

How can new Co-Counsellors be supported to settle into Co-Counselling?

5 Case Studies

Collected by
JanPieter Hoogma

7 July 1999

Contributed & Produced by

Anne Denniss, Baden Smith, Carol Driscoll, Dency Sargent,
Gretchen Pyves, JanPieter Hoogma, Johannes Risse,
Maria Therling-Hülsberger, Pete Fantes, Sheila Lochrie,
Siglind Willems and Teresa Tinklin.





The aim of Cornucopia Publications is to provide easy to read literature that is supportive of Co-Counselling

“How to support new Co-Counsellors to settle into Co-Counselling?”

This Trilogy consists of:

- Case Studies, £2.50
- Findings of the world-wide survey
- Report of the Conference in Scotland, August 1999

“The Rescue Triangle”

*or the art of being in charge of yourself
and not controlling other people*

by JanPieter Hoogma & Teresa Tinklin

This short version provides an introduction to the Rescue Triangle. It forms the first two sections of a longer publication, which we are still writing.

The longer version will also have chapters on the Rescue Triangle in Co-Counselling sessions and in socialisation, liberating yourself from the Rescue Triangle and on how to teach the Rescue Triangle. If you would like to be informed when the full publication is available, please email teresa.tinklin@ed.ac.uk or contact JanPieter Hoogma at the address below.

One copy of the Rescue Triangle costs £1.50.

Packs of 10 are available to teachers who would like to give this as a handout on Fundamentals, at a cost of £10 + £2 post and packing (UK).

Ordering copies

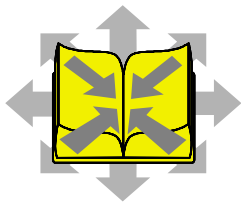
To receive copies send your order with a cheque for the full amount made payable to “CornuCopiA” with a stamped addressed A4 envelope to:

JanPieter Hoogma
32-A Inverleith Place
Edinburgh EH3 5QB
Scotland.

CornuCopiA website

You can read more about ‘How can we support new Co-Counsellors to settle into Co-Counselling?’ and other CornuCopiA Publications on the internet at the CornuCopiA website. Its address is www.coco-home.demon.co.uk

Preface



While preparing for the 1999 international gathering on the theme 'How can we support new Co-Counsellors to settle into Co-Counselling', I realised that our survey of Co-Counsellors' individual experiences was not, by itself, going to be enough to inform and encourage the discussion and sharing at the meeting. I recognised that we also needed to find out about the experiences of people who had set up and tried to develop Co-Counselling projects in their own areas. There were two reasons for this: they could share a lot of valuable experiences with us and they would have more of an overview of what worked and what didn't. The result is this collection of five case studies which I hope will provide stimulating and informative food for thought for anyone that reads them.

I wanted to gather together a range of different experiences and approaches, some successful, some less so, which together provide a rich source of information and ideas about the development of Co-Counselling. The USA has had a flourishing Co-Counselling community for 25 years, with many well-developed practices. Co-Counselling in Münster, Germany is based around a Co-Counselling therapy centre. The Birmingham group were initially very successful at getting people to take up Co-Counselling but encountered problems later. Gretchen Pyves in Manchester, England has developed her own unique approach to building up an active Co-Counselling community in her area. Finally I included my own experiences in Scotland, where I always considered it very important to look for ways to support people to stay in Co-Counselling after Fundamentals. I hope you will find these case studies stimulating and valuable.

JanPieter Hoogma

Questions we asked

- 1 What was your vision when you first set up your Co-Counselling project in your area?
- 2 What factors did you consider to be important in turning your vision into reality?
- 3 Which aspects of the Fundamentals course in your area support new Co-Counsellors to settle in to Co-Counselling, in your opinion? How well do they work?
- 4 What is available to new Co-Counsellors in your area that might support them to settle in to Co-Counselling?
How well does this work?
- 5 What other things have been tried to help new Co-Counsellors settle in?
How well did they work?
- 6 Is there anything else that you think is relevant?

Contents

Preface.....	3
CCI - USA (1974).....	4
'Haus Kloppenburg' Münster, Germany (1976).....	6
Manchester, UK (1984).....	12
Birmingham, UK (1986).....	16
Scotland (1992).....	19

CCI - USA (1974)

Prepared by Carol Driscoll & Dency Sargent, CCI USA Continuity Persons, May 1999

CCI in the USA was founded in 1974 by Tom & Dency Sargent.

Q1. What was your vision when you first set up your Co-Counselling project in Connecticut?

To have trained Co-Counsellors available to help support me and others in managing our lives.

Q2. What factors did you consider to be important in turning your vision into reality?

- Competent teaching
- regular classes
- outreach to evaluate and enrol participants
- a structure for support of teachers
- a peer structure for maintaining and growing a community of Co-Counsellors
- an annual CCI workshop - a way to come together to share and develop skills as Co-Counsellors; build relationship (community); and develop planning, organising, and facilitation skills
- communication with other CCI communities
- culture of validation

Q3. Which aspects of the Fundamentals course in Connecticut support new Co-Counsellors to settle into Co-Counselling?

The following work well:

- a requirement that participants in (weekly) Fundamentals classes co-counsel outside of class
- a requirement that participants in weekend Fundamentals classes co-counsel at least two times a week between the weekends
- participation of experienced people in Fundamentals
- setting up newcomers (especially weekend format) with an experienced buddy Co-Counsellor
- seeing the teacher do his/her own work in a way that is sensitive to maintaining safety
- in weekly classes, Co-Counselling space made available prior to the start of class
- providing a list of class participants which includes at least the first name of each member and their phone number
- working with individuals who have financial constraints; setting up barter arrangements, payment plans, reduced fee, etc.
- culture of validation

Q4. What is available to new Co-Counsellors in Connecticut that might support them to settle into Co-Counselling?

These things work well:

- availability of regular Co-Counselling events (e.g. once a month)
- the opportunity to participate in day-long, weekend, and 5 day
- CCI workshops
- culture of validation supports relatedness, safety and belonging
- staying awake to a culture of validation & importance of relatedness

Q5. What other things have been tried to help new Co-Counsellors settle in?

These things work well:

- having people repeat Fundamentals one or more times either sequentially or annually
- offering classes beyond Fundamentals, "applied" and/or "advanced"
- giving priority in the popular October weekend workshop to newcomers
- encouraging newcomers to participate in the community by participating in the annual CCI workshop organisation/delivery, or the newsletter, or planning/governance activities
- inviting skilled new graduates to repeat Fundamentals as an experienced Co-Counsellor to help demonstrate and model skills; may offer a reduction in class fee for taking on this role
- inviting skilled and aware Co-Counsellors who have been around longer to repeat Fundamentals for the purpose of supporting the teacher, or apprentice teacher, and to provide feedback and observations regarding effective teaching, strengths and weaknesses; may offer a reduction in class fee for taking on this role

Peer support groups have had some success.

'Haus Kloppenburg' Münster, Germany (1976)

Produced in Münster & Edinburgh by Siglind Willems, Johannes Risse, Maria Therling-Hülsberger, JanPieter Hoogma, Anne Denniss & Teresa Tinklin.

