



**A resource guide for healthier living.**

**Prepared by the QueerSpace Collective  
with the support of N.I.V.T.**



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## **Introduction to QueerSpace**

QueerSpace is a voluntary organisation run by an open collective. Conceived in September 1997, QueerSpace opened its doors on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 1998 in Botanic Avenue as a cultural resource centre for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered community. QueerSpace moved to larger premises in August 1998 in Eglantine Avenue and remained there until January 2000. QueerSpace now operates out of the Cara-Friend Rooms, Cathedral Buildings in Donegall Street.

Our policy has always been to be as inclusive as possible. The organisation is run by volunteers in a non-bureaucratic way through weekly collective meetings which are open to everyone. We aim to provide a safe and comfortable social environment and networking space for our community. We operate as a drug and alcohol free zone. We provide a friendly, welcoming alternative to bar culture that many people find intimidating and is used by people from all social backgrounds and ages.

QueerSpace is not just a social 'space', it's an organisation which believes in supporting the work, campaigns, and events run by and for the LGBT community. Since QueerSpace was set up in January 1998, members have been involved in projects such as 'Pride', 'Lesbian Lives', attended conferences at UCD, COSO, and supported ILGO at the St. Patrick's Day parade in New York. QueerSpace volunteers have also organised a wide range of events such as video nights, parties, table quizzes, readers and writers events, poetry and prose, debates, various talk nights; the 'out-of-space' nights have included visits to cinema, concerts and theatre, and group weekends away. Having recently celebrated its third anniversary, QueerSpace is now running the InSpace 'drop-in' every Saturday, 2-5 p.m. in the Cara-Friend Rooms in Old Cathedral Buildings.

## **QueerSpace Aims and Principles**

*At the heart of QueerSpace are four core aims:*

**Visibility.** QueerSpace seeks to increase the visibility of the LGBT Community in a positive manner to counteract and disregard the negative images presented to the general public.

**Support.** QueerSpace is dedicated to supporting, organising and publicising the artistic, educational, cultural and social activities of the LGBT community which are designed to:

- express cultural traditions through musical, dramatic and visual projects;
- increase the understanding of the historical background and current status of the LGBT community in and around Belfast;
- provide an interface for groups within and outside of the LGBT community;
- foster open and inclusive debate and dialogue concerning questions of identity, difference and division;
- and influence opinion on particular issues which are directly relevant to the QueerSpace Mission and experience.

**Resources.** QueerSpace strives to provide resources for the LGBT community that have for so long been denied them.

**Communication.** QueerSpace will facilitate communication among the diverse groups within and outside of the LGBT community.

*All actions carried out by QueerSpace are guided by four principles:*

**Community Oriented.** QueerSpace recognises and promotes the interdependence of the diverse groups within the LGBT community. It is an expression of the Belfast LGBT community and no policy or action should relinquish any element of community control.

**Freedom of Identity.** QueerSpace is operates under a non-judgemental policy and is open to all identities. No member of QueerSpace will be asked to hide or change any element of their identity. It is the policy of QueerSpace to have respect for diversity.

**Ethical Funding.** QueerSpace exists at the will of the community, and recognizes that important sources of its income are donations from the community. All outside funding shall be carefully sourced as to not restrict the scope of the QueerSpace mission.

**Accessibility.** QueerSpace is committed to equality and makes all due effort to ensure equality of access to its programmes, resources, facilities and decision-making processes.

### *Volunteering for QueerSpace*

Would *you* like to help out and volunteer within the LGBT Community?

QueerSpace has a number of ongoing projects and is constantly searching for new ways to help. If you've got a good idea you want to make happen, come to QueerSpace and we'll help you carry it out. Or if you just want to lend a helping hand, then QueerSpace is for you.

Make QueerSpace your space.

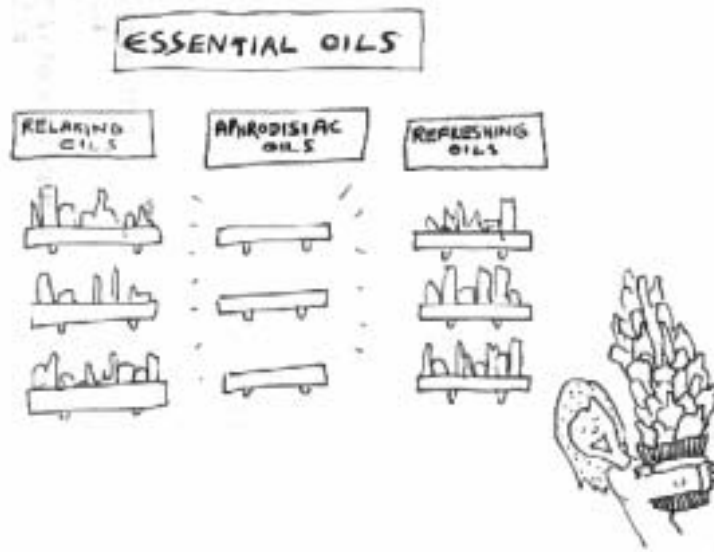
## ***Introduction to the Health Workshops***

