

Valentines and Venus' Flytraps

Workshop to Offer Advice on Affection

By Al Goodman
Herald Staff Writer



Valentine's Day, once a simple box of chocolates and a kiss for your sweetheart, may now be a giant Venus' flytrap capable of crushing a relationship.

The problem isn't with Feb. 14 per se, but as the day when American lovers think about tenderness, caresses and physical intimacy, it symbolizes a territory fraught with danger.

Who says so?

Phil McCrillis and George Simons of Soquel.



WORKSHOP LEADERS
... Phil McCrillis (above) and
George Simons.

They don't say it exactly that way. They speak more generally about the difficulty couples — especially men — are having when it comes to touching and physical intimacy. But the message from these two leaders of personal-growth workshops is clear: Relationships will be a lot smoother when couples improve their communication about intimacy.

"It's not just an issue of sexual compatibility," McCrillis said. A major point is learning what your partner says and wants from tender talking and touching.

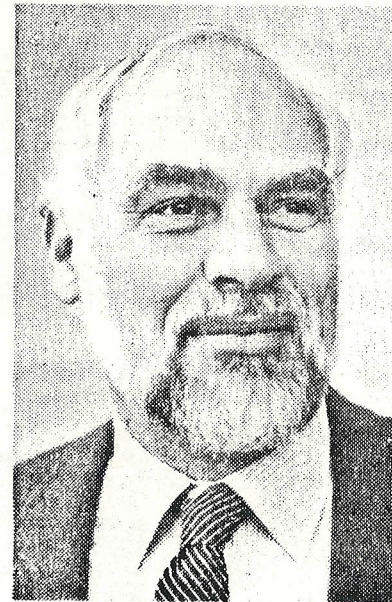
Men and women often have such conflicting views on that topic that merely "being able to distinguish between touching that is touching and touching that is sexually oriented" may go a long way toward solving the problem, Simons said.

Landers Survey

The two leaders of the Hidden Valley Center for Men, a non-profit educational center in Soquel, said there are plenty of reasons to concentrate on tenderness. They point to Ann Landers' "sex survey" of January 1985, in which 72 percent of the 90,000 female respondents said they would rather be held closely and treated tenderly in lieu of 'the Act.'

They also said sex researchers Masters and Johnson addressed the topic of touching before delving into sexual dysfunction.

McCrillis and Simons mulled over this data — and the information from their own random interviews with about 300 women and many men — in order to develop a new workshop, "How to Cuddle Your Valentine." It's exclusively for men



seeking to improve their perceptive skills and enjoy more intimate moments with the women they love, the organizers said.

The problems are rooted in the way men and women learn to touch other things and how they perceive experiences, McCrillis and Simons said.

They emphasize that their interpretations don't apply to all American men and women. But they believe many American men were raised to be goal-oriented and take action in a sequence that leads to a desired result. Women, by contrast, are raised to be more in tune with the process of life, to enjoy the path that leads to the goal and not just the end product itself.

Men's Concerns

According to McCrillis and Simons' interviews, women mentioned that the men in their lives seemed

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