Introduction

'Haus Kloppenburg' in Münster was founded in 1976 and was originally set up as a therapy centre by Siglind Willms, a behaviour therapist. She soon realised, that there was a lack in her work concerning the understanding and handling of emotions.

In 1973 she came across Co-Counselling and did her Fundamentals with John Heron in Germany. She understood the importance of catharsis and how it was meant to work. In 1975 she taught her first Fundamentals in Münster for 20 people.

In 1976 she made acquaintance with Johannes Risse, a catholic priest and Pastoral-psychologist. He joined the next Fundamentals in 1977, started Co-Counselling, and judged it so important for him, that they started having sessions and giving Fundamentals and Co-Counselling workshops together.

Since 1975 they ran two Fundamentals courses and two advanced Co-Counselling workshops every year. Each workshop had between 25 to 30 participants. They were mostly their clients or their colleagues. If people wanted to have psychotherapy with us, they told them, that they were expected to learn Co-Counselling, as this gives them the possibility of staying more self-reliant in a therapeutic process and bearing more responsibility for the process themselves.

The main elements of the therapy offered in the centre are 1) cognitive, behaviour therapy, 2) Pastoral-psychology and 3) Co-Counselling. Each of the therapists have their own integrative form of therapy with additional elements.

The centre operated for 20 years without meeting any other Co-Counsellors except some people from the Re-Evaluation Counselling community in Münster. In 1995 Siglind and Johannes sought contact with John Heron and since then they have met with many other CCI-Co-Counsellors from around the world.

Q1. What was your vision when you first set up your Co-Counselling project in Münster?

1. Their vision for Co-Counselling

Siglind and Johannes understand Co-Counselling as a way to handle emotions well, a way to cope with frustration and traumatic experiences, which may occur at any time and a way to reduce large amounts of collected tension due to having been unable to discharge emotions of any kind.

Co-Counselling is the only way they know, to learn how to handle emotional processes not only in therapy but everywhere in life.

Working with Co-Counselling serves also a wider, more cultural and political perspective. Co-Counselling practices can be used in other contexts, for example the acceptance of feelings and the use of free attention in daily life and in conflict situations. In Co-Counselling groups and sessions people learn to accept other people's differences and to bear the responsibility for their own problems and decisions, while proper support helps people to own their uniqueness and take responsibility for their own lives. In this way Co-Counselling supports democracy with self-reliant people with a co-operative attitude.

Co-Counselling and Cognitive-Behavioural-Therapy (CBT) go well together

Catharsis or discharge loosens emotional blockages and opens the possibility of new thinking and new behaviour. But this mostly does not automatically follow discharge or catharsis. Therefore it is important to learn strategies to change thinking and behaviour. Behaviour therapy and its sibling Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) offer good strategies that fit well with Co-Counselling.

2. Co-Counselling and Therapy complement each other nicely

As mentioned before 'Haus Kloppenburg' is a therapy-Co-Counselling centre. Siglind and Johannes see a mutually supportive influence between Co-Counselling and therapy. It is this positive mutual influence that forms the core of their approach.

How Co-Counselling supports Therapy

- **Free attention**
Through all cultures free attention is the basis of acceptance and of proper conditions for lively emotions. Thinking and behaviour are always connected with feelings. If you want to change them you must be able to cope with the emotional aspects.
- **Emotions**
Co-Counselling is the only method they know which teaches non-professionals to handle their emotional processes. It is general, simple and practical.
- **Self-reliant clients**
Co-Counselling teaches clients to be self-reliant and this is reflected beneficially in the client-therapist relationship. Closely related to this is their desire that their clients be strong enough to stand on their two feet
To give people the change to be self-reliant in therapy & outside in daily life.
- People could work out material that came up in therapy, in Co-Counselling sessions. Which means their therapy costs less.
- **After therapy, there is still support**
After having finished therapy clients are not completely left to their own devices, as is usually the case with 'normal' therapy. They still have access to the support system of Co-Counselling. They can have sessions and participate in Co-Counselling groups.

How Therapy supports Co-Counselling

Co-Counselling on its own is sometimes not enough for people. At some point Co-Counsellors can get stuck in their process, have a personal crisis or strongly restimulated by other Co-Counsellors. Here is where therapy can come in, helping to work out the problems and providing suggestions about how to work on them in Co-Counselling sessions or in the Co-Counselling group.

This backup is especially important for those people who come to Co-Counselling out of a strong personal need for help. Quite often their problems are too complicated for them to work out through Co-Counselling alone.

3. Christian inspiration in Co-Counselling

Although 'Haus Kloppenburg' is not a Christian centre, Christianity forms an important source of inspiration, especially for Johannes Risse.

It is easier to understand the written word of the Bible if you can connect it with your own experience, especially emotional experience. Many experiences in Co-Counselling, especially those of deep catharsis have a religious aspect. Reading the psalms, for instance is like having a Co-Counselling session with God's free attention. Johannes thinks of God as the "Centre of Free Attention".

Q2. What factors did you consider to be important in turning your vision into reality?

1. 'Free Attention'

With 'Free Attention' people have the inner space both to witness their own truth and what is going on around them. This enables them to acknowledge differences: differences among people but also differences between intentions and effects.

It is this free attention Siglind and Johannes felt enabled them to witness what was going on and helped them to develop the relationship between Co-Counselling and therapy, their advanced workshops, their socialisation guidelines etc.

2. Consistently requesting therapy clients to do Co-Counselling as well

About 70% of the participants in the Fundamentals come from therapy. The other 30% come from 'mouth to mouth' recommendation. They explain to their clients how Co-Counselling will support their therapy process and how therapy can support their Co-Counselling.

3. The 'Siglind & Johannes' partnership

Maria remarked on how Siglind & Johannes as a pair very much contributed to the success of the centre. Within the dimension of spiritual inspiration they represent the two extremes: Johannes represents more the institutional side of religion while Siglind represents more the free spirit side, as she is on the edge of institutional religion. This was very important for the project, as they exemplified how differences in 'Christian' inspiration and style can 'live and co-operate together in love': aims of both Co-Counselling and Christianity.

For Co-Counselling this means that they represent a togetherness with different faces that appeals to a wide spectrum of people. This supports the teaching of Co-Counselling as well, as people learn best from people who appealed to them. As Siglind and Johannes have a complementary appeal, almost everybody in a group is reached by them.

4. Supporting Socialisation

They recommend non-socialisation in the beginning of Co-Counselling groups. Meeting each other for activities other than Co-Counselling brings the differences between people much more to the forefront and that often means conflicts. New Co-Counsellors are often not able to solve these conflicts and this leads to the break down of Co-Counselling groups. Another reason for recommending non socialisation is that people develop expectations from the very open, emotional situation in workshops or Co-Counselling groups: expectations concerning love, acceptance, harmony etc., which are mostly disappointed.

If groups do Co-Counselling for a longer time and get to know each other very well, they may then much more easily move into socialisation at the level they want.