QueerSpace applied for funding through the Northern Ireland Volunteer Trust (N.I.V.T.) for a series of health (well-being) workshops. The thinking behind this was that as an organisation, we could provide a worthwhile service to the LGBT community. We were successful with our application and found a suitable venue in Ballynafeigh Community Centre to hold the workshops. Many played a role in the planning, organising, publishing and delivery of the workshops.

The workshop topics included: Aromatherapy; Human Rights/Bill of Rights; Creative Writing; Mediation Training; Reflexology; Self Defence; Self Esteem; and Art Therapy. The workshops were well attended and the feedback was positive: people have expressed that they were enjoyable, interesting and informative – certainly providing a lot of food for thought.

QueerSpace would like to thank N.I.V.T. for awarding the grant which enabled us to hold this series of workshop.

## **Aromatherapy**



Complementary Medicine does not aim to replace conventional medicine but rather to work alongside it. It is referred to as holistic because it aims to treat the whole person - body mind & spirit. It works with:

- physical symptoms of different ailments
- underlying causes of disorders - which can be of diet, lifestyle or mental/emotional origin
- the body's own healing energies.

To find a trustworthy therapist, it helps to go through an approved organisation that keeps a list of qualified practitioners.

Aromatherapy is the holistic application of essential oils to improve physical and emotional health. It has been used since ancient Egyptian times, & later by the 12th century German abbess Hildegard von Bingen and the 15th century Swiss doctor

Paracelsus, who mentioned that distillation releases the most desirable, i.e. healing part of a plant. The French doctor René-Maurice Gattefossé used it to treat wounded soldiers in the First World War. The Austrian biochemist Marguerite Maury developed the modern concept of Aromatherapy in the mid-20th century. Studies have shown Aromatherapy to relieve stress and its associated physical symptoms, for example muscle tension, digestive problems, headaches and insomnia.

***How do I start? What oils do I use?***

The term 'oil' is misleading - one way of testing whether you are buying pure essential oil is by putting one drop of the oil onto blotting paper - it should evaporate quite easily. Depending how long it takes for the aroma to vanish, the oils can be divided into top, middle and base notes. Top notes can be stimulating & uplifting and evaporate fast. Base notes tend to be relaxing, develop their aroma slowly, but keep it for quite a while. To create a balanced oil blend, use at least one top, middle and bottom note each.

For a blend you like personally, use test strips of paper tissue or blotting paper. Apply 1 drop per oil per strip (note which oil is on which strip!). Combine different strips so you can decide which blend you prefer. No more than four different oils should be used at once. This way they combine and augment each other's effects without 'fighting' - an effect known as synergy.

No household should be without tea tree, lavender and peppermint essential oils. Lavender is excellent for cuts, bruises, insomnia, tension, headaches. Tea tree is antibacterial, antiviral & antifungal, therefore helps with athlete's foot, acne, and again, cuts. Peppermint is great with the digestive system - dilute in carrier oil and rub onto abdomen. Always dilute essential oils in a vegetable carrier oil or in water.



Never put the oils directly onto a cut - apply neat to the dressing instead. This avoids making the cut sorer than it already is while being much more effective. Use oils in massage, inhalation, compresses, or added to hand/foot baths or to bath water. Sweet Almond and Grapeseed are good to use as the main carrier oil, with smaller proportions of Wheatgerm, Avocado or Jojoba if wanted. Mineral oils are completely unsuitable - so forget that baby oil.

### ***Safety***

Always treat essential oils with respect. After all, they are very concentrated plant extracts. When putting on an oil burner, fill the water into the bowl first - the essential oils are highly flammable.

With the occasional exception of lavender (applied to the temples for a headache) and tea tree (directly onto a verruca) NEVER use them undiluted on the skin; they can be very irritant and have been known to eat through furniture varnish. Avoid contact with the eyes.

Keep out of reach of children. Do not use internally. Ask advice from a qualified aromatherapist if you are pregnant or suffering from high blood pressure, epilepsy or any medical condition.

