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Speakers: Jack Cooper, M.D. and Rev. Lester Eisenberger
R.F.D. #1 57 Locust Hill Avenue
No. Salem, N.Y. 10560 Yonkers, N.Y. 10701

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concepts in handling drug abuse.

Participants:

George Abich	Frank Haronian, Ph.D.
Bruce Bernstein, Ph.D.	Frank Hilton
Alfred Brauch	Hilda Hilton
Fran Borst	E. Kotsos, M.D.
Jack Cooper, M.D.	Ruth Lofgren, Ph.D.
Rena Cooper	Jesse Morris
Hamida Cooper	Joseph Soti
Lester Eisenberger	O.R. Turkkan, Ph.D.
Evilio Freire	

Psychosynthesis Research Foundation

Room 1902

40 East 49th Street

New York, N.Y. 10017

Some Results of Melding Psychosynthesis
and Religious Concepts in Handling Drug Abuse

Jack Cooper, M.D. & Rev. Lester Eisenberger

INTRODUCTION:

I'm Jack Cooper, psychiatrist, and working at the present time as Clinic Director for the Department of Correction of Westchester County, in Valhalla, New York. The Department of Correction consists of a jail, a penitentiary that will receive inmates with sentences up to a year, and a women's penitentiary. The total number of inmates in the Department of Correction is 500 - more or less - with approximately 200 officers.

I began working at the penitentiary in August of 1965, at which time it was not the nicest place in the world. It was under the Welfare Division, and the population was about 80 percent alcoholics; at that time drug users were just beginning to come in.

In recent years the population of alcoholics gradually diminished and there has been an increase in drug users, drug abusers, and drug-related criminals.

The Rev. Lester Eisenberger, who is a minister at the Yonkers Assembly of God Church, and I began working together at the penitentiary. He began to study some of the methods we were using in Psychosynthesis and felt that they had some role for Teen Challenge* and began to use some of those under the supervision of Dr. Potter and myself. He became our best student, and he was able to put these techniques into practice with drug abusers.

After about two years Les came in one day and said, "I'm a minister, not a psychiatrist," but I said, "You've graduated; now you're one of us!" Les got so good at it that he was called "Doc" around the pen. He began to develop group therapies, etc.; and it wasn't long before other centers of Teen Challenge throughout the United States found that the people that they sent to the Farm in Philadelphia didn't stay very long, ' the ones that came from the Brooklyn Center stayed. So the other centers wanted to follow Brooklyn's example. Our panel here tonight came from the Brooklyn Center and they will tell their stories as we go along.

It's great to work with Les, and it's a lot of fun to work with members of Teen Challenge. It is my pleasure to introduce to you, now, the Reverend Lester Eisenberger, who will introduce the three members of Teen Challenge who are here.

The Reverend Eisenberger:

I'm very happy to be here, because for some years I've thought that there could be a relationship between psychiatry and religion.

I was working at the penitentiary simply as a minister; and when I heard that Dr. Cooper was coming, my heart with my ideals and aspirations hit bottom. I thought, "Oh, my! This is all we need, now, to have a psychiatrist in here, and everything will be ruined." There were quite a number of inmates who were beginning to talk to me and we discussed the Bible and they began to feel they were getting something worth while from the Bible. But later on, when I learned to know Jack, I discovered--to my amazement--that he's not the ordinary psychiatrist.

Since that time I have been able to learn a great deal from him, and I have been able to incorporate it in the work I am doing at Teen Challenge. This is basically an organization which is religion-oriented for the help of drug addiction. The fellows that come into this program usually do so for one purpose: They want to kick the habit of drugs. They hear that it's a religious program, but that doesn't mean too much to them until they get in. When they actually see what's going on some of them get frightened.

The program is fundamental evangelical in nature, which accepts such fundamental beliefs as that of man not being able to cope with his own problems, that the guilt problem can be relieved a great deal when he accepts what the Bible teaches us: "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth"; and I can't tell you where God came from; I don't know where His existence is, but there's something inside that has had meaning to me.

When a fellow comes into the program and has an understanding of some of these things, he has what we call a "religious experience." I had learned, through working with various persons in the penitentiary, as well as outside, that there are two things to my mind that are very important to help a person to develop a personality, and I would say first of all is a religious experience, and second is a therapeutic experience, and third is a love experience. If you have these things going for you you can pretty well keep yourself together.

Teen Challenge, in the beginning, made many disparaging remarks about therapy and psychiatry, and I can understand it. If you read the book "The Cross and the Switchblade," you would get the feeling that everything had been done there without any kind of professional help.

In the beginning this was very true. However, since that time, Brooklyn Teen Challenge has found that if there is a place where people can bring out their feelings and their emotions, they can begin to know themselves in a better way than they previously had, so a development takes place which has tremendous value.

My work with fellows at Teen Challenge has been basically on the physical image. I had a professor of psychology who made the statement to the class, and I use it in working with the fellows. He said, "The deal is not that you stand naked in Macy's window, but are you ashamed to be naked?" And this has a great deal of meaning to these fellows because they can begin to relate to some of their own fears, and some of their own shame, and any one who has used heroin and related drugs knows exactly that all of their feelings have been cut off, and when they are not on drugs they are not able to function. As soon as they have some drugs, they can begin to function as they would like to function.

This is the basis of my working with the fellows. I have talked to Jack about it, and some of the techniques have really run them "up the wall," but on the other hand many are effective.

These three fellows who are here with us are "G", "E" and "J". G. went through the program, and when he first came in he was intending to stay only a short time. I don't know how long E or J intended to stay; but all of these fellows had a therapeutic experience before they had a religious experience.

Don Wilkerson, the Director of the Center, asks me sometimes, "Have you been seeing So-and-so?" (referring to one of the boys). He says, "I do notice that when they (the ones who have had therapy with Rev. Eisenberger, Ed.) come into the chapel service, their relationship to the other fellows around the center is entirely

different because they begin to open up and begin to lose some of their paranoid feelings." He recognizes that when you help a fellow to open up he is more susceptible to receive the things that are taught concerning the Bible, and concerning his religious experience.