Hugging

In the beginning hugging was part of their teaching, but they decided that it was not helpful for the Co-Counselling process. A lot of hugging evokes a lot of expectations, especially erotic and sexual longings and this gets in the way of concentrated regular Co-Counselling.

Advanced course 'Open Communication'

'Haus Kloppenburg' runs a workshop on a regular base called 'Open Communication'. In this they teach the principles of good communication based on the work of Watzlawick and others. Other aims of the course are: expressing yourself freely, learning to listen, to handle conflict, to trust another person, to give feedback and to develop self evaluation.

Q3. Which aspects of the Fundamentals course in Münster support new Co-Counsellors to settle in to Co-Counselling?

“Ah, that is a good human experience, I want more of that” experience of the Fundamentals.

The challenge is to facilitate a Fundamentals course in such a way, that its participants want to learn to recreate the experiences they have of their own accord. Crucial aspects of the Fundamentals to achieve this are:

1. **‘Free attention’**

The experience that you can be present for both yourself and for somebody else without having to perform, just being...

2. **‘Sharing’**

Witnessing sessions in the group, sharing feelings and emotions in rounds and the sharing that happens within sessions create together that special sense of ‘shared common experience’ and sense of belonging, so typical on Fundamentals courses. This in turn creates an experience of being among people with who you can really be yourself without keeping up appearances.

The 5 day long Fundamentals (including catharsis, action planning and working with thoughts) seems to be more effective in achieving this “Ah, that is a good human experience, I want more of that” experience than the short 2 day course, which includes only catharsis.

Q4. What is available to new Co-Counsellors in Münster that might support them to settle in to Co-Counselling?

During the Fundamentals and therapy sessions people are encouraged to participate in the Centre’s workshops and the ongoing Co-Counselling groups. These are announced on the centre’s notice board. The centre offers very cheap rooms for groups and one-to-one sessions. There is a ‘Looking for a partner?’ section on the Centre’s Notice Board. Some people seem to use this option, but most one-to-one sessions seem to happen at the centre. Few people seem to have sessions at home.

1. Ongoing Co-Counselling groups

There are ongoing Co-Counselling groups organised by Co-Counsellors themselves. There are also fortnightly Co-Counselling groups at the Centre facilitated by people who want to become Co-Counselling teachers, who teach elements of the Fundamentals. The group sessions are about two and half hours and have 8-12 participants. These ongoing groups provide a long term support space in which Co-Counsellors can work on their stuff, practice their skills and learn healthier ways of socialising in a Co-Counselling way.

2. Advanced Co-Counselling workshops

1. **learning to change thoughts and behaviours**

by role playing, direction holding and training assertive behaviours

2. **childhood experiences workshop**

going through old experiences and overcoming old traumatic stuff

3. **art workshop**

here Co-Counselling is used as a starting point to discover creativity, working with colour, clay and wood instruments

4. **‘Open Communication’ Workshop** (see page. 8)

Although this is not a Co-Counselling workshop, people are encouraged to participate in it, because here Co-Counsellors learn communication skills that in turn will benefit the ongoing Co-Counselling groups they participate in.

Rooms for sessions at ‘Haus Kloppenburg’

If people cannot have sessions at home, they can book a room for sessions in ‘Haus Kloppenburg’ or they can join ongoing Co-Counselling groups that have their sessions at the centre as well.

Q5. What other things have been tried to help new Co-Counsellors settle in?

Monthly ‘Open Co-Counselling Days’

In Münster the ‘Münster Co-Counselling Initiative’ organises monthly ‘Open Co-Counselling Days’ as a first step to creating a local network that is not dependent on ‘Haus Kloppenburg’.

Q6. Is there anything else that you think is relevant?

1. Dealing with people who don’t really pick up Co-Counselling during the Fundamentals

Sometimes it occurs that people attending the Fundamentals don’t really pick up the gist of Co-Counselling. In the centre’s opinion vetting at the end of the Fundamentals is not on. It creates an atmosphere of inequality. Therefore there is no other alternative than to leave those people in peace. When they join an ongoing Co-Counselling group, let the group cope with them in the hope that they will pick it up later.

When a group finds it difficult to deal with this, Siglind or Johannes have a talk with that person. Sometimes when the person is a client, the issue is raised in the therapy session. Sometimes this works, sometimes not.

2. Conflicts

Though the conflict resolution model is available for conflicts, people don’t often use it. When Co-Counsellors have a conflict within a group that can’t be resolved, they tend to leave that group and join another one. There are enough groups available. Occasionally people leave Co-Counselling because of a conflict.

When therapy clients are involved in Co-Counselling conflicts, they are invited to work on it in therapy.

3. People try Co-Counselling out of a need for help rather than a wish for personal growth

This has several consequences. For people who try out Co-Counselling out of a need for help, Co-Counselling is often not sufficient to meet their needs. Generally they need additional therapy.

Teachers who are only trained in Co-Counselling as a tool for personal growth are not equipped to meet the needs of people who come to Co-Counselling for help. Such teachers will have difficulty finding people whose motivation is based solely on a wish for personal growth.

4. Continuity in the organisation

The continuity of Co-Counselling in Münster is based on two factors.

First there are the two 'continuity' people with the commitment to make Co-Counselling work. Siglind Willms and later Johannes Risse have worked together for almost twenty five years. They form the axis and inspiration from which many Co-Counsellors have benefited. The question of continuity remains however. Who will take over the commitment to continuity after them?

Secondly, there is the central Co-Counselling venue 'Haus Kloppenburg'. Everybody knows that if you want to pick up Co-Counselling(again), you can contact the centre.

4. Peership in the Co-Counselling organisation

Finally Siglind & Johannes feel very strongly about peership in Co-Counselling. They really don't want to see things in Co-Counselling organised in the Harvey Jackins style of Re-evaluation Counselling.

They have noticed as well that people start to feel on an equal footing with Co-Counselling teachers when they have Co-Counselling sessions with them. Therefore they see this as good practice in Fundamentals.

Manchester, UK (1984)

By Gretchen Pyves

Interviewed by JanPieter Hoogma & Anne Denniss.

The tapes are processed by Sheila Lochrie & Teresa Tinklin.

Introduction

Gretchen Pyves did her Fundamentals in 1979 and did her Co-Counselling teacher training in 1983 with James Kilty and John Dave Kearny. She started teaching Co-Counselling in and around Manchester in 1984. Her teaching eventually resulted in a blossoming Co-Counselling community in Manchester and a reputation as Co-Counselling facilitator far outside Manchester, attracting many people for her courses from all over the UK.

Q1. What was Gretchen's vision when she first set up her Co-Counselling project in Manchester?

Gretchen just wanted a few Co-Counsellors to work with initially. It grew from there.

Q2. What factors did Gretchen consider to be important in turning her vision into reality?