### ***In search of a therapist?***

The following organisations will supply you with lists of therapists in your area:

The International Society of Aromatherapists, ISPA House, 82 Ashby Road, Hinckley/Leics, LE10 1SN  
Members use the letters MISPA

The International Federation of Aromatherapists, Department of Continuing Education, Royal Masonic Hospital, Ravenscourt Park, London, W6 0TN Members use the letters MIFA

The Register of Qualified Aromatherapists  
PO Box 6941, London.

Members use the letters RQA

In Northern Ireland you can also contact the Aromatherapy Network, c/o Lyn Lamont, The Gerard Lynch Centre, Belvoir Park Hospital, Belfast.

*Literature hints*

PRICE, Shirley: Practical Aromatherapy. How to use essential oils to restore health and vitality. Thorsons: London/San Francisco. ISBN 0 7225 2850 7. Accessible guide to background and application of Aromatherapy, including Reflexology and massage techniques, tables of oil properties, recipes for blends.

WORWOOD, Valerie Ann: The Fragrant Pharmacy. A complete guide to Aromatherapy and Essential Oils. Macmillan/Bantam: London. ISBN 0 553 40397 4. The ultimate guide to essential oils at any age and in any area of life, home & travel. Best if recipes are used with caution - reduce dose by at least 50%.

## **Art Therapy**



Art Therapy uses therapeutic art for self-expression and the relief of stress. Thoughtful, relaxing meditation helps to reduce stress levels and allow some spiritual reflection. This is followed by drawing/painting, reflective and creative, this allows for an expression of memories and thoughts, which with a follow up discussion aimed to be healing in nature. The Queer Space workshop focused on and how we perceive our bodies, the follow up discussion focused on self-perception and self-esteem. Our workshop followed the Jungian school of psychotherapy and was self-interpretive in nature, allowing the participants to draw their own conclusions about the experience they have had while drawing/painting and what their creative output represents. The workshop leader drew the participant to certain key areas of the page, questioning where objects or people were placed in the picture. The school of Jungian therapy believes that when we allow ourselves to open up to the

childlike, we get closer to the subconscious and so can allow ourselves to express things we have hidden even from ourselves. These hidden things are not necessarily traumas, but are things that for whatever reasons we have forgotten and by expressing these hidden things allows self-awareness and development. Once we have put these things into practice we can be aware enough of our own perceptions and reactions to have some sense of internal focus of control. This in turn helps to reduce stress and avoid confrontation.

- *A personal view of the Art Therapy workshop*

My previous experience of Art had left me loath to attend this session. I had no desire to expose my artistic shortcomings to all and sundry – or even to my fellow participants. If there is one thing I have learned – at no small cost to my vanity – it is that I am not the least bit artistic – in a creative or an appreciative way.

My non-artistic hackles were raised from the very beginning. The very idea of putting crayon/chalk/pencil/whatever to paper had me rigid with fear and inhibition. No-one and nobody was going to attempt to decipher/interpret my somewhat stilted abilities. I had struggles to ignore the repeated call to creative artistic action. Who's afraid of the big bad crayon? I am So there! Confront your fears and inhibitions? Not me – not when they're wielding charcoal sticks and pastel crayons anyway.

But shame is as good a motivator as any. I reluctantly rose to the challenge and somewhat shakily joined paint and paper together in unholy matrimony – and unholy mess it turned out to be. It didn't take a trained art therapist to interpret that.

As if it wasn't bad enough facing up to my short-comings in the creativity area, I also had to come to terms with my total

inability to interpret the work of others. I was presented with a drawing and left to come to my own conclusions about the artist and the meaning of the work.

How much can one person get wrong? Just about everything I reckoned! Imagine my chagrin when it was revealed that the artist was no gentle woman, in fact the drawing which greatly appealed to me was the creation of a man who had been convicted of sexually abusing and murdering both men and women. A born manipulator who had totally sucked me in. With perception like that I'd make a great art therapist, or maybe not.

