

# Your dreams and you

By Aswathy Dayanand

**U**ntil recently, visiting a psychologist used to be a cloak and dagger affair. People could think you had a couple of loose nuts in your head. It was very common for someone to whisper in your ear, "Don't tell anyone but my sister is suffering from depression and is visiting a psychologist for help." But psychologists have taken to doing a whole lot of things now. New activities—meditation, psychodrama, learning body language—are turning out to be effective and believe it or not, a lot of fun too.

Oneiric, a centre for psychological testing, behaviour therapy and individual counselling to facilitate behaviour modification, is one of them. They have a simple mission. G L Sampooran, the senior associate at Oneiric, a trained psychologist with a specialisation in counselling, says, "Each person has a dream, to be somebody, to do something. But there may be something stopping them. We run result oriented programmes to help these people overcome this and realise their full potential."

At Oneiric, which means relating to dreams, qualified professionals from the areas of psychology, occupational therapy, management and other creative fields work together to help people realise their dreams. Ajaysha Muthiga, an associate at Oneiric, and a psychologist working in the areas of psychological testing and behaviour modification, says, "We have pro-



Oneiric helps people reach their full potential with counselling and training from experienced psychologists



grammes for schools and corporates. We also offer counselling for personal, marital and health problems and behaviour modification for stammering and bed-wetting." They also conduct meditation classes which help people suffering from stress and other psychosomatic diseases.

Uma Iyer, a housewife who suffered from terrible migraines, vouches for the efficacy of meditation. "Last May my migraine was aggravated to an unbearable level because of the heat. Within one month of starting meditation, the migraine was reduced from a three-day torture session to just a half-day one. My

mother-in-law, who is a diabetic, used to suffer from pain in her legs until she started this meditation," she says.

Oneiric also holds workshops for children and young adults. A two-and-a-half day workshop costs around 500 per class, usually consisting of not more than 20 participants. For Navrith Navasrinha, a final year BSc student, it was a chance for self improvement and learning body language. He, his sister and friends, who were just bored during the holidays, enrolled themselves for the workshop. The two-day workshop did teach them a bit of body language, but more than that,

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It was the relaxation technique that worked them. Says Navrith, "We just went into a semi sleep. After we woke up, we felt as energised as after eight hours of sleep."

Unlike management workshops that deal with the external situations, a psychologist helps you look into yourself to benefit the inner you. The workshop which Navrith and his friends attended also used role play or psychodrama. Psychodrama is useful to bring out hidden feelings. Take a simple example, like sharing something meaningful with another person. That person ignores you. The feeling many of the participants voiced was, "I felt devalued, angry, rejected, frustrated." During role play, the participants share information that is important to them with each other. Here the roles are reversed for everyone to understand how it feels. "I've also become a better person who is able to empathise with others," says Navrith.

For these children it was just a matter of having some good fun and learning something in the process. But 12-year-old Rajiv had a genuine problem. His stammering was making him shy and uncommunicative. It took 20 sessions of counselling in over a month to help him. Sargantha, his mother says, "His didn't have too many friends, there was a bit of peer pressure, sibling rivalry and pent up anger in him. But the counselling helped him." Speaking to Rajiv you would never guess that he ever stammered in his life. "I really enjoyed the counselling and meditation sessions, especially the bragging exercises that boost your self confidence," he says. "I am waiting to go back to school," he enthused.

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