The helper system

I decided to introduce the helper system which I believed was a critical factor. Once people have done Fundamentals they can join another Fundamentals as a helper for free. There is usually one helper to two new people. She usually taught groups of 30, including 10 helpers. The advantages of the helper system are that it provides:

- a refresher for the more experienced Co-Counsellors, particularly giving them an opportunity to listen to the theory with more experience
- support for the teacher in practical ways e.g. washing up, clean up food
- it speeds up the learning process for the new people, particularly since new people get to work with more experienced Co-Counsellors and learn from that experience
- there is a different energy balance in the group - a third of them are already committed to Co-Counselling - and new people are inspired by this.
In Gretchen's own words: "Now one of the benefits that I found was that the energy balance was different as a consequence ... because there were ten people who were totally committed. ... there was the energy of commitment so if any controversy came up I would have to wait and one of the helpers would say 'Well I don't know, that wasn't my experience because this is what happened to me'. And so it was a total sort of way of teaching - the evidence was there, I didn't ask anything from the helpers, it came quite spontaneously."
- helpers model how to use Co-Counselling sessions as client, this means the teacher doesn't have to and can keep his/her attention on facilitating the group
- the helper system creates a real peer network, because new people see experienced people working on their own distresses. New people get used to working with experienced people right from the start and see that their interventions can make a difference even to someone who is more experienced than them, this helps them gain confidence
- the helpers provide tangible evidence that Co-Counselling works

Her basic co-operation agreement with helpers is that they are there to work on their own stuff, that they are there to work with new people, not each other and that they move round and work with different people. She also asks them to inform her if anyone is too distressed to give free attention although this rarely happened because of the system of getting people usually through recommendation by Co-Counsellors to their friends and acquaintances.

The teacher role.

She developed her style of facilitation over time. In her view the teacher/facilitator is responsible for holding the group together. This makes it difficult for him/her to switch into and out of the client role. She chooses not to be in the client role when teaching, because it is a quantum leap from the client role to the facilitator role. When in the client role it is not possible to keep an eye on the group.

She believes it is important to teach from a deep place of personal awareness and self learning through Co-Counselling and/or therapy, not by rote.

Keep running Fundamentals.

Fundamentals provide opportunities for new people to learn Co-Counselling and for existing Co-Counsellors to refresh their skills and understanding. It also maintains and feeds new members into the community.

Running frequent workshops.

This is important as it enables a deeper understanding of one's pain and to experience a variety of other Co-Counsellors and their expertise.

She used to run a **follow up** workshop 6 weeks after Fundamentals which provided a space for problem-solving. Not everyone came to this, even it was open to anyone who has done a Fundamentals.

Advanced workshops She ran workshops on topics such as bereavement, sexuality and NLP. She got ideas about which workshops there is a need for, by listening to what people said in any workshop or group she ran.

Inviting other facilitators in

This allowed local Co-Counsellors to see different models of facilitation and avoids Gretchen being seen as a guru. It also means that different skills are brought in and taught.

Promoting attendance at workshops

She markets all her courses and workshops during her courses. She also encourages people to attend national CCI UK workshops.

Q3. Which aspects of her Fundamentals course support new Co-Counsellor to settle in to Co-Counselling?

Feeling acknowledged / the spiritual dimension

During Fundamentals most people for the first time feel recognised, accepted and valued for who they are. This key experience is more important than any support afterwards. People recognise that this is what they need and hence they come back for more.

In Gretchen's own words: "I think that one of the most important things for people to actually come back for, is if they have felt recognised, supported, they feel valuable and they feel accepted for themselves, whatever that is and I think that has a lot to do with teaching, the non-judgementalness, the acceptance part ... all behaviour has a positive intention so to look behind behaviour in terms of people, where they're at, and it's working with the heart and with the soul that's attempting to come through all the stress, the shit that we have been hiding, at that level, that's the focus, not anything else that anyone's done, but that is the focus in teaching, that we address the soul, the spirit. I don't use these words because that puts people off but that is essentially what I am doing ... it is that aspect that I think has

much more to do with why people come back because they will come back for more, they will be hungry to be accepted, they will be hungry for being able to be regarded and supported and have permission to say what they have never been able to their “persecutors”, in a session and so feel relieved of carrying these burdens around. say . That’s the key.”

Also...

The helper system provided new Co-Counsellors with potential partners for after Fundamentals.

Q4. What is available to new Co-Counsellors in Manchester that might support them to settle in to Co-Counselling?

- Fundamentals follow-up days
- becoming a helper on Fundamentals
- advanced and themed Co-Counselling workshops
- encouraged to attend several residential workshops throughout the UK
- the newsletter which publicises workshops and other opportunities.

Q5. What other things have been tried to help new Co-Counsellors to settle in?

Nothing.

Q6. Is there anything else that Gretchen thinks is relevant about teaching Co-Counselling?

Fundamentals is about Co-Counselling sessions not about socialisation.

Gretchen’s view is that if people have difficulties with other Co-Counsellors outside of sessions it’s up to them to sort it out. Her responsibility is to teach people how to function in a Co-Counselling session. Outside of sessions normal socialising rules prevail, not Co-Counselling rules. If used properly Co-Counselling should be self-eliminating. If someone’s behaviour in sessions is persistently problematic, other Co-Counsellors will choose not to work with that person. This means there is no need to formally exclude people from the community, or for more experienced Co-Counsellors to get involved in the situation. If people have problems with others, she teaches them that they can use Co-Counselling to look at their own stuff in the situation with another .

In her own words: “I say this, you are normal people, the only thing you have learned is how to have a session. I’m not advocating how you deal with other people in a social setting or group. They come and say: ‘A Co-Counsellor has said...’ and I say ‘Was that in a session?’ If it wasn’t, then I remind them that they’re allowed to say anything they like. And sometimes if I’ve said something judgmental in a remark, they say ‘That is very judgmental’. I’ll say ‘Yes I’m very judgmental’. - ‘But you’re a Co-Counsellor’. - ‘I’m a Co-Counsellor. I do not judge in a session but I can be as judgmental as I blooming well like outside in a social setting’. Co-Counselling is about teaching how to have a session, I think there can be a lot of confusion, if this point is not made clear.”

'Free attention'

The term 'Free attention' is not appropriate out of a session. It is a particular state to enable another person to work. This is where the cross-over from Co-Counselling to social setting can get muddled, if we are not very clear about it.

Interrupting the pattern

Gretchen's view is that if people want to point out other people's patterns they are probably running a pattern themselves. She's not interested in this kind of input from people. She believes people will follow their own paths and learn at their own rates. This kind of 'challenging' behaviour is not helpful, nor is it supportive. Co-Counselling gives people an opportunity to work through their interpersonal difficulties with another Co-Counsellor not involved.

Introducing RC techniques into Co-Counselling

She's not against this as long as people say that this is a re-evaluation technique, not a CCI technique when they introduce it.

Teaching big groups on Fundamentals

You need a big room! Big enough for 15 couples to sit down and work together. A carpet is good for this.

Birmingham, UK (1986)

Written by Bob Smith: I do not actively co-counsel at the present time but I have taken an enormous amount from Co-Counselling and would like to contribute to its development into the millennium. I run Birmingham Counselling Centre and am currently training as a Gestalt Psychotherapist.