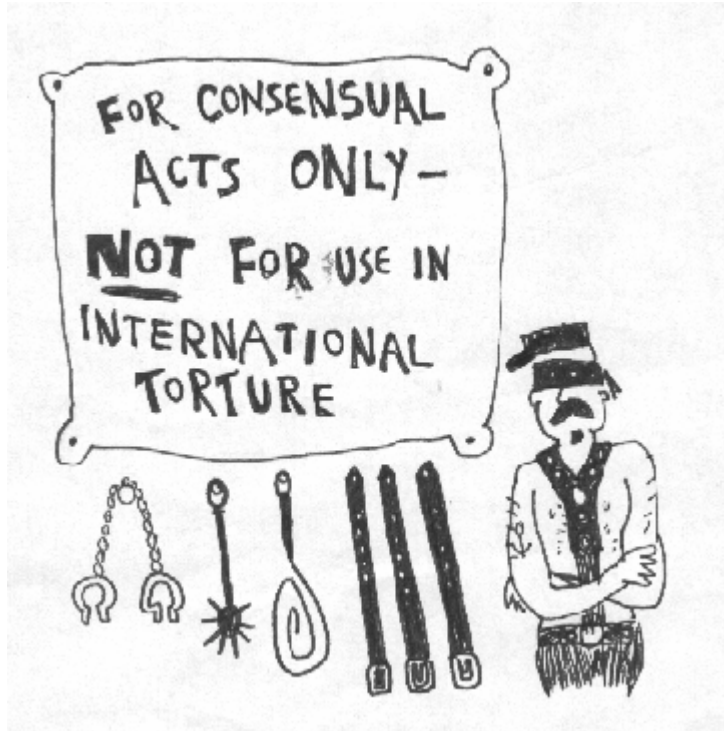
Bit I must admit, once I'd gone beyond my initial inhibitions, I actually enjoyed the session. I might never make a successful commercial artist – but I did make a mess, and a gloriously colourful mess at the. What it said about me, I shudder to think, but I enjoyed creating it. And at the end of the day that was the purpose of the workshop. According to Winnicott (1996), “it is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self”. So in future when the blues hit, I'll just attack them with the reds and the greens and the yellows and any other colours that come to hand.

***Useful Web links:***

<http://www.baat.co.uk/>

<http://www.vickyb.demon.co.uk>

## **Bill of Rights**



Miriam Titterton, Development Officer with the Human Rights Commission, gave a workshop on the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Miriam explained that the idea of a Bill of Rights came about as a result of the Belfast Agreement. One of the major functions of the Human Rights Commission, since its inception under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, has been to draft a Bill of Rights. The Belfast Agreement provides that the Bill of Rights should complement the European Convention of Human Rights, which is largely concerned with civil and political rights. The Bill is supposed to be particular to the circumstances of Northern Ireland but there are powerful arguments that recognition of diversity in NI contributes towards the breaking down of traditional divisions.

Miriam set out how the Commission intended to involve a wide range of community groups and the general public in an extensive consultation process over the content of the Bill. Some initial drafting would be undertaken by a series of working groups which would report early in 2001. There would then be a six month consultation period before the final draft of the Bill would be sent to the Secretary of State who would then initiate Westminster legislation to bring the Bill into law.

There was a detailed discussion about LGB rights in relation to the Bill. It was felt that an equality clause in the Bill should clearly include non-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Since sexual orientation was now recognised in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and increasingly in European law, it was hoped that this inclusion would be less problematic than it might have been. There were also strong expressions of opinion that rights to privacy should be fully protected and that same-sex partnerships should be recognised. There was also discussion of recognition of victims of violence including those who suffered homophobic violence.

Miriam concluded by pointing out that the Commission would be arranging training sessions for human rights facilitators who would in turn bring human rights issues back into their communities. A number of QueerSpace members agreed to apply to participate in these courses.

***Useful web links***

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

<http://www.nihrc.org.uk/>

Northern Ireland Equality Commission

<http://www.niec.org.uk/>

## **Creative Writing**



### Out of the Closet

Creative writing seems to be one of the great taboos of our society, more so than art or drama. It is considered okay for someone to dabble in a spot of painting, or a little amateur dramatics at the weekend, but creative writing? That's strictly for famous people, the best-selling novelists like Stephen King and John Grisham; or the classy intellectuals like Stephen Fry or Salman Rushdie that clearly need to let some of those enormous brains leak out onto the page before their brains explode with pressure.

But ordinary people? No way. The fact is, a lot of people are scared of writing. For some it means essays you had to write at school about 'My Summer Holidays'.

Other people were forced to read books that were called 'classics', and if they didn't think that these novels were the best in the world then the teachers made it clear that there was obviously something wrong with the reader. Perhaps they had to study and dissect Shakespeare until they couldn't stand the sight of the stuff.



The other reason that people are scared of writing is a fear of the technical rules of writing. Where do you put a comma when you use quotation marks? What if you can't spell? What does *this* word mean?

The fact is, writing should be primarily be something for you to enjoy. Agatha Christie would have never written so many books if she didn't somehow take pleasure from it. Don't worry about impressing anyone else. Spend time finding your own voice, and if you make a mistake then who's to know? It's all a learning curve. When you feel you are ready to share your work, go ahead.

