co-counselling training but have dropped out of all community activity including regular co-counselling. This has to be done sensitively to take account of two possibilities: that a person who has dropped out has chosen quite intentionally to do so for what she judges to be good reasons; that she has dropped out through the grip of old distress patterns and so may ultimately welcome the encouragement to continue co-counselling activities.
 - A policy and programme for reaching out to those as yet unfamiliar with co-counselling in order to introduce them to it.
- Social activity: there is both a negative and a positive case to be made out here.
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 - The negative case is that it makes sense absolutely to rule out all kinds of unaware, compulsive, stereotypic conventional sorts of social interactions (including the sexual) with other co-counsellors - firstly because they will inhibit the competence of people to co-counsel really humanly and effectively with each other, but secondly and more importantly since it is just that kind of behaviour that co-counsellors are trying to get out of anyway. I encourage people who are learning to co-counsel with each other in their own homes to cut out all pre and post session entertaining routines, and in a disciplined way get down to the business in hand then depart.
 - The positive case is that it makes sense for experienced co-counsellors who have reclaimed some of their intentionality and flexible humanity to explore new, aware ways of relating other than co-counselling, so that their shared self-expression can be on a basis of mutually shared assumptions and experiences. These aware ways of relating may be to do with creativity, recreation, sexuality, various kinds of conjoint enterprise. But this is the natural bridging point with the next kind of community.

See also: Co-Counselling Teacher Trainers' Manual : [Community building](#)

Type Two Community

A co-counselling community as an association of those who engage in co-counselling activities and their supporting organization, but who also co-operate on aware, intentional enterprises other

than co-counselling. This covers all the sorts of activities listed above, and adds to them organized mutual aid and mutual effort activities that are quite different from co-counselling. This is the community that seeks to give practical expression to its members' new found creative intentionality in living. Its members, however, are still involved in the sorts of occupational, domestic and housing situations that characterize the existing social system.

- **Mutual aid.** One method is a token system for mutual aid among co-counsellors with respect to any number of practical tasks such as gardening, house repairs, decorating, baby-minding, and so on. I help you out on some task, and we agree on how many tokens my contribution represents, then for the future you owe me work of any kind equivalent to the same number of tokens. This method needs very clear criteria of token allocation per unit of work. There are many other possibilities.
- **Mutual effort.** There are at least two versions of this.
- Members work together to provide some new resource for their membership: a theatre, sports centre, studio, or whatever.
- Members work together to introduce change into the surrounding social system: transport, local politics, education, anything.

Type Three Community

This is a co-counselling community in the full sense of a community. It is an association of those who live together on shared land in various forms of habitation, on some mutually agreed basis of ownership and management, and for whom co-counselling is a central or important component of the shared life-style. Initially this is likely to be a sub-community within Type One or Type Two Communities. The group may also be concerned with new forms of decision-making and conflict-resolution within the community life, with new ways of structuring and living intimate relationships, with new forms of child-raising and child-minding and education, with new sorts of economic arrangements and ways of subsisting, with different forms of technology, with shared approaches to the transcendental. And so on. The Life Center in Philadelphia is a good example of this type of community.

V. Decision-making models for peer groups

In the section above on Community Building, I proposed one model of [decision-making](#) for a Type One Community. But what are the alternatives?

Negative models

There are two polar extremes here, with many distorted variants in between.

- **Oppressive autocracy.** The leader makes decisions unilaterally, without consulting others. The decision is made and acted on before anyone else can have a say. The leader has taken this power; it has not been freely and formally given by those who are subject to it.
- **Messy democracy.** A peer group in which everyone compulsively falls over backwards to avoid being seen to be authoritarian. This compulsion means that the group never clarify how decisions are to be made, but slips unawares into pseudo-consensus - there is a tacit assumption that a decision will somehow emerge out of the group as a whole. This model

tends toward stagnation and disintegration of communities, with effective programme planning at a very low ebb.

Positive models

All the positive models, by definition, are intentionally chosen by the peer group - which commits itself to apply a model and follow it through for a given period, then review the matter.

