

Pedophiles seek cure for their "illness"

What do you say to a convicted child molester who looks you straight in the eye and tells you he's cured? "I have no more impulses," Raymond, 42, told me during a lengthy interview recently.

I responded appropriately. Prove it, I said. "It's been a year," he said calmly. "I work with the public. I test myself.

"The other day, this young man came and sat in front of me in the Métro and he had an erection. He looked at me and I just looked the other way. It didn't affect me.

"Before, I would have made eye contact with him and gotten off at the next stop to get it on with him.

"I am no longer a pedophile," he said proudly. "I'm an ex-pedophile."

Raymond paid \$300 to undergo lie detector tests and even submitted to a pleximograph exam at a Montreal university clinic. The tests showed that Raymond had no abnormal responses.

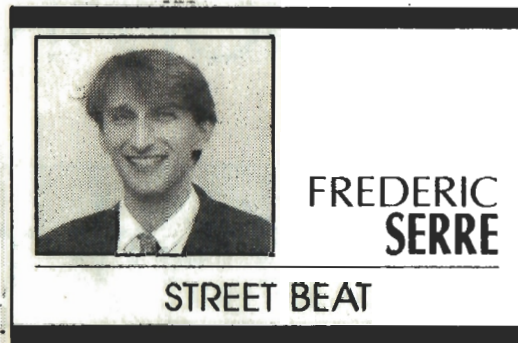
A graph from one of the tests indicated that Raymond's only moment of arousal occurred when he was shown a picture of a flower.

Sitting next to Raymond during the interview was Gordon, a 46-year-old visually-impaired West Islander who spent three months in a Quebec City jail in 1991 for sexually assaulting a young boy.

"I have no more obsessions," Gordon told me, adding that he is undergoing treatment to be cured, just like Raymond.

Throw Raymond and Gordon's testimonials at police officers who have dealt with child sex crimes and see what kind of reaction you get.

"There's no such thing as a cured pedophile," one leery sergeant detective snapped at me on the weekend. "They'll say, 'Oh I'm cured. I no longer have these impulses.' Yeah, and I'll bet



they also say, I have found God before they do (the crimes) again."

"I have the best known cure for pedophiles," said a colleague at *The Chronicle*. "The death penalty."

That's pretty much the kind of reaction I've received since this paper did a front-page story a month ago about Peter Veniez, a Pierrefonds psychotherapist who claims that child molesters can be cured through hypnotherapy.

Raymond and Gordon are two of a handful of child molesters that Veniez is currently treating.

After 17 sessions, Raymond is considered an ex-pedophile, Veniez said. The Montreal man still sees Veniez on a regular basis so that Veniez can continue to monitor the treatment.

Raymond first went to Veniez's Perron St. clinic a year ago, saying he wanted to kill himself because he couldn't get rid of his sexual desires for children.

Divorced and convicted on a multitude of assaults on children, including his two handicapped sons, Raymond spilled his twisted tales of sexual abuse and perversities on to Veniez's lap. Veniez said that many of the stories almost made him physically ill.

Raymond said he had been attending workshops at the Centre psychiatrique de Montréal, an affiliate of the Pinel Institute, as part of his therapy following his two-year jail term. Raymond

said the sessions drained him.

"Their principle is that it's incurable," he said. "They're (made) to make you feel guilty."

After several visits with Veniez, Raymond underwent hypnotherapy. During one of the sessions, Raymond discovered that he had been repeatedly sexually assaulted by his brothers. The assaults began when he was nine.

Under hypnosis, the patient is made to relive the memory and all of its pain as a means of uprooting the past, Veniez said. In Raymond's case, the memories of being raped by his brothers were stored into the farthest reaches of his mind, but its effects were expressed through criminal acts committed on children.

During several sessions with Veniez, Raymond was made to relive the pain and suffering he had caused to countless children. Through the suffering, Raymond sought forgiveness for the evil acts he had committed — one of the first steps toward a cure, Veniez said.

"I lived a week of feeling the pain of all those children," Raymond said.

Pedophilia is like a weed that keeps growing, Veniez said, adding, "I use hypnosis to de-root that weed so it won't grow back."

Veniez's approach is gaining reserved acceptance. The solicitor general's office in Ottawa has asked him to prepare a report chronicling Raymond's case. Pierrefonds-Dollard MP Bernard Patry, who is himself a doctor, has endorsed his support for Veniez, urging Ottawa to help fund his research.

Last week, Veniez learned that the *Journal of Psychiatry and Law* in New Jersey is interested in publishing his findings.

"There's nothing out there for these pedophiles," Veniez said. "At least I give them more than just hope. I give them a cure."

Veniez can be reached through the Corporation des praticiens en médecines douces du Québec at 634-0898.

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