There are thousands of people in Northern Ireland alone who write stories or poems or even the odd play. Some people dream of doing this for a living; a lucky few have actually achieved this. But for most it is simply something they enjoy. To put it bluntly, writing is like masturbation: it has brought harmless fun to millions, but very few people will actually admit *doing* it.

This applies particularly to poetry. People are actually afraid to admit that they are "poets". It seems almost an insult nowadays. The Polish poet (and Nobel Prize winner) Wislawa Szymborska says that poets "...confess to being poets only reluctantly, as if they were a little ashamed of it. But in our clamorous times, it's easier to acknowledge our faults...if they were attractively packaged, than to recognise your own merits. When they fill out questionnaires or chat with strangers... poets prefer to use the general term 'writer' or replace 'poet' with the name of whatever job they do in addition to writing. Bureaucrats and bus passengers respond with a touch of incredulity and alarm when they discover they're dealing with a poet..."

So being a writer (even – heaven forbid! – a poet) is not such a terrible thing after all. And should you want to come out of the habit and share this disgusting habit with other like-minded folk, there are plenty of writers groups out there. Different writers groups work in different ways. Some are just about sharing your work; others offer a critical assessment (which may be brutally frank); then there are ones for specific target groups – women writers, queer poets, survivors poetry. Writers groups are like handbags; you need to look around for the one that suits your needs.

One of the best places to start looking is the **Creative Writers' Network** (address below). A local organisation, CWN provides a newsletter delivered to your door, giving you information on forthcoming events. You can also contact the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, though they tend to be less helpful than they would have you believe. Both organisations can let you know about forthcoming writing competitions as well, which you really ought to enter if you are serious about making it as a writer.

There is one more, vitally important thing to do if you want to write – READ. If you really think that you are amazing enough to write something stunningly original without ever having lifted a book, then you are very stupid indeed and, frankly, there is no hope for you. A writer's style develops as they find their own voice from a whole host of influences, so you need to read a diverse selection of writers. Don't just go for 'safe' choices in your preferred genre; try a writer you know nothing about for a change and you may be pleasantly surprised.

If you want to go one step further and get your work published, then things begin to get tougher. Unless you have a ready made, full length novel or twenty poems published in high profile magazines, don't even think about approaching book publishers.

Your best bets are magazines and the small press to begin with. Some of the so-called 'small press' magazines are actually widely read, and many are very good indeed, but I would advise you to read a magazine before you submit to see if your work would suit it. It is interesting to note how many more writers submit to a magazine than actually buy it. Some magazines pay in cash, but many pay with a copy of the issue containing your work. For more information on getting published and the small press, **The Writer's Handbook** and **The Guide to the Small Press** are excellent books; ask your local bookshop for details.

One final note; if you really are serious about seeing your work in print, do not send your work to anyone who expects you to pay to get anything published. The 'vanity' press is just that, a work of vanity, and you will not be taken seriously. Likewise, if a newspaper advert offers the chance to get poetry published in an anthology, beware. Many will accept your work, then offer you the opportunity to buy copies at a 'special price'. Be sure that this book will not end up in any shops or public libraries, just your bookshelf. Writing may not make you much money, but be sure that if anything, the publishers should be paying you and not vice versa.

**Creative Writers' Network: 15 Church Street  
Belfast BT1 1ER**

## **Mediation Training**



One of the sessions I attended as part of the QueerSpace series of workshops focussing on health and well-being was concerned with 'Handling Conflict'. The training was provided by the Mediation Network for Northern Ireland. This organisation seeks to promote the concept of mediation as a method for dispute resolution, and supports creative responses to conflict. One of the main aims of the Mediation Network is to assist people to live with diversity in a pluralist society. As QueerSpace caters for one of the most diverse communities within our society, we felt it was important to partake of some of the training offered by this organisation. We believe that any community can only benefit from the skills and insights provided by such training.

The queer community, like any community, is not homogenous, therefore conflict is sometimes inevitable. As this is the case it would be beneficial to have skilled mediators within our community to help resolve any conflict which could arise. Mediation training is not just about learning how to be a third party mediator, it's also about learning to deal with situations of personal conflict. As such I felt it would be useful to avail of

such training in order to learn how to handle any conflict which might arise in my family and social spheres. Too often conflict can result in entrenched polarisation, and in order to avoid this mediation seems to be a healthy option.

The workshop began with exercises which were designed to enable the individual to see how they dealt with conflict. I found the personal conflict style inventory exercise very useful and alarming but educational. I was a 'forcer', and this surprised me.