Now I'll let "G" speak for himself.

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"G": I came into the program about two years ago; I started with drugs at the age of fourteen; started with alcohol, went up to marijuana, LSD, hashish and cocaine. At the age of twenty-one my parents spoke to me about attending college, where there was an architecture school. After being in college for a while my mind wasn't set right because of my LSD experiences, so I had to quit college.

I have a sister who is a medical doctor, and she spoke to me about the methadone program; she took me to a private doctor and I was treated with methadone in the pill form, but it didn't work for me, because I went from getting "hooked" on cocaine to getting "hooked" on methadone. I went to a psychiatrist and he told me some of my problems, but still I didn't want to listen, I didn't want to recognize them.

Then my sister spoke to me about Teen Challenge and said that it was a religious program, that Jesus Christ had changed the lives of many drug addicts who had been there, and she spoke to me of the religious experience that many guys had had. I thought it was a bunch of baloney, to tell you the truth, but I figured "One more program, one more chance."

I went to the service on Saturday, and there were about 35 to 40 ex-drug addicts, and some of them had been on drugs for as long as twenty years. The minute I saw a drug addict kneeling and praying to God it was something I had never seen before, or singing hymns in chapel; and they told me that Christ was the answer. I thought it was a "con" job, and I didn't really believe in it.

But I figured these guys really have something; there must be something to it. Either they're fooling themselves or fooling the program; so I studied them for a week or two, and then Dr. Eisenberger called me into his office, and I did have some hangups about my body, my physical image, like he was talking about. After the experience I had with therapy in his office, I was able to recognize God in my life and not be ashamed to kneel down and accept Christ; to know that there was really a Christ to come into my life. I can't say my desire for drugs had gone when I did that, but I can truthfully say that something deep inside took place and I felt clean.

I attributed this to the power of God, and it's been two years, now, since I came into the program, and I have been free from drugs. My life has been different; I have a purpose, and I'm planning to study psychology; and what I'm doing now is counseling with drug addicts in the program. My intentions are to help others and to let them find what I have found in Teen Challenge.

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"E": I came to Teen Challenge three months ago. I didn't start using drugs until I graduated from high school. I went to college and I saw that what was happening was drugs. I started smoking pot; from there I took acid; after I took my acid trips I became a bit unstable emotionally, so I decided to go to a therapist. I tried to get into various places but they didn't want to accept me. They told me there was hardly anything wrong with me, so I spoke with my psychology teacher who was a Freudian, and he referred me to a psychoanalyst. I went to the psychoanalyst for two years, and I learned a lot of things about myself. He gave me a lot of theories about my personality, but nothing concrete where I would have the power to

change myself. I knew what was wrong, but I didn't have the power to change.

I learned so many theories that I got a job as a drug counselor, and you can imagine what it was for me, hung up on drugs, and I'd go around to schools telling them not to use drugs, that they were bad. That went on for about three months, but I couldn't take it any longer; it was too unreal.

I have a cousin who went through the program of Teen Challenge, and as I was down and out, I figured it wouldn't be so bad - you get food for free, and you get a chance to go to Pennsylvania out in the country - so I thought I'd go to Teen Challenge.

My first experience there was going to the chapel, and I saw all those drug addicts praying and screaming, and I got scared and thought: "What have I gotten into?" I felt I had a problem and had come into an asylum to get well!

But I thought: I had made the decision to go there and no matter what I would stick it out - "If I have to get on my knees and pray, I'll pray." Then I thought, "That cat over there, he looks neurotic. That fellow over there, he looks like a schizophrenic," and for two weeks I can truthfully say I held back all my feelings; I put a lid on.

Then I went to see the Doc, and I remember the first thing he told me: Am I ashamed to be seen naked? And I said, "No, I'm not afraid to be seen naked," and he said, "Well, take off your pants." I said, "What?" "Take off your pants." I thought he must be crazy, and then I thought okay, if it's going to help me I'll take off my pants. So I took off my pants. And I felt so relieved, and I thought, "Why, there's nothing to it!"

That same week I went into chapel, and I started praying. I couldn't believe it, but something happened, and I had to pray. And I was angry at God, because I always felt that He was the one that had put me in the position I was in, and I felt about Him, "If You really exist, why did You do this to me?" And as I went on, that night that I prayed, I felt better; I felt I was relieved; I felt happy, I was smiling.

About three weeks later I started praying in Calvary Baptist Church, and I started laughing, I felt so good inside, and I couldn't understand it. I sat down to think about it, and I couldn't rationalize it out; and I thought, "It has to be God, and this is God." And I was praying and praying and it got better and better, to the point where I can truly say that it is Jesus Christ. Spiritually I was dead when I came to Teen Challenge. I was blind; completely blind, spiritually, and that's why I couldn't understand what was going on.

But after coming to know Jesus Christ, spiritually I'm alive, and also emotionally I'm alive; because before, I thought the highest thing that man could achieve was knowledge, but there's more than knowledge, because there's understanding; I feel good. I don't know why, but I understand that I do feel good, and therapy gives me the tools to work with and God gives me the power to change myself.

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Eisenberger: "J"?

"J": About the age of fourteen or fifteen I started on drugs. I had started drinking and smoking and pills. Then I tried out the other stuff, and I started dealing and making some money, and that's when I started getting hung.

I went to different programs, to the methadone program, to different

hospitals. Those hospitals are mostly rap sessions, and they'd yell at you and you can't let it out. When they see that you're getting a little angry they say "you're getting up-tight now" and yell at you some more.

Once in a while, in hospitals, people talk to you, and every time I'd go on a methadone program, I'd be out about a week or two at the most, and then I'd be back on drugs again. I'd say to myself that I'd just do it once again, and then stop but every time I'd be hooked again.

Then I went to this hospital, where there was a Christian lady, and she told me about Teen Challenge; that it was a religious program, so I turned it down and didn't go.

