

Mogaz

HQ1060

P75



PRIME TIME

A Project for Women in their Middle Years

NEWSLETTER #11

OCTOBER 1979.

304-620 View Street, Victoria, B.C.

VBW 1J6

telephone 388-6101



RESULTS OF 1979 PRIME TIME SURVEYS

Over the last year, Prime Time has conducted several surveys of Prime Time women. In keeping with our objectives of collecting and providing information about women in middle years, we wish to share in brief some of the results of this years research. We offer these findings as impressionistic; the information collected has been of use to us in the pursuit of our mandate and has helped us evaluate ourselves as well. Complete reports on each study are contained in the Prime Time files for those interested in the methodology, the designs, the complete tabulations and analyses. We wish to thank all of you who participated in our questionnaires for your time and interest.

PRIME TIME COUNSELLING EVALUATION/SURVEY (February, 1979)

A survey was done of women who had come to Prime Time for counselling purposes. The objective of the survey was to A) evaluate the service being given by P.T., and B) to gain information on women's perceptions of their counselling needs. Approximately 150 questionnaires were mailed out, and 70 returned. There is some distortion of results, because it is clear that a number of women interpreted "counselling service" rather differently. We had intended that it refer to counselling session(s) with our counsellor. Responses at times indicate women were referring to Prime Time as a whole, the office, and/or the various programs offered.

The varying reasons women gave for coming for counselling were as follows: "seeking involvement", "to ease stress of family and marital problems", "because of depression and booze", "loneliness", "reassurance re menopause", "for encouragement and direction", "for positive ideas", "for help in juggling employment and family needs", "to discuss and get affirmation of choices being made", "to get support", "to get help", "to sort out angry feelings", and "no where else to go".

Slightly less than one-half the respondents who had counselling came for one session, the majority of whom felt the one session had been enough. Of the rest, the clear majority found 2-3 sessions to be sufficient.

The respondents rated the Prime Time Counselling Service as follows:

<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>No Response</u>
1	6	20	34	9

When asked what they liked best about the service, the responses of the women fell into categories: A) the attributes of the counsellor herself -- "caring", "understanding", "open", "friendly", "helpful", "able to listen", "relaxed", "down to earth", "warm", "concern for my needs as a person", and B) the nature of the "service" itself -- "informal", "available", "flexible", "friendly drop-in atmosphere", "the time given me", "a place run by women for women", "hospitable", "confidential", "that you can drop in and discuss any number of problems".

A section of the survey asked questions to ascertain alternative resources to Prime Time's counselling service that women of middle

age might utilize. Friends, doctors, and ministers (in that order) were the predominant responses. When asked if they would go to specific existing services in Victoria, e.g. Human Resources, Mental Health Centres, The University of Victoria's and the Citizen's Counselling Centres, DARS, psychiatrists, psychologists or social workers, the No Response level was very high (average over 35%); such responses may indicate lack of awareness of such services or perhaps that such services are not perceived as applicable to them. In all instances (except for the Citizen's Counselling Centre where yes and no's were of equal proportion), the "no's" were of slightly higher proportion than the "yes's". The reasons given for WHY NOT fell into the following categories for the majority of them: "I don't need intensive counselling", "stigma", "not applicable to me", "not acquainted with this service", "too formal", or in the case of private practitioners, "too expensive", "can't afford it" or "not aware of any".

Respondents were asked if they would be willing to pay for a counselling service. The majority indicated a willingness to pay if fees were reasonable but most felt they were unable to pay due to limited incomes.

PRIME TIME IMPACT SURVEY: (Summer 1979)

A final survey of Prime Time women was undertaken as a summer student project as a "consumer follow-up" which might A) provide a fuller profile of the kind of women who respond to the programs developed by Prime Time; B) determine what impact Prime Time has had on individual women's lives, and C) to further define women's perceptions of the needs and concerns of and services required for women in middle years.

The Questionnaire was mailed out in July 1979 to 490 women whose names were on the Prime Time files; 116 questionnaires were returned (23.6%) (Summer time!). A synopsis follows of those sections where the responses were deemed reasonably valid and of possible interest/significance to others.

Personal Profiles

Ages varied from 35 - 65, the clear majority in the 46 - 55 year range. 56% were married, 26% separated or divorced, 15% widowed, 3% single. Educational level: 18% less than grade 12, 16% had graduated from high school, 22% had some college, 22% "other training", 22% were university graduates. 38% of the women had been in Victoria for over 15 years, 31% less than 5 years.

The responses to the various Employment questions were answered erratically and not particularly consistently. In answer to the question are you presently employed?, 51% of the respondents (N=86) were working, 49% were not working. 38% of those working were working full time, 30% part time, 21% on a casual basis. A significant number indicated they would like to change their careers at this point. The main obstacles to this were identified as: inadequate education/training, lack of experience, lack of child care, lack of support, family obligations. Age was also perceived as an obstacle by some, even by those in the younger age bracket. Of those not in the labour force, a large majority indicated they would like to be, largely on a part-time basis. These respondents also indicated they have encountered difficulties in re-entering the labour force. The majority of these who used Canada Employment Service did not find it helpful.

In the Health section, 72% of the women viewed their health as good, 27% saw it occasionally as a problem, and only one woman said her health was poor.