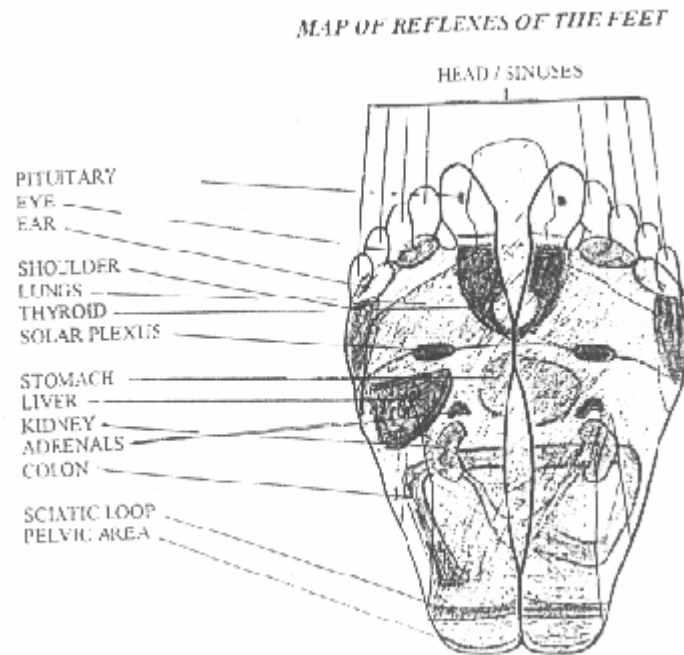
It was somewhat chastening to realise that I was a bully within the sphere of personal interaction. It was a bit of consolation to realise that I was a 'collaborator' after any conflict was established and in mediation terminology collaboration is not a bad word. We also looked at the feelings which often arise in the face of conflict; few, if any, of them being positive. Inadequate handling of conflict often leads to feelings of aggression, anger, powerlessness and these are often turned in upon oneself, leaving the individual feeling inadequate and leading to low self-esteem.

After identifying the usually negative feelings that often accompany conflict, we discussed positive ways of dealing with it. We learned the importance of recognising issues and confronting them; avoidance only tends to exacerbate the problem, not solve it. It is also important to be aware of one's own baggage, and how that baggage can contribute to the problem. We also need to realise that other people's behaviour is most likely shaped by feelings, valid feelings that need to be recognised and acknowledged. Resolving or transforming conflict requires that we understand and address the feelings, issues and relationships that are often the underlying causes of behaviour.

I felt that this workshop was very beneficial in that it taught us that conflict can often be avoided by a little bit of prior consideration. If issues are dealt with as they arise, they do not escalate into open conflict. We also learned that conflict does not have to be negative. If it is dealt with in a positive way it can prove to be a force for much needed change. We don't have to hide from it as this often leads to inner resentment and frustration.

I, for one, enjoyed this workshop and felt that I gained valuable insights into conflict and how best to deal with it in a healthy and positive way.

## **Reflexology**



What is Reflexology?

Reflexology is a form of complementary medicine. It involves detecting health imbalances and their treatment using massage to reflex points on the hands and the feet. It is practised in a wide range of settings, from hospitals to the home. There is evidence that reflexology was practised as far back as 4000 BC in China and 2500 BC in Egypt. The history of modern reflexology began however in the 1930's with an American physiotherapist, Eunice D. Ingham, who based her method of treatment on Zone Therapy, a method developed in the 1920's by an ear, nose and throat specialist Dr William Fitzgerald.

### **How Does Reflexology Work?**

Zone Therapy divides the body into ten zones running lengthways from head to toe. On the feet, each zone is represented by one of the toes. Eunice D. Ingham researched reflex points in these zones to evolve a 'map' showing how the entire body is mirrored (or 'reflected') on the feet. By gently massaging tender or tight areas on the feet, a reflexologist can relax or stimulate the corresponding system or part of the body, assisting the body's healing energies.

### **What are the Effects and benefits of Reflexology?**

In making you feel more relaxed, reflexology relieves stress and its negative effects on the body and mind. Reduced tension helps improve circulation, aids the elimination of waste and re-balances and re-energises the body. Disorders successfully treated by reflexology include: migraine, sinus problems, hormonal imbalances, digestive disorders, breathing disorders, circulatory and back problems.

### **What Does a Treatment Involve?**

A reflexologist will begin with a consultation, with questions covering your medical history, lifestyle including stressors and diet. Sitting on a chair or lying on a treatment couch, with feet uncovered, he/she will first examine them for signs of problem areas. With gentle stroking or pressure each foot will be massaged in turn, concentrating on easing tight or tender areas. The session should last an hour, with a course of 3-6 treatments recommended for maximum benefit.