Then I got hooked again and ended up in the same hospital, and the same lady talked to me and said, "J, you're back, why don't you try Teen Challenge?" And I thought: She's right; I'm here again; but I still didn't want to hear it.

Then she spoke to my parents, who spoke to me, and I said I'd go to Teen Challenge and just stay about three weeks to get off the streets for a while, to get healthy and put on a little weight, and then I'll leave and I'll be all right; I won't touch it again.

So I went to Teen Challenge, and I heard these people telling me about Christ and about religion, and I wanted to say I was just in there to get on my feet and I'm not staying in there more than a month.

Then I went into the chapel, and I thought these people were nuts, praying and all that. So for the first two weeks or so I'd make excuses and say I was sick because I didn't want to go to chapel, and finally they said I should go because I should feel better by now. I would go to church and they would tell me to pray, and I would sit down and bow my head and close my eyes, and people all around would be goofing off and sounding like nuts, but then I would look at them and see how serious they were whenever they spoke about Christ. They were ex-addicts, all of them, and I would think how they had been addicts and they were so changed; and they told me they had thought the same thing when they came in, that everybody was nuts.

I thought I would always think they were nuts, and if they would ask me to pray I would be ashamed. When I came in, like the Doc said, I was really up-tight. The drugs really had all my emotions and everything all tied up, and like all these kids, without the drugs I'd be real shy and could hardly talk and be all up-tight. When I first came in I would rarely talk to anybody, and when people would talk to me I would just listen.

When "Doc" had me down in his office he asked me if I'd mind taking off my pants, and I said I wouldn't mind, but I froze, and one day I went down and had the intention of doing it to show him I'm not scared, and I kept saying I wouldn't mind. Then the Doc said, "Why don't you take them off to see how you feel"; and we talked for a little while, and I told him I wouldn't mind, and then finally I pulled my pants down, and I felt different.

It didn't make sense at first, but then I realized later, that a lot of my feelings inside were helped. I had always been shy around people, and talking about these therapeutic experiences helped me a lot.

Afterwards I would go to chapel and I wouldn't be scared like before, and

I'd get down and pray, because I had a lot of these up-tight feelings coming out of me, and in chapel I decided to get down and pray, and then I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, and in my heart I could see how real He was, and I'd say: "He's real, He's working with me."

From then on with the help of the therapy I felt more comfortable with people and in talking to them, plus I've got Jesus in my heart and He helps and strengthens me all through the days. It didn't take my urge away, just like that; you still have the temptation, but now I have the strength to overcome these things; I'm not alone any more.

Eisenberger: I would like to add that there is a direct relationship in how a person sees himself physically and how he sees himself emotionally. When they strip themselves physically, they automatically begin to strip themselves emotionally, and a lot of their anger and hidden emotions come out and they can accept their physical body as it is.

Many of the fellows that come into the Center--and I believe this is true with many fellows who use drugs--have a very poor physical image, and are just not able to see themselves as a physical being. They have a low self-esteem, and when you can begin to help them to raise their self-esteem, and see themselves as a different person, they find it very easy to begin to relate with other people in the world around them.

We have an iron-clad rule that anything that is done in therapy we do not discuss outside, but with "J"'s permission, I would like to tell you about an experience he went through some time ago.

"J": It's all right.

Eisenberger: A couple of weeks ago J. came to me in the cafeteria, and he said, "You know, I get up-tight every time I go to the hospital. I get sick almost every time."

I said, "Well, I don't have time to see you now because I'm booked full with fellows who want to see me, but I will see you and I think you can be helped."

And so, when he came into my office we did an ISP.* I took him in fantasy into the hospital, with all of its odors, and with his fears. He described a feeling of his stomach turning over and a lot of other fears. We then turned it into a beautiful experience as a birthday party at which he met his girl friend. Are you still going with her ("J": Yes.) J. you tell us how the ISP went.

"J": It was a hospital that I had gone to most of my life. I had been in the Emergency Room so many times, and every time I would go there the odors would make my stomach tighten up and I would feel all up-tight, and I would get sick.

One day "Doc" told me to imagine that it was a party like my birthday party. He said to imagine one of the nicest experiences I had ever had, and I said

*(Initiated Symbol Projection - Leuner's Guided Affective Imagery)

that it was a party and it was real nice, and all my friends were there; and it felt comfortable, and the smell in the air was the perfume the girls were wearing, and there was a warm feeling with everybody.

So "Doc" told me to just imagine that I was going into the hospital and this was the place where the party was and the odor of the hospital was the perfume odor of the party.

Eisenberger: And that ended the session, and now tell us what happened when you actually went back again to the hospital.

"J": I had to have some stitches in my finger, and went to the hospital; and while I was waiting, I said to another guy who had to wait, too, "Man, I remember so many times I've been here in the Emergency Room, and nervous and up-tight." Only that day I felt so calm and not even thinking about being in the hospital, and I told this other guy about it, and how I didn't know how it worked but I felt calm, and everything, there in the hospital.

Cooper: G., you were into the heroin scene pretty tight, weren't you? You have all the scars and marks on your arms? ("G": They're practically gone now.) You have a picture of yourself, don't you, when you were in that scene? How much did you weigh? ("G": A hundred and twenty pounds) You were in pretty bad shape, weren't you? How many times did you have hepatitis?

"G": I never had hepatitis. My sister is a doctor and she had needles, so I used new ones all the time.

Cooper: E., did you have hepatitis at any time? ("E": Yes, I had it.) How many trips did you have on LSD? ("E": Ten.) And you have marks and scars, do you? ("E": Yes.)

Cooper: And "J"? Obviously, you've been through the mill, haven't you?

"J": Yes. I had a lot of bad trips. (Cooper: Did you have hepatitis any time?) No, but I had the symptoms; I was yellow three or four times. (Cooper: You had hepatitis, then--a mild case.)

Cooper: What interest is that no matter how ill the people are, whom we see, they respond to the methods of Psychosynthesis. After going through the Teen Challenge Program they come back to the penitentiary and become counselors. They go into the community and we now have eight or nine that are involved in programs.

