

SYNANON TO HELP NONADDICTS HERE

Foundation Extending Use of Controversial Methods

The Synanon Foundation, which has developed controversial techniques to help addicts give up narcotics, will open a new headquarters here where it will help nonaddicts, such as "alienated" college students.

It will apply its techniques to help people who are disaffected with society. Some of the more obvious examples of such cases are students who riot or drop out of school, or persons who drift from job to job or who have difficulty getting along with their families.

The foundation will not restrict its interest to any particular kind of problem. "It doesn't necessarily matter if a person is neurotic or psychotic—or if he isn't," a staff member explained last week.

"Synanon is an education process, not a treatment center," he continued. "In it you learn to be more of a self-reliant individual and to develop more and better ways to live your life."

No Professional Aid

The eight-year-old organization is run almost entirely by former addicts who reject professional treatment and who help others by drawing upon their own experiences in breaking from narcotics.

The foundation's leaders believe that through its activities in the past year with nonaddicts at its four centers in California, Synanon has evolved into a social movement.

No addicts will be taken into the foundation's new East Coast headquarters, a four-story townhouse on Manhattan's West Side. It is expected to open within two weeks. Addicts who seek help will be interviewed there and, if accepted, will be flown to one of the West Coast centers.

The foundation will not disclose the address of the center here until arrangements have been completed. Its purposes were explained in a recent interview by William Crawford, director of the center, and Michael Kaiser and John Peterson, staff members.

"We won't proselytize," Mr. Peterson said. "There will be weekly open house and our staff members will give lectures for anyone who asks us—schools and colleges, businessmen's associations, tenants' groups."

The Synanon Game

Persons who show sufficient motivation will be introduced to the Synanon Game.

Mr. Crawford described this as a kind of ruthless group therapy played by about a dozen persons who gather informally to criticize one another frankly and to demand improvement in the behavior of each participant. Violence and obscenity are proscribed and there is no leader, but there are no other formal rules, although a staff member is present.

"It's not psychiatry," Mr. Peterson asserted. "We don't sit around and analyze anyone. Drawing only on our own experiences, we do comment on how people are acting."

"The participant begins—in many cases for the first time—to think about what he's doing," explained the 37-year-old director, who said he was an addict for 11 years before coming to Synanon in 1959. "He realizes he can improve himself and how to go about it."

Mr. Kaiser said he had been an aimless drifter through college, graduate school and a job with Columbia Pictures but had never been an addict.

Turn to the Campus

He declared that Synanon became interested in the last year in alienation on college campuses. "In a society growing more complex and technological, characterized by mammoth, monolithic institutions," he said, "persons become alienated from their fellow man."

"Frustrations and tensions increase and communication becomes nearly impossible," he went on. "The results are periodic massive lettings-off of steam like we saw at Berkeley."

"Through the game you develop deep personal empathy," he said. "You begin to break down false images and barriers to gut-to-gut human confrontation."

The game was first played on campus at Valley State College in Los Angeles, Mr. Kaiser said, when Charles Dederich, the founder of Synanon, taught a class there on juvenile delinquency.

"The students visited our house nearby and became completely involved with the game," he said. "It has spread to the University of California at Berkeley and five other colleges, and to the entire psychology department at San Francisco State College. Undergraduates at Long Island University have already been in touch with us."

The foundation is largely supported by private contributions.