## **Where Can I Learn More?**

The Reflexology Handbook–A Complete Guide. Laura Norman

Association of Reflexologists. Tel: 0870 5673320  
( Website useful in finding a reflexologist in your area ).

British Reflexologist Association. Tel: 01886 821207

*If this article inspires you to find out more about Complementary Health or Reflexology please contact myself via QueerSpace or Email me at [fjmullen@hotmail.com](mailto:fjmullen@hotmail.com)*



## **Self Defence**



Unfortunately homophobia is still a reality, and can happen anywhere, especially when you're out on the town. We all may have to deal with it at some stage in our lives. Knowing how to react to an aggressive situation can make all the difference.

The aim of the self defence workshop was to show a few basic techniques, not fancy moves or gymnastics, but rather simple demonstrations on how to control an aggressive situation and get away safely.

Firstly, we discussed the true meaning of self defence and when it should be used. Discussion was followed by the practical part of the workshop.

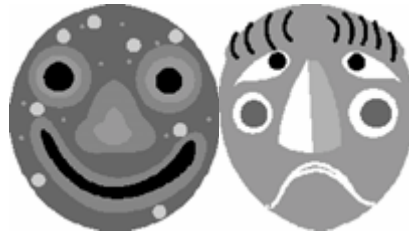
Topics discussed were:

- Keeping distance between yourself and the aggressor.
- Body stance when under attack
- How to safely break fall
- Things never to do (i.e. kicking, turning your back)
- How to use your attacker's weight/momentum to your advantage
- How to remove an object from the attacker (i.e. glass, bottle)
- What to do in a group situation

Useful tips..

- If you see a situation developing, try and leave the area. The safest solution to any dangerous situation is to get out. Running away from danger is the best kind of self defence for anyone.
- If someone threatens you don't be a hero, answering back is fuel for their fire.
- If you can't leave the area, try and diffuse the situation even if this means apologising when you weren't in the wrong.
- Don't try to use wit, sarcasm or cutting irony: drink and drugs can turn everyday aggression into something very dangerous.
- If you are really unfortunate and actually attacked, yell "fire" or something else that will be effective in bringing people running to your aid. Screaming your lungs off or blowing a whistle might frighten off any attackers as it draws attention to them, as well as you.

## **Self Esteem**



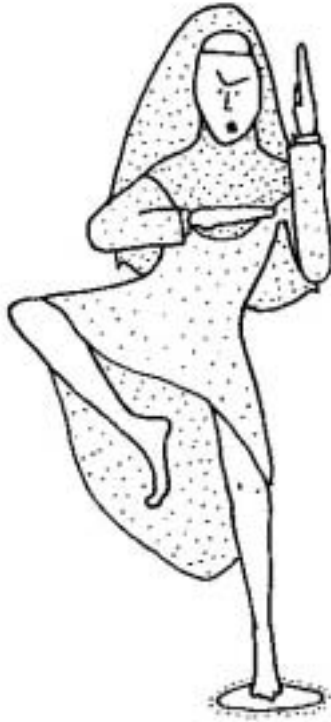
The self esteem workshops were conducted at the Ballynafeigh Community Centre and were hosted by QueerSpace as part of the package of workshops for 'Health and Mental Well Being'. This subject was broken into two workshops.

The first was attended by approximately 12 people. We started with an informal discussion on what the definition of 'Self Esteem' meant to each individual. We then highlighted possible general causes of low self esteem and how these could be specific to the LGBT community. We then finished the workshop with some poetry. The second workshop was attended by about 16 people and was conducted by a visiting speaker, Miss Sharon Gillespie, a Reiki instructor and a committee member of the Friends of Windsor House.

Firstly she spoke of her background and the reasons for her interest in this subject. She then conducted a group visualisation in which all participated on a journey of relaxation. We were given prompts during the visualisation to look out for key feelings. We then discussed this and what significance it had. Finally Sharon gave us tips on how to help our self esteem and pointers to watch out for when it's not at its best.

Useful contacts: The Shadow Trust, M.I.N.D., or the websites [www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org) and [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk).

## **Spirituality and Sexuality**



There is an intrinsic link that connects our sexuality with our spirituality. Each of us has a unique personality, which is expressed in our bodies as well as our minds. Each of us has our own spiritual journey – moving towards our final individuation. We do this by working out our path in the fragments of our lives which we experience through our senses. Our experiences of life, love and relationships are all limited by senses. It is only

through the five senses that we can realise in ourselves the world in which we live. Thus, not our view of the world, but who we are becoming is limited by the boundary of the senses.