As these three said, they had the therapeutic experience; then the religious experience followed. But there are problems, because sometimes men go overboard in this. Some appear to be mentally ill, but Assagioli's pamphlet on "Self-Realization and Psychological Disturbances," helps us to understand what is happening. For instance, it was often said in the past that religion made them go berserk, but now often we are finding religion is helping them become better persons.

There was one individual who had spent some nine years in the penitentiary, had a self-realization experience, and now has become an ordained minister who visits the jail and is bringing his light.

The warden of the pen--he is also a psychiatric social worker--is studying what is happening, and the pamphlet on "Self-Realization." The Commissioner, while he doesn't understand just what's happening at the pen, he knows it's good, and he likes it.

Things are happening. We just don't have any riots in the pen or the jail. Where others have difficulty getting staff, we're having to turn away applicants--some very fine people too. During the financial cutback last year, whereas the other clinics couldn't get any extra personnel, the Department of Correction got a full time social worker in the clinic where I work.

It's a very interesting thing to watch this expansion; and now we have ministers of every faith - rabbis, priests, every denomination - for instruction and guidance in the use of Psychosynthesis techniques. So there has been a melding in Westchester County Penitentiary of religion and psychosynthesis, and with that I'll open the floor for discussion.

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DISCUSSION

Haronian: Have these three men here been connected at all with the Westchester County Penitentiary?

Cooper: I don't know. Have any of you been in the Westchester County Penitentiary? (Reply in the negative.) These three men work in Teen Challenge with Les, and these are three that he has worked with and they have had a religious experience.

Haronian: I have another question which may be somewhat lengthy, and I'd like to have your comment on it.

It seems to me that these three men have described a similar sequence; trying to understand what's happening to them in a psychological way, going through therapy, or studying psychology, or getting into groups of one sort or another, finding something there but not the answer; going to Teen Challenge, being in the chapel situation as they describe it, each of them feeling: This is weird! In each case they described this prior to their first interview with the therapist.

Then comes the interview with the therapist, which always involves an invitation to expose themselves, which they all accepted, and which seems to have been in each case, the crucial turning-point; the business of physically exposing themselves had, as you said, Dr. Eisenberger, the emotional and spiritual effect of making them expose themselves in a soul way, which was the beginning of a sense of relatedness to Christ and a sense of Christ growing within them.

In each case they all said the same thing; then went on to say, "I couldn't shake the habit immediately, but I knew that I could make it then." Is this true, fellows, have I described it accurately?

Cooper: This is common to these three, but there are others.

"G": We didn't lose the desire, but we had the strength to fight it.

Haronian: It seems to me you all described the same pattern, am I right? Have I misrepresented the pattern at all?

"G": Not at all.

Haronian: Then my next question is: What happened in that first contact with the therapist when there was the invitation to expose yourself? It seems to me that was

the crucial turning-point, but there was a certain buildup in each case.

I have other questions. For example, what if you hadn't been in analysis for a couple of years; if you hadn't had the rap sessions in the various groups that you had gone to? Was that crucial to the whole buildup?

Cooper: These are three men who have had similar experiences, but all the cases we see are not the same. We may have some men, for instance, in the penitentiary, who will have various psychological experiences on these ISP "trips"; then Les comes along and he picks them up, and some member of his group takes over. In other words, it's a continuous operation. Tonight we have a kind of cross-section of three men, but there's a lot more to it than that.

Haronian: These three described the same process, and what I'm asking is: Is this the way to do it? If you eliminate one point here or one point of the process there, would it fail? Or is one particular part the crucial thing and the rest really less important?

Eisenberger: I can speak for fellows who have come into the program and haven't had any encounter groups or any other therapy. First of all, when I work with a fellow I do determine to some degree whether he can handle what I'm doing. If I feel he can, then I'll take a chance on it. If I see he's getting up-tight I let it go. I don't force him or push him. But some of the other fellows have gone through a similar experience without any assistance on the outside with an encounter group, or with any sessions with a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

The key was in that self-realization, that they could accept that physical image. One of the reasons why this works so successfully is the balance of religion. I wouldn't attempt to do it under any other circumstance. They come into chapel, where they have an orientation to the Bible, Christian teaching and so on, and so they have a certain degree of protection there.

Haronian: Then that occurs within the context of a religious setting?

Eisenberger: That's right. And if I feel that these fellows are able to handle this self-exposure--experiences of fellows on the street have been many and they have had homosexual experiences, most all of them, and it gives them the fear: "Am I a homosexual?" And by this facing of themselves they can get into some of these experiences on the street, the feelings at this particular time, and in many cases settle once and for all where they are now.

Otherwise, they have been walking about for years and years saying to themselves, "Am I a homosexual because I became involved in homosexual acts for the sole purpose of raising money to get drugs?"

Haronian: When you challenge them to take down their pants, you always almost have to bring up--

Eisenberger: It almost comes out automatically, and I'm able to deal with one of the most crucial problems that they're faced with when they come into the Center - because of their self-image. If their image has been homosexual and they're fighting against these feelings, this helps them to bring out their feelings and they can dispense with them, once and for all.

Haronian: Fine, but what about the person--hypothetically--who hasn't had homosexual experiences because he didn't have to in order to get the money for drugs; would the

same effect be there?

Eisenberger: That's hard to say, but of the fellows we have had at the Center, there's practically no one who has not had homosexual experiences in the street.

Haronian: That's an important aspect of the challenge, then? (Eisenberger: That's right.)

Hilton: I have a question which possibly Dr. Eisenberger or "G" will answer. You said the pattern was, one, the therapeutic experience, and two, the religious experience, and third the love experience.

I think, "G", you said your first experience was the therapeutic with Dr. Eisenberger. Could you tell us what the therapeutic experience was, or is this too personal?

