No coffee for you, Mr Naked Man

I felt more and more nervous

Are we growing blasé about bare flesh?

What's with this blasé attitude towards nudity and acts of intimacy?

Mr Philip Chan, 51, a counsellor at Care Corner Counselling Centre, said: "It's not that Singaporeans are becoming blasé. They are pushing the boundaries more today than before. This is partly a reflection of what they see in the media. What was not okay in the past has become today's baseline."

However, he also pointed out that some of the cases of nudism are due to a mental disorder.

Senior counsellor at a tertiary institution Harry Low, 44, said that while there are some who have no qualms about their behaviour in public, Singapore is still conservative.

He said: "Singapore is considered 'backward' compared to Taiwan. In Taiwan, elderly couples show affection in public and even kiss and hug in public. There is nothing wrong with that."

However, Mr Low added that Singaporeans are getting daring in photo shoots.

He said: "Several years ago, Singaporeans took more conservative photos for their wedding. Now couples tend to take senior shots showing that they are getting more daring." (See report below)

Associate Professor of psychology at the Singapore Management University (SMU) Norman Li said that in many cases, streaking and public nudity reflects a particularly strong form of self-expression.

Professor Li said since Singapore is financially successful and militarily secure, its people worry less about having their basic needs met and fighting wars.

He said: "Instead, people living in peace with their needs met find that they have more time and restless energy, which they use to explore their individuality, and look for outlets for self-expression."

"While some people might take up guitar or paint pictures, a few might go as far as taking their clothes off in public."

On the role of camera phones and exhibitions, Professor Li said technology does facilitate behaviour that is increasingly public and sexual, including public displays of affection and nudity.

Assistant Professor of Sociology at SMU Nicholas Hannigan said that people could be nudists for rational reasons.

He said: "Some nudists believe it makes them closer to nature. Some nudists believe they are breaking down feelings of shame and sin that has been associated with the naked body."

While it is punishable by law, Professor Hannigan reckons that Singapore’s approach to public nudism will soften in time to come.

Currently, those found guilty of appearing nude in public, or in a private location, but visible to those outside, face a fine of up to $2,000 and up to three months in jail.

Options for public nudity

Professor Hannigan said: "There are many policy options open. One is to privatize zones at beaches or pools that are designated nudist. Another option is to draw a sharp distinction between nudity and offensive public behaviour (like sex acts in public).

He said: "In the future, I think Singaporeans will treat public nudism like they treat dianas. They are okay on the beach, but not on the train."

But would the average Singaporean accept that?

While it is happening more often, Singaporeans we spoke to said they would still be shocked if they saw a naked person on the street or intimate behaviour in public.

Said Damien Chan, 32, sales executive: "Singaporeans are conservative and it would still shock me."

Engineer Low Poh Keng, 38, said: "I’d be shocked. Public nudity is not appropriate... it’s barbaric!"

Said Mr Joseph Tan, 31, freelance scriptwriter: "I'm pretty liberal about a lot of things but I wouldn't want to be exposed to other people's naughty bits when I'm out."