Look at sight. Sight attracts us, excites us but it also conditions us by the way in which we work out what we see; it causes us to be moved to other ways. It gives us a focus in our mind where we can discover what types we are attracted to, who will arouse us. An outward experience of this gives us a blissful excitement and a feeling of ease in responding to each other. Our senses build up a data bank which prejudices each new encounter with assumptions which are based on connections we have made using previous experience. In the PRACTICAL EXERCISE a blindfold was used to remove the prejudicial filter of sight. Participants were blindfolded, mixed up and then guided into pairs back to back. This enabled us to feel at ease and to respond to one another in an open and comfortable way. As they began to explore one another, they gradually built up a pleasant and trusting encounter using the non-visual sense. In this we learnt about the way in which our senses work in creating our own understanding of ourselves in our relationships also the way in which our senses filter our sensing of the world around us.

Our spiritual journey takes account of our feelings which are an integral part of who we are. If we do not feel comfortable about ourselves as we are in the way in which we feel about ourselves, then we will not feel comfortable in our spirituality either. If we are unhappy about the way in which we think about ourselves, then we will be unhappy in the way in which we think about our spiritual lives.

If we are to find our true spirituality we must be comfortable with ourselves to be at peace with our own unique journey which ends with the true flowering of our identity in our final individuation.

## **Useful Contact Information**

**AIDS Helpline Northern Ireland.** Mon-Fri 9 am – 5 pm & 7 pm – 10 pm, Sat 2 pm – 5 pm, Thu 7.30pm-10pm.

**Belfast Butterfly Club.** 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tue 8 pm - 11.30 pm. P.O. Box 210, Belfast BT1 1BG.

**Belfast Lesbian Line.** Lesbian help line. Thu 7.30pm-10pm. (028) 9023 8668

**Women's Aid.** Helpline (028) 90331818

**Body Positive Northern Ireland.** Drop-in, advice. Room 308, Bryson House, Bedford St, Belfast. Tue-Fri 2 – 4 pm.(028) 9023 5515.

**Cara-Friend.** Belfast Helpline, 64 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2GT, (028) 9032 2023, Mon-Wed 7.30 - 10pm

**Coalition on Sexual Orientation (CoSO).** 33 Church Lane, Belfast BT1 4QN, (028) 9031 9030.

**Foyle Friend,** Community Resource Centre, 32 Great James Street, L/Derry, (028) 7126 3120

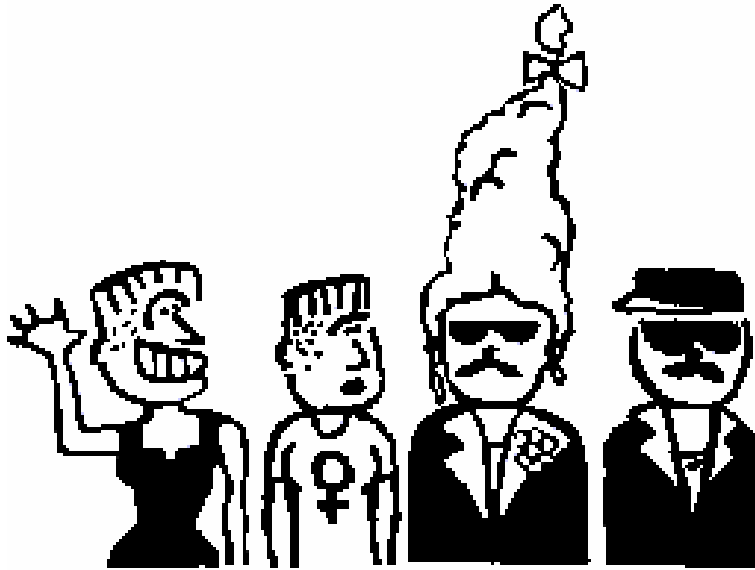
**GUM Clinic.** STD Clinic, Level 3B, Royal Victoria Hospital, Grosvenor Road, Belfast, Mon, Wed, Fri 8.30 am-11.30 am & 1.30 pm- 3 pm, (028) 9089 4777.

**Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland.** (GLYNI). 64 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2GT, (028) 9027 8636.

**Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association.** (NIGRA). 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month, 8 pm, Cathedral Buildings.

**Rainbow Project.** Gay men's health issues. Floor 2, 33 Church Lane, BT1 4QN. (028) 9031 9030

# The QueerSpace Collective



***Mission Statement:*** QueerSpace is a volunteer-led organisation based on collective planning and action which serves the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) Community by raising its visibility, supporting its activities, providing it with resources and facilitating communication while adhering to the principals of community orientation, freedom of identity, ethical funding and accessibility.