Introduction

In 1986 Liz Sewell and Bob Smith who had experienced CCI elsewhere in the country wanted to set up a community in Birmingham. Liz invited Tony Wilson & Heather from Bath to run an Intro evening and this was followed by a Fundamentals in Bob's house.

It was hard work getting regular meetings going but Liz and Bob assisted Mike Bray from Shropshire and Christine Rivers from East Midlands on Fundamentals courses at the local college and then after going on a teacher training course themselves eventually also started running courses. There were soon Fundamentals running alongside each other with many in the community coming through during the 80's to take on teaching roles including Jonathan Cole, Jane Harrison, Edit Bodis, Jennie Harris and Pam Michel.

As the years passed the Co-Co telephone list shot over the 100 mark and a community was established with regular community meetings, focussed peer groups and many others going on teacher training courses.

Last year 10 of us (who had facilitated Co-Co Fundamentals or workshops in the past) went away for a social weekend together. Only I is still actively Co-Counselling!

The answers to the questions below address how the current Birmingham Co-Co community developed in the 80's and how it supported new Co-Counsellors to settle in. The community has been created at different stages of its development and is now different to then.

I also very briefly note some aspects that I think contributed to people leaving who were committed to Co-Counselling.

Q1. What was your vision when you first set up your Co-Counselling project in Birmingham?

Pattern Crackin'

A supportive Co-Counselling group or community in Birmingham which could provide support for a set of values that were more permissive than the broader community provides and be challenging of chronic patterns. A more emotionally aware community, but not just a new friendship circle for those who have difficulty making friends in life.

Q2. What factors did you consider to be important in turning your vision into reality?

- For there to be others with similar vision, energy and enthusiasm.
- To offer regular Fundamentals courses.
- To include opportunities for further development and support after Fundamentals.
- To offer opportunities for those in the community to train up in group facilitation and group process.

Q3. Which aspects of the Fundamentals course in Birmingham supported new Co-Counsellors to settle into Co-Counselling?

Our Fundamentals was over a longer period than usual, usually co-facilitated with additional support of assistants and with never more than 12. We ran it over an academic year giving plenty of time for the digestion of the Fundamentals, the build up of trust & interpersonal contacts and the integration into the community. Where possible we tried to incorporate full days as we missed out on that particular depth and quality.

Q4. What was available to new Co-Counsellors in Birmingham that might support them to settle in to Co-Counselling? How well does this work?

We provided a structured but very choiceful second year with more intensive weekend workshops, just for Co-Counsellors. This included a workshop on the use of intensive contracts, with facilitators like Rose Evison & Richard Horobin. Others facilitators included Pat Young, Dick Saxton, Tony Wilson, Gretchen Pyves, Mike Bray, Chris Nicolov, Meg Bond, Jilly Cooke etc.

We were aware that across the country there were different styles of teaching Fundamentals with emphasis on different aspects. We were keen to experience the differences so we could decide our own direction.

Someone from the Re-Evaluation community came in to explore issues around oppression which they had some very sharp thinking on, which also helped build bridges.

Thus we provided more structural support AFTER the Fundamentals than had hitherto been felt politically appropriate for CCI.

This acknowledged that certain chronic patterns can dictate a role in relation to others for the fledgling Co-Counsellor. For those who have, for example low confidence in themselves, their Co-Counselling ability and in phoning up others for sessions, Bob felt they could drift away from the community if there was nowhere for them to receive support to challenge that pattern, (it happened to be a pattern he struggled with too!) The idea was to provide support to challenge familiar roles, patterns and blind spots while acknowledging that these will not disappear overnight or indeed over 40 hours. One of the features of these workshops was that they were bringing up issues for participants as well as regularly bringing Co-Counsellors together which encouraged the easy setting up of sessions.

Q5. What other things have been tried to help new Co-Counsellors settle in? How well did they work?

Co-Co Philosophy: Staying Clear in Community Relationships

Acknowledging that the 'here and now' relationship is different to the 'client in charge' Co-Co session. The community is made up of here and now relationships. People's lives operate on here and now relationships.

Blind spots, in here and now relationships, may not be addressed in a Co-Co session on a free attention contract. Blind spots are in effect chronic patterns. If these are not being worked with effectively they can feed into the community unawarely and create unsafe boundaries. Some say the use of intensive contracts is important.

I feel that Co-Counselling is enormously effective at developing individual insights and awareness. As a client I work on my perception of the issues involved in my life and discharge the distress coming up. For me this safe (and in the past for me cathartically addictive) place can also become a way of avoiding some aspects of relationships. To address this I always felt that here and now encounter type groups were important and we incorporated these into our second year and separately into the community. The skills to run

such groups are different but I know some teachers will usefully incorporate group process into the Fundamentals. This is difficult when the Fundamentals is heavily structured.

When we ran a group process workshop it became uncomfortable for several of us so at break we all went away and discharged our distress in sessions and fell better. What we did not do was address it in the actual here and now process of the group, so our use of the Co-Co session was to keep some processes hidden from the live group relationship.

Q6. Is there anything else that you think is relevant?

Co-Co has utilised ideas from many other models and put them together into a package that is very effective. However further developments in other models have taken place since the 60's and may offer the opportunities for further developments for Co-Counselling. I know several of the teachers in our community in the past chose to develop their therapeutic understanding further by training in other therapeutic models. I wonder whether the work with chronic material is an area with particular scope for particular development. If there is any lack of safety, fuzzy boundaries, avoidance of deeper work or collusion on patterns, people may not stay.

Intensive contracts

I conducted a limited research project many years ago, as part of a masters thesis on Co-Counselling, that confirmed at that time that very few people in our community were using intensive contracts. This could have been because they lacked the confidence to use it, did not see the benefit of it, felt it was inappropriate or that it was just something to be used on very rare occasions.

I think there is a danger of chronic patterns continuing undisturbed when intensive contracts are never used and I also think the community risks being less clear and having blurred boundaries that can make it less safe for others.

Scotland (1992)

By JanPieter Hoogma with the editorial support of Pete Fantes

Introduction

In 1991 I moved from the Netherlands to Edinburgh, Scotland. When I was originally asked to teach Fundamentals in Scotland, I said 'No!' because I saw that there was a very high drop out rate and no real follow-up support to keep new Co-Counsellors in Co-Counselling.

Q1. What was your vision when you first set up your Co-Counselling project in Scotland?

My main aim was to make Co-Counselling available to as many people as possible: I was thinking of thousands of Co-Counsellors in a region like Edinburgh instead of the tens that seemed usually to be the case. Because attaining this was too big a job for one person, my next and related aim was to create a big pool of really committed volunteer helpers. This was important as the community was quite depleted at the time and I didn't want to keep doing most of the work.

1. A network carrying several communities

Many years of experience have led me to the conclusion that communities have a filtering effect. People who share beliefs, lifestyles, values etc. tend to join in, while people with different backgrounds tend to stay out or leave.

A separate observation is that Co-Counselling communities, tend to have short life cycles. This seems especially so for very informal communities such as those in Glasgow, Birmingham, Den Haag, Hamburg, which died after some years of blossoming.