- **Autonomous initiatives.** The group agree that it is open to anyone to start up some activity on her own initiative, and negotiate with others to pursue it. This is creative anarchism - in the original and constructive sense of that term. The group will, of course, need some regular forum for negotiating individual plans, and some publicity mechanism for circulating regularly details of forthcoming events.
- **Open agenda and majority vote.** It is open to anyone in the group to put forward items for decision, i.e. to help build the agenda. Each item is decided by majority vote after appropriate discussion. The group have to agree whether they use a simple majority, a 75% majority or whatever.
- **Open agenda and consensus.** As before about the agenda, but decisions are taken on an agreed majority vote but only when the opposing minority are satisfied that they have been adequately heard and that they have been properly understood.
- **Open agenda and unanimity.** As before about the agenda, but only those items are put into action about which everyone agrees. Either the group stay with an agenda item until they achieve unanimity, or they abandon it.
- **Open agenda and consultative leader (rotating).** As before about the agenda, but decisions are taken by the appointed (rotating) leader, after anyone who wishes has expressed an opinion on the item under discussion. The leader's decision, while it will wisely take into account the views expressed by those present, is not bound to reflect it. The leader exercises personal judgement and decision in the light of what has been said by others, but she does not simply echo or summarize or gather the sense of what they have said.
- **Open agenda and gathering chairperson (rotating).** As before about the agenda. The appointed chairperson gives space for all who will to speak on an item, and then, without any voting procedure, gathers the sense of the discussion into a final decision. She seeks to be a mouthpiece for the balance of wisdom in the group.

VI. Assessment and accreditation procedures

A co-counselling community has some right to have a say in the accreditation of would-be teachers who expect the people they train to become active co-counsellors within the community. If the community is to accept these people, then it needs to have some say in approving the competence of the teacher to train them adequately. Here is one approach.

The would-be teacher, after some appropriate teacher training, meets with a representative group of her community peers - 6 or 8 persons whose experience is relevant to the procedure.

- They all work to reach agreement on criteria of teacher competence. And this discussion of course includes the candidate. A typical set of such criteria is as follows:

- Can discharge freely in all modes including in front of the group.
 - Co-counsels regularly and can identify and work on some of her own major chronic distress patterns.
 - Is skilled at using an intensive contract as counsellor.
 - Has expository competence - rich and clear verbal ability - and can provide clear conceptualization.
 - Has a clear conceptual and practical grasp of theory, principles of method, basic techniques.
 - Is a celebratory leader, trustable, and can create a safe, positive, up climate.
 - Can supportively confront, i.e. decisively interrupt chronic acting out distress patterns in others.
- The candidate assesses herself, using say a simple five point rating scale, in the light of each of the criteria, in the presence of her peers. She leaves the room while her peers assess her using the same scale and the same criteria. She returns to the room and the self-assessment and peer assessment are compared. If there are any major discrepancies between the self and the peer assessments, she may wish to revise her self-assessment - or she may not.
 - Her peers then play devil's advocates and surface any slight doubt they may have, however minimal or inadequately warranted it may be, about her competence to teach co-counselling in this or that respect. They also of course surface major doubts, with supporting evidence where possible. The candidate listens without comment. She has previously been encouraged to discriminate carefully among the comments made, winnowing out fair comment from foul. The purpose is to refine her self-assessment. The devil's advocate rule gives everyone permission to surface all doubts without worrying whether they are projections or of doubtful validity and so on,. It also ensures that peer assessment does not become collusive and protective, avoiding major confrontation issues.
 - After the devil's advocate procedure, there is significant time for her peers to give her their positive impressions of her potential as a teacher. This is important - for its affirmative, validating power.

This is the self and peer assessment part of the procedure. After a lapse of time, at least overnight, for the assessment to be digested, there follows the self and peer accreditation procedure.

- The candidate states before her peers her accreditation formula. This includes what sort of workshop she accredits herself to teach or facilitate, (whether beginners, follow-up, general workshops for the experienced, advanced, theme, etc.); in what sort of capacity she accredits herself to teach (whether as solo teacher, equal co-teacher, subordinate assistant teacher); and when she accredits herself to begin (next week, in six months, next year, and so on). Each of her peers in turn then say whether they agree with this formula and whether they would recommend any changes in it - all this in her presence. If there is any major discrepancy between her self accreditation formula and the consensus peer accreditation formula, both parties negotiate until an accommodation is reached.

I have introduced and facilitated this whole procedure several times now in co-counselling teacher training courses in several countries and have been deeply impressed with its maturing effect on all of us who took part.

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