"G": For your benefit I'll answer it. When I was eight or nine years old my brother had a bicycle that had two seats, and he sat me on the back of the bicycle. The pants that I had on were too long for me; I think they were my brother's that I was wearing. Anyhow, they got caught up on the back wheel of the bicycle, and this stopped the development of my genitals, because I got hurt. So they had to send me to special doctors for special medicine to make me develop the right way. I always had that complex that I wasn't the same as other men; that I was smaller than they were and my genitals were not as big as theirs. Always I had this complex inside of me.

I don't know how "Doc" did it, but he got back to my story, and he asked me if I would be ashamed to take down my pants. I was putting up a fight that I wasn't, but I really was, inside; and by taking my pants down I related the whole story, and I found out. I'm not saying that that was all my problems, but it was the biggest problem in my life. So I was able to recognize that I'm a man just like any other man, and was capable of everything a man could do.

And I wasn't ashamed to walk around. Like J. said, meeting with older people I always was shy, and that could be one of the reasons. I did have some homosexual experiences for money, which came out, too, just like any other drug addict; and by taking down my pants all these things came out.

I had been to a psychiatrist before--and every time I went to him I had to pay him twenty dollars--and he said that my doctor for methadone wasn't giving me enough methadone, and he used to write a prescription and give me another 20 mg. I went to him four or five times, and every time I went to him he would say, "are you feeling a little better? Are you feeling okay?" And I'd say, "I'm feeling a little better," so I told my sister I wasn't going to him any more.

Turkkan: This exposure and the religious experience and the things that go on; it still is not clear to me what chemistry takes place, what works on you, where you see the light and feel changed. Can you give a clearer understanding of what it is that is working? What are the techniques you are talking about that make it work?

"G": If I had had the therapeutic experience without the religious, I don't think I would be here tonight. That's my answer to that. If I didn't recognize God in my life, somebody bigger than I am, who would help me in times of trouble, I'd be on drugs tonight, some place.

Cooper: This has been our experience in most therapeutic endeavors that fail. In essence, you may open up a cesspot or sewer--if you wish to think of it in that way--and if you clean up the mess, you must provide something to fill up the vacuum. You have to add the spiritual dimension.

They have to have the therapeutic experience first, and then other members of the ministry have to be there to help them to integrate and to place their lives on some basis on which they can live and support themselves as responsible people. It's a true melding of psychiatry and religion.

Morris: Is it moral values that are being brought to bear, or is it the spiritual?

Eisenberger: The spiritual is emphasized. There are certain moral values which are established from the Bible.

Morris: Could you elaborate a little more on this? Is the religious experience the traditional one, or is it experiential, or do you use a special process which brings out something more experiential than what is usually done in the church or synagogue?

Eisenberger: The Teen Challenge is basically the fundamental, evangelical type which we find in the Bible, teaching these fellows from the Bible that man is a sinner, he's not able to help himself, but there is power from Christ through God to help these fellows pull themselves together, and it is His sustaining power that keeps them going; and I can't explain it.

Morris: Do they go into special chants in groups? Is there anything additional--

Eisenberger: No. They simply preach or bring a message from a portion of the Bible, and relate it to human development and human experiences, and so on. There is an invitation to come front and pray, and there's someone there who will pray with them; if they have a spiritual problem, they're there to assist them with this spiritual problem. If there are other problems of an emotional type there are persons there to help them. But the experience is something that they go through themselves.

Cooper: In psychiatric facilities, as a general rule, the minister is not really an integral part of the team. At the Penitentiary we are bringing in the ministers as part of the team. Hopefully, as this movement expands, more ministers and more people with a religious background will move on into hospitals and into other cities, rather than just meet patients on Sundays or hold funeral services when they die. At Grasslands*we have pastoral counseling programs, where 60 ministers from all denominations are taught, and the most important aspect of it is what they learn at the penitentiary.

I would like to see a hospital, where patients are, shall we say, dying of cancer, with half of the hospital for physical treatment and the other half for spiritual treatment.

Eisenberger: Before I met Jack, naturally my preaching was along a certain vein. After I met him--well, something had to give!

One time I delivered a sermon on what hate does, connecting it with psychosomatic illnesses. Later a woman I had known told me she had had cancer and she had been healed. The physician who was treating her for the cancer had wanted to perform a hysterectomy, but she had refused. Continued prayer brought her to the point that

she passed this thing and she was healed, and the same doctor gave her a clean bill of health.

What she told me was something she had never told anybody else. She said, "I'd like to tell you that what you said in your sermon revealed the cause of my cancer, because I hated my mother-in-law. She had insisted that I pray that I be delivered from cancer, which made it worse all the time. But I came to the point where I said in my prayer, "Please forgive me for hating my mother-in-law,"--and I meant it! And within a half-hour I went to the bathroom and passed the cancer, and was healed."

I just thank God for Jack, because I was brought up in a religious home; I had gone to church most of my life. I studied for the ministry; I've been preaching for several years, but I never learned as much in school as I learned from him, because one of the most important things that he taught me I never learned in school. He said, "If you ministers would get out of the Epistles and get into the teachings of Jesus, you might be able to do more good for your people," and that's exactly what I've been doing.

Borst: Dr. Eisenberger, how effective is the treatment of Psychosynthesis in treating drug addicts? Is it 10%? What is it?

Eisenberger: A person who wants to be helped is motivated by seeing someone who is being helped. I'm not concerned about what happened years ago, although I may have some of this information on an inmate which just gives me some knowledge of their background. I ask, "What do you want to do with the life you now have, regardless of what you did five years ago, or how many times you may have been paddled by your husband or your mother or your father. This is where we are; what are you going to do from this point on?"

I can't tell you how Psychosynthesis works; but let me tell you something about "G". He had a particular feeling about his mother, and he could never understand it, to such a point that when she went to kiss him he one time wiped it off his face. One day we were going through an exercise in our group - we weren't talking about his mother, or what she had done or hadn't done - and it was during the exercise that "G" realized why he had this anger against his mother. When he realized it, it disappeared.

Question: Which exercise was that? Do you remember?

