

Outsiders Play Synanon's Game To Ease Their Own Problems

"Do you have to go around all your life with a chip on your shoulder?"

"What's wrong with a little common courtesy?"

"You think no one in the world gives a damn about you — and there's got to be a reason for it."

These remarks, in rapid-fire succession, were aimed at a young free-lance photographer, Dwayne Bey, by members of a Synanon "game" club. The sponsor is the Synanon Foundation, a California-based program for the control of addiction, alcoholism and delinquency.

But the club, which meets weekly at Synanon House, 35 Riverside Drive, brings together people who are neither addicts nor alcoholics. They have one goal: to work out their personal problems with others.

The game — a method of deep, provocative and often abrasive soul-searching of oneself and others — was adapted from the group therapy method developed by the Synanon Foundation in its treatment of narcotics addicts.

There are no winners in the game, just the satisfaction of greater self-knowledge.

The game differs from the more conventional forms of group therapy in that there are no professional therapists involved. The participants can be as spontaneous, creative, rigid, earthy, loud or passive as they choose to be. There are only two prescriptions: no violence or the threat of it, and no lying.

Truth Is a Must

"People come here to speak the truth," said Leonard Cohen, a furrier and a participant in a recent game. "If they don't want to speak the truth, they don't come here. Moreover, most people won't come here, because they are afraid to speak the truth."

"A guy like Dwayne finds the game intellectually and emotionally stimulating," said Chester Stern, a director of the foundation and a former addict. "Although he's not play-

ing it as a life-saving device, many beneficial side effects accrue — such as learning to take a closer look at himself, becoming less suspect of people's intentions and motivations, and learning to communicate better."

Synanon — the name refers to an addict's garbled pronunciation of the word seminar — was founded nine years ago by Charles E. Dederich, a former alcoholic. There are 830 alcoholics and incorrigibles, as well as addicts, in various stages of development at present in the foundation's seven centers across the country.

Residents participate in the game three times a week, and 2,000 nonresidents have one session a week. All register beforehand.

The group of 13 that challenged Mr. Bey included Assemblyman Robert Abrams of the Bronx, several corporation executives, a blouse manufacturer, a Syracuse University coed, a priest and four former addicts.

The Game's Subjects

The game lasted three and a half hours and ranged over such subjects as rejection, antagonism, child-bearing, dating patterns and promiscuity.

Assemblyman Abrams learned about the group by accident. Four weeks ago, while searching for a motel room during a California vacation, he was attracted by a sign reading "Eight dollars a night" in front of the Del Mar Hotel and Beach Club in Santa Monica. The next morning, puzzled over the nominal charge and also over a bellhop's refusal to accept a tip, he was informed that the club was a recent Synanon acquisition.

Mr. Abrams, a member of the Joint Legislative Committee on Social Welfare, became an enthusiastic supporter of the Synanon program after spending five days in the various facilities of the foundation. In one conversation, a resident told him that he had been arrested for robbing stores in the district that Mr. Abrams represents.