

Groups offer help for incest victims

By Lori Siewert

Incest is a problem no one likes to talk about. But it is a very real problem, and adults who were victims of incest as children often have severe emotional troubles.

Helping incest survivors deal with these problems is the goal of a new support group being formed by counselors at Lincoln's Family Services Association. Denise Daup, a Family Services counselor, said the group will have its first meeting Feb. 17 at 7:30 p.m.

All women who were incest victims are invited to attend the meeting, Daup said. It will be at the Family Services Association, 1133 H St. Charge for the group will be on a sliding scale based on income.

An incest survivors group is needed in Lincoln to help women cope with unresolved feelings of resentment, anger, fear and guilt, Daup said. Being able to talk with others who were also incest victims will show group members "they're not crazy to feel the things they do," she said.

Women who were victims of incest often are unable to form stable relationships, Daup said. They become confused about the difference between love and sex. This confusion causes some women to become withdrawn and

isolated, while others become sexually promiscuous, she said.

Long-range problems

Incest survivors also have high rates of alcoholism and suicide, Daup said.

Shelley Barnett of Child Protective Services said the number of sexual abuse cases referred to the agency increased 30 percent from 1980 to 1981.

Child Protective Services investigates cases of abuse and neglect from a social work perspective.

In 1980, the agency received 54 reports of sexual abuse, Garnett said. In 1981, it received 71. The majority of these reports were about incestuous relationships, she said. Most of these involved fathers or stepfathers and their daughters.

Garnett said one reason more cases are being reported is because people are becoming more willing to talk about incest.

"It's becoming more acceptable for a child to admit what's going on in his family," Garnett said.

Incest in a family takes years to develop and dealing with the problems it causes can also take years, Garnett

said. Support groups like the incest survivors group can help, she said.

Relieves isolation

"It helps victims realize they're not the only ones it's happened to," she said.

Mary Owen, a counselor and therapist at Child Guidance Mental Health Center, said a big problem incest victims have is being unable to feel worthwhile.

Children who are incest victims know something is not right in their families and blame themselves, she said. This leads to a low self-concept.