Eisenberger: I remember it very well, but it's absolutely kooky. I asked them to pull their pants up to their knees and close their eyes and rub their legs.

They got in touch with some of their own feelings, and when "G" was rubbing his legs it took him back to things that happened in his childhood which were traumatic, and because of this he lost his ill-feeling toward his mother.

The first time I met Jack I related a Teen Challenge case to him; and he said, "You tell Don Wilkerson to send that fellow to the farm and give him a cow," and I thought, "Wow!"

I didn't go down and tell Don Wilkerson what to do with the fellow, because Teen Challenge had maintained their establishment for some time without any kind of therapeutic assistance; but eventually this fellow got to the farm and he went to the barn to work with the cows and this was the making of him.

Question: You mean what he needed was a cow?

Cooper: He needed the experience of actually caring for something alive, which he had been denied throughout his whole life situation up to then. The Teen Challenge people were quite concerned about sending him to the farm; they didn't think he was ready for it; but from everything that I could see on the presentation of the case, I felt that this would be the thing.

Eisenberger: The farm is in Rehrersburg, about 30 miles from Harrisburg.

Brauch: I'd like to ask a question about techniques. I don't understand what an ISP is.

Cooper: It's the Leuner technique, with modifications. In the penitentiary we're more apt to use the standard Leuner situations. Religion is the added dimension that we're looking for with therapy.

Brauch: Do you find there are other specific situations that seem to be most effective?

Cooper: Yes. (Eisenberger: Whatever will work I use.) The intuitive aspect, plus the techniques of psychosynthesis. There are over forty of them, and you use the ones that will fit.

Les, in working with the techniques, has the intuitive faculty, which immediately helps him, plus the spiritual aspect of an ordained minister--this makes a true team approach.

Bernstein: I'm trying to understand more specifically, I guess, what it is that works, and get a better hold of it. Can you talk about what hasn't worked in terms of a persons' development, or the kinds of people that you have not been able to help? Are there certain types of people you can't reach?

Eisenberger: I hardly know how to answer, really. It all depends upon the person. When they have come to a point where they want to be helped, that is the starting point. I cannot, and no one can, help a person unless they have a desire to be helped.

In a setting like Teen Challenge, you have both the religious and the therapy aspects present, and what helps is for one fellow to see another fellow. Suppose you had been a junky and in jail and you looked at these three guys here, and were told that all three of them had taken heroin, you would not believe it. You would never think that at one time they were junkies on the street.

So on entry into the program newcomers see this sort of thing, and begin to say, "There must be something to it." And some fellows will come in scared to death of me, because I'm not exactly a mild fellow. I don't have time to break down their resistance. If they have a lot of resistance I don't make any attempt to break it down. But if a fellow wants to be helped, then I'm willing to take a chance, hoping that he can have the self-realization experience, and then a religious experience.

There have been fellows who, like one who came in angry and aggravated, went up to the Dean of men and said he wasn't going to see me. So I said, "Leave him alone." Then later on, one day he was working in the kitchen with another

fellow who had come into Teen Challenge at the same time; and he noticed how this other fellow was getting loose, how he was talking with other fellows and was happy and so on, and he remarked on this. And the fellow said: "Go and see the Doc."

So he did come to see me, and interestingly, he had a therapeutic experience, too, which greatly enriched his personal life. So I never try to break down a guy's resistance; I don't have time, and there are so many fellows that want to be helped and are making progress that I don't see any point in trying to break down a resistance simply to break down a resistance, although I got through to that guy.

Cooper: If they drop out of the program, they come back to the pen, where we pick them up. The only enemy we have is death, in the form of an overdose. Two died in Yonkers this morning!

Bernstein: Do you notice any common link, the point at which an individual's resistance is lowered, or the timing at which he's open to this kind of thing?

Eisenberger: I can't tell of any specifically; I never know. There have been fellows there that I thought were ready for an interview --just from observing them in the dining-room and in the hall; it's something you can't refrain from picking up. And we have a special group that is more or less of a sensitivity group, but we don't use the encounter whatsoever. The purpose is to help them to function as a group member, helping them to be able to get outside in the world where they have to function as part of a group.

A fellow who takes drugs does not function as a group member; he is isolated. Sometimes I have brought them in to my office and tried to talk with them, but immediately I saw they just couldn't, so I let them go, till they were ready. Then you can begin to see them try to move up close to me; they'll pass me and say "Good morning," trying to be very nice. They may say they don't want to talk to me; they have no problems, and so on, but I'm getting the message they do want to talk to me. Then I will take the initiative and invite them down to my office.

Cooper: We do the same thing in the pen and the jail. Les also comes over there, which is another instance of going to where they are. And, of course, this has been the essence of Teen Challenge.

Rev. Wilkerson who started it, came to New York from a little town in Pennsylvania and got right in the midst of the scene. We feel the same thing, that the professional should be where the person is, not isolated in an office, but rubbing shoulders with the addicts and working with them.

Haronian: There has been a lot said and implied, here, by these men about the inadequacies of conventional treatment. Frankly, I'd like to hear more about that, and I'd also like to hear more about what Psychosynthesis techniques you are using; for example, the dis-identification exercises.

Cooper: I don't think that Les is concerned with specific techniques as such; he is using the principles. There is a higher consciousness, which he tries to open up.

Haronian: I am curious as to whether these men would like to tell us more about what they saw as the inadequacies of the conventional approach. You've been in treatment of one sort or another; you've seen psychiatrists and psychotherapists and psychoanalysts and what-not. From your point of view, where did they fail most dramatically?

Eisenberger: I think "G" explained it when he said that he went to the psychiatrist and he increased his methadone dosage.

Haronian: How long were your sessions? Ten minutes?

"G": It wasn't even that—five, maybe six. "How are you today?" "Tell your doctor you are not getting enough,"—and then pay for the advice!

I think one thing that has a lot to do with it, too, is the way you treat people. If you treat me with love I will respond much more. You treat me just like another patient I'll let you sweat it out and work with me. The main thing is the love that we never had in our lives. A junkie thinks nobody loves him, and when you show him love, then he'll be much more responsive.

