FIRST THERE WAS **SPEED DATING**

THEN **SPEED FLATMATING** ... AND NOW ...

SPEED SHRINKING:

A THREE-MINUTE CURE?

1 New Yorkers are famous for spending more time with their therapists, or 'shrinks', than with their friends. Whether that's true is open to debate, but with the arrival of speed shrinking, they'll find they have more time left for their personal life and more cash left in their pockets as well.

2 'You only have three minutes to say your problem and get advice,' said Andu Novac, the first person I spoke to when I arrived at my first speed-shrinking event. 'That's so you don't waste time going into detail.'

3 In the newest variant of a format that seems to be inspired by speed dating, participants have the opportunity to seek the advice of eight different therapists, each providing a three-minute session. Speed shrinking is the brainchild of Susan Shapiro, a professor of journalism who has also written a book on the subject. Shapiro stumbled across the idea a few years ago when she herself was looking for a new therapist and found a way to try out several of them at minimal cost.

4 This evening's event, held in a university lecture hall, is free and has attracted a long queue of people hoping to find a quick cure for their emotional quandaries. Many of those attending are unwilling to talk about their worries to anyone but the therapists, but problems seem to run the gamut from broken relationships, to anxiety about work and money, to general depression, as well as a variety of phobias. Advice tends to be succinct and practical, as suits the format.

5 'I'm really unhappy in my job,' Novac tells therapist Adrian Jones. 'I wish I'd become a painter, but now I feel stuck in this position I have at a bank.' 'Follow your dreams,' Jones tells him. 'You may end up poorer, but you won't have the regret of not doing what you really want to do.' Jones's advice hardly seems original, but Novac says he is satisfied. 'I liked his style – he seemed to understand and care,' explains Novac. 'I'm actually looking for a new therapist and this is a great way to try out eight of them in a short time.'

6 That's actually why many therapists take part in the event, Jones tells us. 'This is a great source of new clients. And it's a good way for me to advertise my new book – I just have it on the table in front of me and refer to it during my sessions.'

7 Some of those seeking advice aren't entirely happy with the format. 'People near me can hear what I'm telling the therapist,' remarks Donna Bersch. 'I feel self-conscious.' But with the loud buzz in the room that sometimes reaches the level of shouting, it's hard to imagine that anyone could actually eavesdrop on another session. Sometimes, they're lucky to be able to hear the person sitting opposite them!

1 A Read the heading and tick the best summary, a), b) or c). Then read the article and check.

a) It's about a service where overweight people can lose weight quickly.

b) It's about a service where people can get advice from a therapist in a short time.

c) It's about a service where people get help making their lives simpler.

B Match the people 1–4 with the roles a)–c).

1 Novac *b*
2 Shapiro
3 Jones
4 Bersch

a) therapist
b) client
c) founder

C Are the statements true (T) or false (F)? Underline the words/phrases in the article that helped you.

1 New Yorkers prefer to spend more time with their therapists than with their friends. *F*
2 Shapiro works at a university.
3 In speed shrinking, the therapist gets paid cash.
4 A lot of people don't want to tell the reporter what their problems are.
5 Novac thinks that Jones's advice is disappointingly unoriginal.
6 Many of the therapists participate in order to get more business.
7 Bersch doesn't like how noisy it gets sometimes.
8 People sometimes can't hear each other because they talk too softly.

D Find words in the article to match definitions 1–8.

1 the way that something is organised or designed (paragraph 3) *format*
2 idea or plan that one person has thought of (paragraph 3) _____
3 found by chance (paragraph 3) _____
4 difficult situations where you cannot decide what to do (paragraph 4) _____
5 strong unreasonable fears of particular things (paragraph 4) _____
6 clearly expressed in a few words (paragraph 4) _____
7 a job in a particular organisation (paragraph 5) _____
8 secretly listen to another person's conversation (paragraph 7) _____

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