So in order to envisage 1000 Co-Counsellors in a region I had to come up with a better idea than that of a 'Co-Counselling community' with 1000 members, while not wanting to abandon the usefulness of the "community" concept.

My vision was of a Scottish Co-Counselling *Network*, big enough to carry several Co-Counselling communities and also those individuals who would not feel at home with any of the available communities.

A network provides a greater variety.

I see a Co-Counselling network as carrying a huge variety of beliefs and lifestyles, e.g. Marxism, Buddhism, Christianity, Socialism, new age spirituality, travellers, professionals etc. A Co-Counselling network therefore can give space equally to Co-Counsellors who think that 'spirituality' is the new paradigm of Co-Counselling, and to others who think that this is nonsense. A single community, however, is likely to reflect only one set of shared beliefs. The variety provided by an extensive network is attractive and provides Co-Counsellors with different ways of using Co-Counselling.

A big network supports small, local communities that otherwise have a smaller chance of survival.

When small communities are embedded in a bigger network, their members are more likely to attend Co-Counselling events elsewhere in the network, weaving their connections with other Co-Counsellors and finding some additional Co-Counselling inspiration. This tends to strengthen the Co-Counselling within the small community. In times of crises the small community is more likely to ask for and to get support. And that could help them to stay alive.

2. A motivated bunch of volunteers supporting the network

Keeping the network running, I was sure, would involve a combination of tasks such as running a variety of workshops, supporting new Co-Counsellors, and administrative jobs. These latter would include producing an attractive newsletter and keeping the membership and financial administration up to date. I dreamt of a bunch of motivated volunteers who would carry out these jobs and look after the network.

However, people do not start Co-Counselling to do voluntary jobs of this sort: they want it for sessions, access to workshops and mutual support. Despite this, quite a lot of Co-Counsellors are prepared to take on small, short term jobs that have a clear beginning and an end. But only a few are willing and able to offer a long term commitment that involves a lot of effort and persistence when things become difficult. In my experience only 5-10% of the Co-Counsellors will be prepared to make such a longer-term commitment to Co-Counselling. Out of 1000 Co-Counsellors there will be 50 to 100 committed volunteers, which seems a good number to me. And here a big network of at least 1000 Co-Counsellors comes in handy.

But the challenge remains: how to 'breed' enough committed volunteers within a small community?

Q2. What factors did you consider to be important in turning your vision into reality?

It is easier to lose a freshly trained Co-Counsellor than to find a new person who wants to explore Co-Counselling. Therefore I spent quite a lot of time thinking about which factors contribute to an unnecessary loss of newly trained Co-Counsellors and what could be done about that.

1. Co-Counsellors vote with their feet

Co-Counsellors tend to leave Co-Counselling if they don't easily find what they want or need. Most Co-Counsellors are happy to attend workshops and enjoy the support on offer, but generally are not prepared to get involved in organising. It is very rare for anyone to get involved in organising the workshop they need, or even in taking part in discussions about what sort of workshops they would like.

Closely related to this is another phenomenon:

Co-Counselling lacks a good feedback culture. If there is something that Co-Counsellors don't like, they process that in sessions (or not) and very often they don't feed this back to teachers or workshop organisers. The 'Positivity' culture itself inhibits feedback: Co-Counsellors are encouraged to express the 'good and news' of a Co-Counselling event, but NOT what they have found lacking.

Based on these factors, my best guess about why new Co-Counsellors leave is that Co-Counselling does not meet their needs. The challenge is to try and figure out what these needs are, and to try and meet them.

2. Co-Counsellors do socialise!

Healthy socialising is important to Co-Counselling for two reasons.

Firstly, many people come to Co-Counselling with a lot of distress around past socialising, parents, siblings, peers, teachers etc. Many problems Co-Counsellors have stem from earlier socialisation problems. Sessions may help to overcome past distress around socialising but they do not necessarily lead to more functional socialising skills.

Almost 90% of CCI Co-Counselling manuals is about sessions or session related material. Co-Counsellors, however, spend a lot of time with each other outside sessions and they seem to like it. Co-Counselling workshops are often used to try out new socialising behaviours. Yet in the CCI Co-Counselling literature peer socialising issues such as (sexual)

attractions, conflicts, assertive behaviour, let alone communication skills, relationships or group dynamics seem to be an afterthought.

Secondly, a good socialisation culture that supports healthy connections between people forms a useful breeding ground for committed future volunteers. **About this, more later.**

Healthy socialising is threatened by some factors

The lack of socialising skills can lead to disturbing difficulties: breach of safety, control and manipulation or power abuse, distressed sexual attractions and split up of relationships, gossip, to name but a few. In this context it is wonderful that so many Co-Counsellors with difficult relationships in their background seem to be able to relate to each other so well. However, having been a Trust Person and having listened to many safety issues at the 'Conflict & Safety in the Network' workshop, I think that many of the more difficult issues remain hidden under the rule of 'Confidentiality' and the shame people sometimes feel about having experienced such difficulties.

The "Celebrate the person, interrupt the Pattern" theory

One of the biggest threats to a healthy socialising culture is the "Celebrate the person, interrupt the Pattern" philosophy, rife in some parts of CCI Co-Counselling. However nice this theory may look like at face value, in practice it works differently. If you choose to do so, it is easy to label other people's behaviour and thinking as patterns. Basically this labelling is totally arbitrary and subjective, depending on the eye of the beholder. Being able to label another person's behaviour or thinking as being patterned provides the justification that you have it right and the other person wrong. From here this theory allows one Co-Counsellor arbitrarily to dismiss the other person's belief system or behaviour, or push through his or her boundaries.

Co-Counsellors who are in need of feeling right are provided by the "Celebrate the person, interrupt the pattern" philosophy with the tools and justification ('patterns are wrong') to get that feeling, by looking for and spotting patterns in other people. A further problem is that some pattern-spotters seem to need an audience. They prefer to talk to other people about how patterned they consider their target person to be and sometimes even publish their views, if a Co-Counselling newsletter allows them to do so.

Once this is happening in a Co-Counselling network, the effects on the settling in of new Co-Counsellors are disastrous. Many of them don't like what is happening and will leave Co-Counselling before having really explored what Co-Counselling has on offer. This has happened in Scotland where two years of my Fundamentals people have almost totally disappeared and the network membership has halved.

Challenges to healthy socialising in Co-Counselling

If we don't want to forbid socialising among Co-Counsellors like in Re-evaluation Co-Counselling or to lose Co-Counsellors because of socialising difficulties in Co-Counselling, then we have some challenges at hand.

1. How can the development of healthy socialisation skills and an awareness of its pitfalls be promoted?
2. How can we develop a Co-Counselling theory of socialisation that is based on the concept of 'empowerment' instead of that of 'spotting and interrupt patterns' or 'oppression'. E.g. how can a Co-Counsellor learn to deal with difficult behaviour by other people without needing to label them or their behaviour as being 'wrong', oppressive or patterned, just disagreeing or disliking. This then can be a base for providing (new) Co-Counsellors with empowering support to deal themselves positively with safety, conflicts & complaints issues.