The majority of respondents had been involved with Prime Time through P.T. courses and/or P.T.'s Orientation Program. Other categories of



Barbara Selley



RK

stated involvement were Advisory Groups, Support Group, Interview, Volunteer or Counselling.

Only 54.4% of the respondents stated they had expectations when coming to Prime Time; the majority of these were looking for an opportunity to speak/be with other women, to pursue self-growth, to become involved in something constructive. 61% said their needs had been completely or partly fulfilled.

60% of the women were able to list skills, information or insights they had gained through their involvement with Prime Time that have been of value to them since. The majority of these lay within the categories of "better understanding of their own needs", "feeling more assertive or self-confident" and "being more aware of others' needs".

44% of the women indicated they had made specific changes in their everyday life which they attributed to their involvement with Prime Time. These responses included the following categories: "more capable of dealing with my life", "do more things for me", "am more assertive", "have found friendship and involvement", "went back to school", "got a job". "Stopped feeling sorry for myself".

A majority of women expressed the opinion that communication with and support of other women was the aspect of their contact with Prime Time that was most important to them. It appears that many women wish to learn about and associate with other women of their own age both for social reasons and to assist in their own growth process.

Re Needs of Mid-life Women

The latter point was further substantiated by another question about their needs and concerns, in which 84% of the respondents stated one of their needs as being "the opportunity to talk to other women".

Over 51% indicated a need for information about community resources. 43% said information about re-training, adult education and health were personal needs of theirs. About 40% identified "opportunities to talk to sympathetic counsellor" and "information about jobs" as applicable to them.

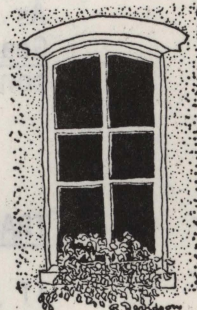
Concerns identified as "unique to mid-life women" through an open-ended question fell in the following categories: "need to stand on own two feet", "coming out of isolation after years in the home", "adjustment to divorce, separation, widowhood/children leaving home/early retirement", "finding time for ME".

In answer to the question "if you wish to enrich your life in any way, what difficulties might you have in achieving these ends?", the following were the major obstacles identified (several women checked more than one category of difficulty): N=116 Lack of energy/motivation (48); financial (31), lack of education (26), transportation (15) co-operation of family (10).

TELEPHONE SURVEY OF 37 PARTICIPANTS IN SHIFTING GEARS COURSES (Summer 1979)

The purpose of this study was A) to assess the attitudinal and behaviour changes in a cross-section of women who have taken a Shifting Gears course within the last two years, and B) to ascertain the extent of the changes that occurred as a direct consequence of the course. The sample consisted of an arbitrary selection of women who had participated in a specific leader's Shifting Gears course over a period of two years. She conducted the interviews personally over the phone; average interview time was 30 minutes.

It would appear that the majority of women (33 women or 89%) have a better awareness of their own needs and a clearer sense of their priorities and values. Twenty-four of these women (65%) are also satisfied with their allocation of time for family roles and have continued to make progress



in decision-making. The majority of the women felt they had achieved some of the goals set during the course. The goals they had achieved, and continued to set, were as varied as the women themselves; they included answers such as "trying to be more tolerant", "no longer try to run everyone's life" to "taking courses", "going to work" to "growing old gracefully".

It appears that the accomplishment of goals was not easy. The obstacles identified fell primarily in the following areas: "family commitments", "health", "lack of energy", "self-doubt/lack of self-confidence". However, the majority of them did seem to be overcoming the obstacles as indicated by the overall tone of the responses.

Community resource information did not appear to be perceived as important by the majority of these women (in contrast to other findings). Contact with other women of similar interest, such as fellow participants in the course, appears to be of importance to over half of the women.

Summary:

The course Shifting Gears appears to give participants a greater awareness of their own needs and a clearer sense of their priorities and values. Progress also seems possible in the areas of time allocation, decision making, and the achievement of goals. The latter was accomplished, by the majority, only after overcoming personal and familial blocks to goals. The level of self-fulfillment was on the whole fairly high. As a consequence the conclusion can be drawn that the course Shifting Gears was a success as far as the majority of the respondents were concerned.

TRANSITION HOUSE

If you are a woman who is physically or emotionally abused, you can call VICTORIA WOMEN'S TRANSITION HOUSE for help. The 24-hour number is 385-6611.

INFO/HEALTH

The B.C. Medical Association and the Victoria Medical Society are pleased to join the Victoria YM-YWCA in sponsoring Info/Health, a series of programs about contemporary health care. The next program is November 1st and the subject is Diseases of the Chest - chronic bronchitis, asthma and emphysema. Each program starts at 8:00 p.m. at the "Y" - 880 Courtney Street and admission is free.

VICTORIA RAPE/ASSAULT CENTRE

The Victoria Rape/Assault Centre is in need of public contributions. Government funding has not increased in several years. Expenses have. If those of you reading this are able to make a donation, the collective contribution will give us all the strength of knowing that we still have an active service available for women and children. Contributions are tax deductible. Send whatever you can to Victoria Rape/Assault Centre, 1947 Cook Street, Victoria, V8T 3P8.