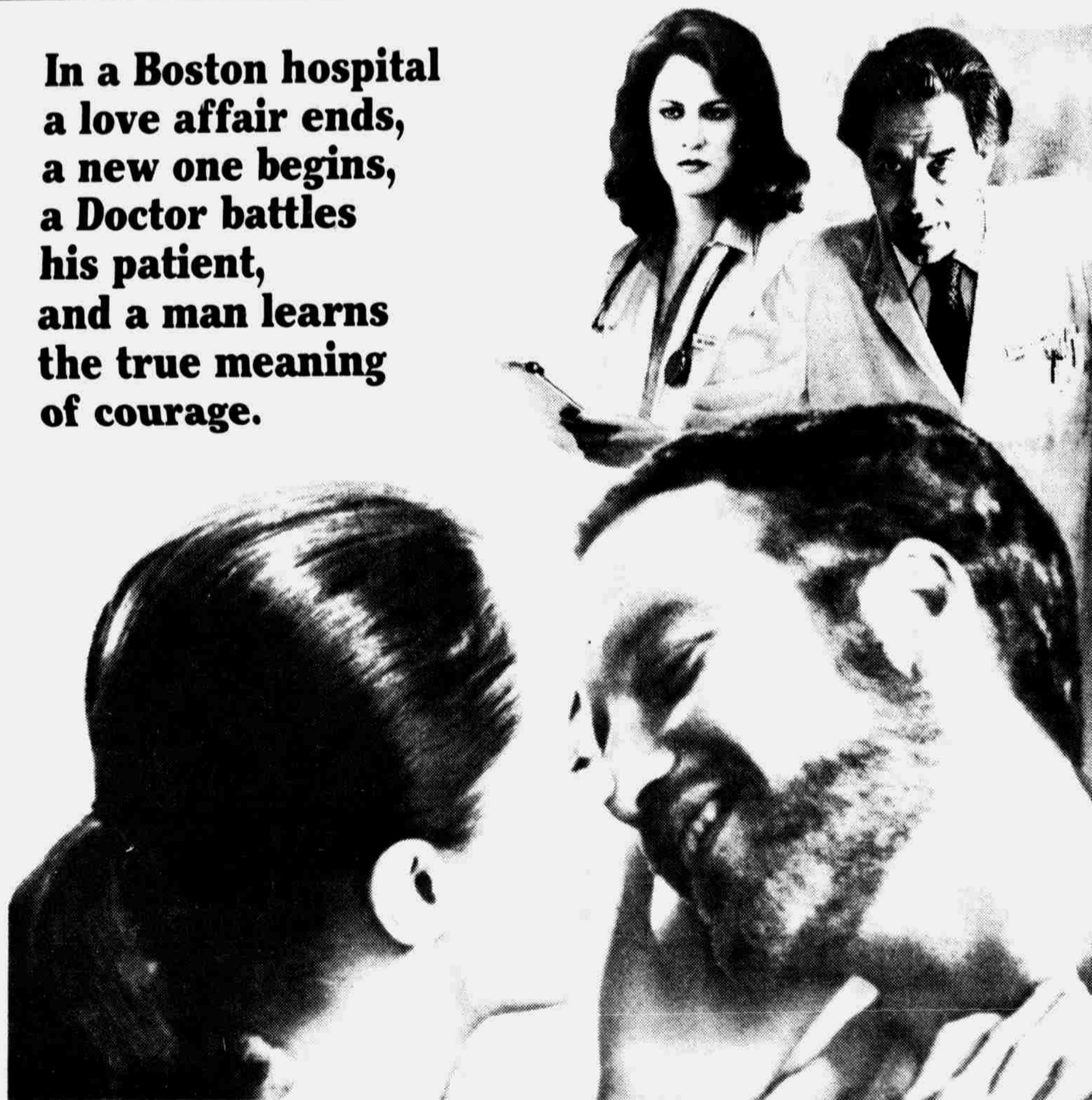
"If the self-concept is not worked out at the time the incest is reported, the self-concept continues to be low," Owen said.

Child Guidance has a survivors group for teenagers who have reported incest, she said. The group at the Family Services Association is probably the first established and publicized one for adults.

The increase in incest reports reflects a law requiring professionals, such as teachers, ministers and doctors, to report cases of suspected abuse to the police or Child Protective Services, Owen said.

The rate of incest may also be increasing. During stressful times, the rate of violent crimes often increases, she said.

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Thefts . . .

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However, Opegaard said restitution as such is not provided according to the store's policy. The store does try to replace stolen textbooks at a discount, he said.

"It's too bad there's a few people that get hurt each semester," Opegaard said. "The most difficult are the personal items that can't be replaced."

Kubicek agrees. "It's kind of ironic," he said, "what with Reagan's speech on the state of the union. As soon as my backpack was taken, I knew what the state of the union was."

Kubicek acknowledges that times are hard economically, and that economics probably has something to do with the backpack thefts.

Economics seems to be the one point on which everyone agrees. Similar sentiments were voiced by UNL Police and both bookstore managers.

Opegaard and Doris Sims of the Union Bookstore said a meeting with UNL Police is being planned to deal with the theft problem.

In the meantime, and as a full-time precaution, students can reduce their potential loss by removing valuables from their backpacks when they have to leave them, Fey said.

"As inconvenient as it may be, based on the frequency (of thefts) we're seeing, people have to take the risk (of leaving their backpacks unattended) or take the backpacks with them," he said.

Punishment for the theft of a backpack is based on the value of the items stolen.

When the value is \$100 or less, it's classified as a class-two misdemeanor, which carries a jail sentence of up to six months, a fine of up to \$1,000 or both, Fey said.

When the value is between \$100 and \$300, the crime is a class-one misdemeanor. Punishment can consist of not more than one year in jail, a fine of up to \$1,000 or both, Fey said.