3. Supporting Co-Counsellors to learn to facilitate

Learning to facilitate workshops allows Co-Counsellors to meet their own needs and those of other Co-Counsellors. Once facilitation skills have been learned, a Co-Counsellor can set

up his or her own themed workshop, which contributes to the variety of such workshops available in the network, which in turn provides more opportunities for new Co-Counsellors to settle in to Co-Counselling. The variety of workshops offered is one reason for the success of the International CCI meetings.

The challenge is how can Co-Counsellors be encouraged to develop the skills, the confidence and motivation to organise and facilitate workshops themselves?

4. 'Breeding' committed volunteers

As I said before, I was dreaming of a bunch of committed volunteers, enthusiastically running workshops as well as doing jobs essential for keeping the network going and growing.

Roughly speaking there are two kinds of Co-Counselling volunteers. The majority of them are prepared to take on small, short term jobs that have a clear beginning and a clear end. Only a few, however, are willing and able to offer long term commitment that might require unexpected effort and persistence when things become difficult. It is this kind of volunteer we need most, as they often provide the conditions that enable others to take up their small jobs.

Therefore the challenge is: How can we 'breed' these long term committed volunteers? How do we need to look after the Co-Counselling garden so that there will eventually be a blossoming of committed volunteers? I have discovered three necessary 'fertilisers' so far.

1. A really good experience with Co-Counselling

Only if people have the experience that Co-Counselling has made and is still making a real difference in their lives, they might take up commitments to volunteer. Supporting Co-Counselling comes then from within.

2. 'almost 'family' like connections with other Co-Counsellors

It was in my chats with American and London Co-Counsellors in the eighties that those people who were committed to Co-Counselling and carrying the work were people who were connected to each other in 'family' like bonds. And generally they developed these bonds in long term support groups. The same I observed here in Scotland. When the conflict in the Scottish network came to its climax, it was the members of the long term support groups who took up the commitment to continue the network. Without them it would have certainly collapsed.

3. Healthy and functional relating patterns

In the same way that real life families vary in functional and dysfunctional behaviours, Co-Counsellors and support groups vary in their social and functional skills. People would not come into Co-Counselling if their relating to themselves and others were effective in the first place. I have come to the conclusion that many long term support groups provide their members with the opportunity to experiment with their social skills and by doing so to develop more functional relating skills.

However, Co-Counselling support groups usually seem to have short life spans and to create disappointment in their demise. Therefore my challenge was to explore ways in which I could advise new support groups to get the best possible start for a long and healthy life. If I could find this out, I would discover how a breeding ground can be provided for committed volunteers, so needed for the blossoming of Co-Counselling.

Q3. Which aspects of your Fundamentals course support new Co-Counsellors to settle in to Co-Counselling?

1. Integration of Co-Counselling with daily life

The more clearly Co-Counsellors see how Co-Counselling can be integrated in daily life, the more likely they are to use it for their daily emotional needs.

Telephone Co-Counselling

brings sessions in almost immediate reach when needed, especially when there is a list published of Co-Counsellors generally available for telephone Co-Counselling. However, it is not everybody's natural inking to reach for the phone. Therefore people need to acquire telephone Co-Counselling experience during the Fundamentals before they are likely to use telephone Co-Counselling.

Encouragement to create a mental and physical space at home for sessions

If people are at ease with having sessions at their homes, arranging a session loses the complication of finding a venue for that session. Students are requested to have several sessions in each other homes between the Fundamentals weekends anyway, but during the course we review in the group how it is to have sessions at home. This provides the opportunity to exchange tips and suggestions for people who find it difficult to have their sessions at home. Obviously the three weekend format provides more opportunities for reviewing than the two weekend format.

Hand-outs and free manual

There are Co-Counsellors who read books and use them to find guidance. Therefore the supply of a free manual and course handouts, give them the chance to read them, when they need them.

2. Supporting transition into the network

Experienced Co-Counsellors coming in at the end of the Fundamentals.

During the Fundamentals the students often build up a great familiarity with each other. This regularly seems to form a barrier against having sessions with people they don't know: "I can't have a session with somebody I don't know". Quite often there is also the belief that they as freshers are not good enough to be a counsellor to experienced Co-Counsellors. These beliefs can only be challenged by reality. Therefore I ask experienced Co-Counsellors to come into the Fundamentals on the last day, and to have three sessions in a row with the new people. In this way the freshers get the experience of having sessions with unknown, experienced Co-Counsellors and of having three sessions in a row. It is nice to see time and time again how positively confronting this experience is to their previous beliefs.

Encouragement to attend the next Community day.

The monthly open Co-Counselling day provides freshers with the opportunity to meet new Co-Counsellors and to have sessions. I noticed that if the host of the next Community day is among the experienced Co-Counsellors coming in on the last day, more freshers are tempted to attend that Community day.

'Do not socialise until...' advice

I recommend my students *not* to socialise until they feel confident as client and as counsellor. If they start socialising then, they have at least the Co-Counselling tools and partners available to work on the restimulations and disappointments socialising may bring. If they start socialising too early, they are at risk of losing Co-Counselling as well. I explain also the potential pitfalls of (early) socialising.

3. Teaching the Rescue Triangle

The Rescue Triangle describes common patterns that people may have learned that control other people's behaviour. The Rescue Triangle describes those patterns and how they interrelate with each other. Knowing about the Rescue Triangle will help Co-Counsellors to become more aware of when they are acting in controlling ways. Knowing about the Rescue Triangle will help the new Co-Counsellor to move towards being in charge of him/herself and will help to leave others in charge of themselves.

One of the basic principles of Co-Counselling is that people are responsible for themselves. This holds both for sessions and in socialising. If I need something, it is my responsibility to ask for it. If I don't want to do something I can say 'no'.

4. Building confidence

The more confident people feel with their Co-Counselling, the more likely they will explore the opportunities on offer in Co-Counselling. Three aspects are important here: clienting confidence, counsellor confidence and last but not least the confidence to ask for what one needs.

Developing this confidence takes much more than can be offered during the Fundamentals. The development of **Counsellor confidence** can be quite easily supported during the Fundamentals. I present the counsellor role as basically an attitude, not a skill to be learnt. “Being present for your client”, “Being at ease with the client” count for at least 80% of the counsellor role. Most students pick this up very intuitively. The other 20% consist of counsellor’s skills that people pick up when clienting. However these skills are rendered useless if the underlying attitude of being present for your client is not there. It is this emphasis on attitude instead of skills that helps people very much to relax into their counsellor role.

Secondly the above mentioned meeting with experienced Co-Counsellors is also helpful. Here they realise that “being present for the client” is enough as the experienced Co-Counsellors actually run their sessions themselves. This is the great benefit of the “client in charge” attitude.

5. Extra support outside the main course

Some people pick up Co-Counselling more easily than other people. On occasions when I saw people having difficulties picking up Co-Counselling during the Fundamentals, I offered them free extra tuition sessions with me. Also after the Fundamentals they were sometimes offered regular Co-Counselling sessions with one of the teachers. Generally these extras supported them to settle into Co-Counselling.