Eisenberger: The concept of Teen Challenge follows the Commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and after that, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and I begin to explain to them that you can love a person, that you can have a place in your life to love your father, to love your mother, you can have a place to love your sister, your wife, your children, your friends.

But we have made so many disparaging remarks about love that as soon as you say it, we have this connotation of sex connected with it. Unless it's your wife or your child, you'd better watch out. For one man to tell another man he has strong feelings toward him—you'd better watch out for that guy! And yet, in the Bible we notice how the scripture tells us that the important thing about the early Church was how they loved one another.

And I physically demonstrate this. Many times I will talk about it. Would you like to have me give you a demonstration? (Haronian: Sure!) Okay. (Demonstrates with "E", putting his arms around him.)

Maybe a fellow has homosexual tendencies, and I tell him, "Girls never have the problems fellows have. When they walk down the street they walk hand-in-hand." And then when we leave we put our arms around each other so (demonstration).

I remember a boy who was coming down from the ballpark when he was twelve years of age. He had been playing ball with a friend of his, and these friends went to each other's homes; and they were walking down from the ballpark arm in arm, when someone came up and said, "I thought you were boys!"

Do you know what this did to him? Don't touch a man! Don't get close to a man!

One of the early things we do at Teen Challenge is to show love and this is the first thing that they respond to. (Demonstrating) I'll tell you I had to get rid of my own hangups before I was able to do that!

Turkkan: May I comment on that? It may be peculiar to this culture, because in Europe, and in many countries—Turkey, for instance—men walk hand in hand.

Eisenberger: Exactly, and there's something in us that makes us like to be close to people. I have a better feeling if I put my arm around Jack like this (demonstrating), than if I just take his hand and say, "You know, Jack, I'm glad to see you."

We're so afraid of our feelings, and this is an area in which I work. To

be in touch with your feelings you don't have to be ashamed of your feelings, but you don't have to take your pants down in Macy's window! That's idiotic and you'd end up in Bellevue. Most of the fellows who come to us are afraid of their feelings.

Haronian: (Addressing the Teen Challenge panel) Wouldn't you say that the therapists never showed the kind of feelings that Les showed toward you. (Agreement from the young men.)

Eisenberger: Bible class sessions are opened with prayer, because prayer has the means of helping a person, maybe, to get rid of a lot of their feelings, particularly when they have been oriented according to Bible teaching. So I want them to come into the group with all their angry feelings and everything else they have so they can get them out. But we end the session by standing around together, and then we put our arms around each others' shoulders in a circle, and then I or somebody else will pray.

Turkkan: Are your applications of this approach to drug abuse for addiction or prevention?

Eisenberger: Dave Wilkerson, who founded Teen Challenge, did not found it for drug addiction. It was for helping delinquent youth. It just so happened that it developed into drug treatment.

We still have Teen Challenge centers over the United States, but he is no longer actively involved in any of them. He still is very closely linked with the Brooklyn center which he founded, but now all of his meetings have to do with young people to get them to receive or accept the religious experience as he has been preaching it, before they get involved in drugs.

He was at a dinner held last night, and he mentioned that his program now is evangelizing and particularly with young people before they get into drugs, which is a prevention program.

Cooper: Also, as prevention work, these men here go to various schools, churches, etc., and give talks. Anyone who's been through the mill as they have, can explain the problem so much better than we can.

Eisenberger: I have discovered that so many people have been helped that I'm willing to risk what some person might think or feel about the methods. I think one of the greatest compliments I have received in working at Teen Challenge--over four years now--is that I have never received a letter from anyone who went through the program with me, and also had a religious experience. I consider this highly complimentary because it shows that the method has helped them to move on to a place where they don't have to be attached to me. They have reached a level where they can function without me. Of course, when they come in there is that transference, and I permit counter-transference, because at this point I think this is very helpful to them. Some therapists will say that this is one of the worst things to do--don't let them know where you stand; how you feel.

I let them know where I stand, and how I feel; I let them understand that I'm interested in them as a person. And I have found that they are capable of moving to higher levels themselves--just like a bird, after reaching a certain point, gets pushed out of the nest and flies on its own.

Cooper: In the Teen Challenge Program there is a 74% cure rate of those who stay in it.

Lofgren: Do the young people who come to this program retain something of a kind of daily spiritual and meditative component in their lives, or is this just during the period?

Eisenberger: Yes, I would say it does remain. When they go to the next phase at the farm, and after they leave there, they continue in churches; they find themselves in the community; find themselves a job, attend a church of their choice.

When a person returns into the re-entry program at Teen Challenge, they are advised to find a church of their choice, and become actively involved in its work. Ours is basically an Assembly of God organization, but we do not advertise that fact; we do not preach or say that you have to be an Assembly of God member. The Assembly of God is a part of the Pentecostal groups.

Mrs. Hilton: When was Teen Challenge first founded and how is it supported? By the church?

Eisenberger: No. Very frankly, that's why we don't say we're from the Assembly of God, because people might feel they were supporting the Assembly of God. (Mrs. Hilton: But you have to have money to run a thing like this.) Oh, indeed, we have to have money, but do you know that all the money comes in by voluntary gifts and there is no Government support. It costs approximately \$1000 a day to operate the farm, and everything comes in solely by people's contributions. School kids save their money and send it in. They hear these fellows who have been at the farm speak in high schools, etc., and they listen, and some of the kids will save their money and send it in to Teen Challenge.

Mrs. Hilton: And how long has it been in operation? (Eisenberger: Twelve years.)

Bernstein: I'd like to know a little more about the self-determination procedure--how long he goes to Challenge; when he goes to the farm; what happens?

Eisenberger: Its' approximately three months in Brooklyn, and sometimes it goes longer than that. They take a prescribed Bible course and I think the total number of examinations they take is ten. When they have passed these examinations if there is a vacancy or a bed at the farm they're sent to the farm. They remain there and they give them an advanced course in Bible instruction and some academic work--instruction half a day and the other half a day, they work.