Q4. What is available to new Co-Counsellors in Scotland that might support them to settle in to Co-Counselling?

As said before, Co-Counsellors vote with their feet. Most new Co-Counsellors seem to prefer to have sessions, need to meet other Co-Counsellors to find partners, attend workshops and organise the support they need.

1. Workshops

Facilitated workshops

- **CoCoPlus day workshops**
These monthly workshops (9 a year) offer a link between Co-Counselling and other ways of working such as focusing, interrupting negative thoughts, using voice, body movement, thus supporting the development of clienting skills. Or there is a link offered between Co-Counselling and specific aspects of life, like loss & bereavement, relationships, sexuality etc.. The facilitators are both experienced facilitator and skilled (often professionally) in their particular area. Because of their variety they appeal to quite varied audience of Co-Counsellors.
- **‘Too Big Issue’ workshop over 8 evenings**
When people finish their Fundamentals, often they still do not believe they can use Co-Counselling for really big issues. For that you need a ‘real’ therapist, so they think. This workshop is set up to show Co-Counsellors how they can work systematically on a big issue over a period of 8 weeks. Most Co-Counsellors who have done this workshop are still in Co-Counselling.
- **Residential, Facilitated Weekend Workshops**
At least twice, often 4-5 times a year these workshops are organised on a similar basis as the CoCoPlus workshops.

Peer led workshops

- **Community Days or Open Co-Counselling Days**

These are organised on a monthly base (12 a year) and provide mainly opportunities for sessions in pairs or in groups. In the early nineties they were very well attended, numbers were regularly around fifteen people. With the increase of the ongoing support groups and other attractive alternatives attendance at them has diminished. New people seem to attend them only once.

- **Residential Peer Workshops**

Since 1991 there have been at least 2 residential workshops of a weekend or longer in Scotland. In the beginning there were the SummerWeek and New Year Workshop. These were gradually replaced by the McCoCo (long CCI-UK weekend) and Lauriston Hall (week) workshops that attract Co-Counsellors from outside Scotland as well.

- **Peer Day workshops with a theme**

The organiser of a workshop of this type publishes the theme in the newsletter and asks other Co-Counsellors to join and to share their experiences related to that theme. The facilitation of that group is shared with the group and often decided on the day itself. Themes have been: "Women in middle age", "Shyness", "Coping with depression". I consider this types of workshops as an example of Co-Counsellors taking responsibility for their own needs. How can Co-Counsellors be supported to do this more?

'How to run a workshop' workshop

Although this workshop does not immediately support new Co-Counsellors to settle into Co-Counselling, its spin-off does. It encourages more experienced Co-Counsellors to run workshops during the residential workshops or to organise a peer group with a theme. This benefits in turn the new Co-Counsellors. Anne Denniss and I ran that workshop at least once a year, often twice.

2. Long Term Support Groups

As I said before, long term support groups are crucial for Co-Counselling. They not only provide Co-Counsellors with a regular support base and with the opportunity to experiment with their social skills and by doing so developing more functional relating skills. This deepens the sense that Co-Counselling 'works'. In this way these long term support groups eventually provide Co-Counselling with committed volunteers skilled in relating to other people. Therefore I see encouraging Co-Counsellors to join or set up a long term support group, as a cornerstone policy of creating a healthy Co-Counselling network.

Start up workshop

Here I try to explain how new support groups can give themselves the best possible start up for a long and healthy life. One of the most important pre-conditions is that each candidate is confident with their clienting and counselling skills. People need to be able to work on what it brings up to be a group member. Also they need to know what group dynamic difficulties they are likely to meet and how the group can prevent the group dynamics from overpowering the individuals. In other words, how each group member can make sure that the group keeps meeting their needs.

Most support groups who attended this workshop and stuck to the recommendations or experimented skilfully with them, have now been running for several years. Also they are now providing the core of volunteers who keep the network running in difficult times.

3. Trust Persons

Where people deal with people, things can sometimes go wrong between them. Often Co-Counsellors can cope themselves, whether or not in a Co-Counselling session.

However, new people especially sometimes need to share or discuss with someone else the difficulties they are having with another Co-Counsellor. A Co-Counselling session is not always sufficient and is not an appropriate communication tool for sharing. Sometimes people need to hear about different ways of handling the relationship or of clienting.

Trust Persons come in here. They are obliged and committed to full confidentiality. If necessary, they can consult or ask each other for support without mentioning names. Their first task is listening, complemented by suggestions that empower people to deal with the problem themselves. It is only as the last resort that they get involved in 'conflict resolution' meetings, if requested.

Although the system of Trust Persons has its limitations in managing conflicts in the network, it has supported several new Co-Counsellors to find their way in Co-Counselling.

Q5. What other things have been tried to help new Co-Counsellors settle in?

Buddy System

At one time we ran a buddy system for new Co-Counsellors. During the last weekend when experienced Co-Counsellors came into the Fundamentals, new Co-Counsellors were offered the opportunity to choose an experienced Co-Counsellor as a buddy to have sessions with for a certain period. In the rare cases that this offer was taken up, it was quite successful. However, the take up was very low and not really worth the effort to get it organised in this way. It doesn't diminish however, my impression that when a new Co-Counsellor pairs up with an experienced one, this often results in a good settling into Co-Counselling. Therefore the question remains for me, how we can encourage this pairing up?

List of experienced Co-Counsellors who are willing to have sessions with new people

In the Co-Counselling newsletter there is a list of names of experienced Co-Counsellors who are willing to have sessions with new people. In reality new Co-Counsellors hardly made use of this list. However, having a list, whether or not it is used, signals a welcome to new Co-Counsellors.

A peer review group

Sometimes a Fundamentals group gels well together, sometimes not. In the last case it is not useful to suggest to them to come together for a set amount of time for revision of the Fundamentals stuff. For the groups who did gel together, a review group did not really work. The groups started quickly to socialise and with the exception of some individuals, most people disappeared from the Co-Counselling scene. For me an indication, that too early socialising can be an important factor why people don't get really settled into Co-Counselling.

Q6. Is there anything else that you think is relevant?

Teaching Co-Counselling is more than teaching Fundamentals alone.

It is very seductive to believe that teaching Co-Counselling only involves teaching Fundamentals. I know from my own experience what hard work it is first to find people for the Fundamentals and then to teach them. Often I have breathed a sigh of relief at the end of the Fundamentals. However, it is my belief that teaching Co-Counselling Fundamentals is nothing like enough. Rather, taking the Fundamentals course is the beginning of a new Co-Counsellor's progress via post-Fundamentals support into long term support groups and ultimately into facilitating their own workshops. Of course not every new Co-Counsellor has to go through this development. But if teachers don't have their eye on this long term perspective, almost no new Co-Counsellor will follow this path.

In support of this belief, all you need to do is have a look at areas with teachers who believe that Fundamentals is all that is needed. You will often see that depending on their efforts and the local situation quite a lot of people take up Co-Counselling, but they don't stick to it in the longer term. More importantly there is no development of a core of committed volunteers who will eventually keep their network going and lighten the task and responsibilities of the teachers...