Bernstein: They live in, in Teen Challenge?

Eisenberger: All of them are live-in programs. They won't take any person as an outpatient. (Haronian: Do you have any foster home programs at all, or is it all in dormitories?) It's all in dormitories.

Mrs. Hilton: How many persons does the Center hold at one time?

Eisenberger: There are approximately thirty persons in the Center. (Mrs. Hilton: Is that large or small?) That's one of the largest. At the farm, right now, they have 109.

Bernstein: How long do they stay at the farm?

Eisenberger: At the farm they stay approximately eight months, but we feel that it might be possible or better for them if they stayed longer, because they never rid themselves of a desire for a high; and they're still a little shaky, even after that period of time. I think the professionals feel that they should be in some kind of a

program or closely related to a program for two years, and after five years they generally accept them as being pretty free from drugs.

Cooper: In my opinion it takes two years to de-tox completely from drugs. We're beginning to investigate methods for faster de-toxing--such things as sauna baths and epsom salt rubs, etc., will enhance or increase the de-toxing process.

Most of the drugs are pretty persistent. Marijuana, for instance, stays in the system permanently. At Teen Challenge there is no smoking, and coffee use is down to a minimum because both of them continue to keep alive this feeling of a high and a desire for it.

Haronian: Could you tell us something about the rules for living in; how strict it is and so forth?

Eisenberger: Well, no smoking, no drinking, and of course, no drugs. There's a certain time for them to rise and take care of their room. There's a certain time for them to go to bed. They have breakfast at eight o'clock. After that there are certain duties for them to perform. They clean up the cafeteria; they mop the floors every day, the lobby and other things.

Twice a week they work. Two half-days they work in the center, doing general cleaning at the offices and other areas. Twice a week they go out to either a park or to the YMCA and recreation. Lights are out at eleven o'clock.

They have a chapel service every day plus their classes, and a time for prayer. This did not happen at first, but since I have been going there I do have the prerogative of taking a fellow out of any prayer meeting, out of Bible study, out of the chapel, because Don Wilkerson, who is a brother of Dave, has learned that fellows can profit, many times, much better by coming and talking with me than listening to a service in church.

They have to go to chapel. If they are not busy they are compelled to go. If they violate rules they're written up for it and if they get too many they're called in to the Dean's office. They're not permitted any visitors for a month; they have three--four sections, A, B,C, and D, and when they come in they automatically fall into one group.

As they begin to progress they move up into another group, and if they don't have a lot of violations; if they don't have writeups; if they behave well, if their work is good, then they get extra privileges of visits. No one is allowed a visit for a month, but after that they can have one visit each week.

Haronian: Are they allowed to go home at all?

Eisenberger: No. They used to grant passes, and if you fellows would like to know who stopped it, first of all it was stopped by Jack and I was very anxious to follow through.

Haronian: I'd like to know how these three here felt about the restrictions, compared with the life they had before they came there.

"J": We didn't like it at first. When you're kicking you stay in bed, and then afterwards you start working, and after a while you get used to it. Sometimes you cop out from some job in the beginning, but you get used to it. I don't mind at all now.

"E": It's like you realize that you have this useless body and you have undeveloped emotions, and that you've got to begin to deal with it. Now I get up at a quarter to seven; when I was in the streets I used to get up at one o'clock in the afternoon. And then to work! Who ever heard of that?

Haronian: If I were to say that those restrictions and that routine were a very important part of the treatment, would you agree?

"E": Yes, because in society you have to work.

Haronian: Not being able to leave and go to your old neighborhood; not being able to have a pass, was that important to you?

"E": If you were to go back to your old neighborhood, there is nothing there profitable that would help you out.

Cooper: At the penitentiary there are work programs, but they alone do nothing. It is this other dimension that makes the difference, the spiritual dimension.

Eisenberger: I would say the whole program, fitted together, is really what helps them to develop and find themselves.

Haronian: Could you just summarize the essential points of what you think the whole program is?

Eisenberger: The essential points, I would say, are religious experience and therapeutic experience. (Haronian: The pattern of living in under certain time and space restrictions, is that part of it?) It's very important, because these fellows had not been disciplined, and they had been controlled by drugs, and they had to learn to control their own emotions and feelings. There was only one thing they wanted, another high, and they lived from fix to fix. They are discovering that they can do things without drugs that they used to do with drugs.

I dare say that every one of these fellows, if they had had to come to a group like this they would never have been able to do it straight. They would have been scared to face a group, and they would have to have been high. Now they know they can face them straight. They might be a little up-tight, but after all, I get up-tight sometimes, too. And if a public speaker starts off and he's not a little up-tight, and he doesn't have a couple of neuroses he's not fit to be there anyway.

Bernstein: After the: eight months on the farm, then what happens?

Eisenberger: Then they go to Bible school; not because Teen Challenge says they should; it's their own desire. Some of them come back into what Teen Challenge knows as a re-entry program to assist them to get back into their community.

This is one of our weakest spots, and we're working on it to make the re-entry program more meaningful. It's too much of a traumatic experience, almost, to leave a sheltered program at the farm and go back into the street again.

Mrs. Hilton: I heard Dr. Eisenberger say something, also, about the girls' centers. I assume they stay the same length of time as at Teen Challenge. What do you do with them, can you send them to a farm?

Eisenberger: There is a program for the girls but likewise it has its board of directors, and is a program which is not similar to the one for the men. When girls go to that program they stay; it's known as the Walter Hoving Home, and they stay approximately for a year; they live right in the program all the way through. The girls' program has the spiritual factor but that is all. They do not have the therapy.

With the fellows, we have different stages and phases to run through to prepare them to cope with the situations in the outside world.

Cooper. We're not too happy about the girls, but that's the way it is.

Mrs. Hilton: That's a pity.

Cooper: That's the reality!

With that we'll end for the evening, and I want to thank Reverend Eisenberger and "G", "E", and "J" from the bottom of my heart.

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