

## Some Notes on Psychodrama

### What Is Psychodrama?

Psychodrama has been described in many ways. One translation of the method has been that it is a way of 'looking at the truth'. Another definition is that it is a 'way of acting out one's problems'. But the most commonly used definition is this - 'Psychodrama is an action-oriented group-encounter therapy, in which a person acts out a problem, and through certain techniques it is hoped that the result is therapeutic'.

Why do we need psychodrama, and other group methods? Perhaps Moreno, the father of the psychodramatic technique, and group therapy, explains it best. He says:

*Successful adjustment to a plurality of environments requires a flexible, spontaneous personality make-up. Everyone has an official role to live up to - but we all are filled with different roles which different roles which we want to become active in and that are present in us in different stages of development. It is from those active pressures which these multiple individuals in us exerts upon us that we get a feeling of anxiety. Psychodrama allows the 'other' individuals in us to be presented so that we can judge for ourselves what we are.*

Psychodrama, far more than any other form of therapy, follows the model of life, itself. Time, space, and the concentration of reality are important parts of the process. The protagonist *actively participates* in structuring his perceptions of reality on the therapeutic stage. The subject is not expected to sit back and let others do the work for him; he is expected to take a good look at his problems, and confront them in action, in the manner in which they occur in life. The protagonist is not a head-trip analyst, rather, an 'actor' actively experiencing rather than judging.

### The Differences Between the Role of the Psychodramatist and That of the Psychoanalyst

The psychoanalyst attempts to assume a neutral, emotionally cool attitude toward his patient - the attitude of the impersonal scientific observer and interpreter. On the basis of this behaviour, which is imperative to him, he hardly dares to be himself. Nevertheless, he becomes the target of highly emotional transferences which the patient gradually attaches to him over a long period of treatment. He may for instance covertly transfer the image of his father to the psychoanalyst. The patient's ensuing dependence on the analyst must then be resolved by means of a painstaking working through on the symptoms and original infantile patterns, now insidiously 'acted out' in the new derangement of the patient. The prolonged dual situation often gives rise to so called counter-transferences from the psychoanalyst to the patient. This situation

takes even more time to work through, and it is clear that the psychoanalyst and the patient are not engaged in any person to person relationship, rather a superior-subordinant relationship.

In contrast to the psychoanalyst, the psychodramatist can afford to meet his patient in a warm, human, sharing person-to-person relationship. Why? Because, letting the patient act out his conflicts constructs the therapeutic situation on a semi-real basis. However, the psychodramatist does not end up in an entanglement of feelings which are invalid. After the patient's experience of past relationships on the psychodrama stage, and simultaneous recognition of these transference phenomena; the psychodramatist is free to engage with the patient in a direct person-to-person relationship. Thus the relationship between psychodramatist and patient remains unencumbered by the transference neurosis. A healthy, real and adequate relationship - as is the basis of every patient-therapist contact-should ensue.

## **Psychodrama Notes**

### *Elements of Psychodrama*

- a) Protagonist
- b) Group
- c) Director
- d) Therapeutic Aids (aux. egos, doubles)
- e) Psychodrama Stage

### **Protagonist**

Spokesman for the group - does not act in the theatrical sense, but portrays scenes and incidents from his own private world. Acts *in situ*, or, the here and now. Gives love to the group, and gets it in return. **The Protagonist Should Co-Direct The Session.**

### **Group**

The group has two responsibilities - 1) It serves the protagonist when it reacts critically or supportively to what is occurring on the stage, and 2) It serves itself through experiencing what is taking place on the stage, and thereby can gain insight into its own motivations and conflicts, both as a collective whole, and in its individual parts. The group can serve as 'therapist and patient' simultaneously. The group member can pick and choose exactly how involved he becomes.

### **Director**

Chief facilitator, producer, and social analyst all at the same time. Must be trained, skilled, and above all, sensitive. Must be able to function in a highly volatile state, and keep control at all times. Must be able to warm-up himself and the group. The director must be a *damn* good listener, for he must pick up the clues and the cues given off by the protagonist. He must set situations up so that they are real to the protagonist. He

must at all times keep the protagonist and the group discussion after the session is over. He must have a high degree of spontaneity, and he must be a good protagonist. He must always remember that the protagonists' well-being is the number one priority in a session.

### **Psychodrama Stage**

Provides the protagonist and group members with a living space, which is multi-dimensional and flexible to the maximum. It is limitless. The stage space is an extension of life beyond reality. Fantasy, reality, illusions, and hallucinations are given flesh on the psychodrama stage.

### **Therapeutic Aids**

These are people who are trained in psychodramatic methods. The therapeutic aid might also be a member of the group. The psychodrama aids are auxiliary egos, and doubles.

The auxiliary ego portrays a *significant other* in the protagonist's life. The auxiliary is usually picked by the protagonist. An aux. ego can be the 'actor' who portrays an absentee person in the private world of the protagonist. The aux. ego must be a good listener, spontaneous, and at all times must be able to portray the role in a way as to fulfil the protagonist's needs.

The double is a supportive device called for when the director sees that the protagonist is having a hard time holding his own, i.e., not being able to verbalize feelings or thoughts. The double will speak as he perceives the protagonist is feeling. There are three types of doubles:

- 1) *Hypothesizing Double* - listens to what the protagonist has to say, forms a hypothesis, and verbally feeds back the hypothesis to the protagonist.
- 2) *The 'going with' Double* - this double 'goes with' what the protagonist is trying to say. This double may say things the protagonist is unable to say. He may shout, whisper, anything he feels the protagonist is unable to do.
- 3) *Non-Speaking, Supportive Double* - does nothing but emulate the protagonist's posture and sit next to him. This double is strictly a supportive tool.

## **Five Concepts Fundamental to the Psychodrama Theory**

### **1) Spontaneity**

The creative, uninhibited action that occurs on the psychodrama stage as a result of the director's therapeutic intervention.

## **2) Situation**

Or *in situ* refers to the here and now, the immediacy of the action on the stage.

## **3) Tele**

Is a mutual exchange of empathy and appreciation which may be considered a part of human relationships. Tele takes place as a part of the spontaneity-involvement of two or more people in a psychodramatic situation. (Example - between auxiliary ego and protagonist, prot. and group, prot. and double).

## **4) Catharsis**

Concern the emotional outlet or outburst that follows anxieties brought on by a return of repressed impulses.

## **5) Insight**

The 'new perception', or the learning that takes place as a result of a session.

## **Three Parts of the Psychodrama Session:**

### **a) The Warm-Up**

This is the procedure in which the director will warm-up himself, and the group members. The warm-up can be done in a variety of ways. A warm-up should involve a high degree of spontaneity.

### **b) The Session**

Where the action takes place. Where a protagonist presents his reality to the group, and the interplay, and interaction takes place.

### **c) The Sharing Period**

This is the most important part of the session. This is the phase of the 'total' session when the group members *share* feelings, *not* analyse what has taken place. Great insight and new perceptions may take place for the protagonist and the group members as a result of group sharing. The group is asked to identify (if they can) with the protagonist, and to relate those aspects of their own experiences which are similar to, or have a bearing upon, the experiences of the protagonist brought out in the psychodrama.

## **Important Techniques Used In Psychodrama**

### **1) Role-Reversal**

This is the most commonly used technique in psychodrama. The person undergoing

the psychodramatic process is compelled, through role reversal, to move out of his own perceptual sphere, and to try to feel his way into a particular person (or 'thing') who is significant in his life. Since he must take the role of the 'significant other' within the psychodramatic framework, the protagonist begins to get a deeper understanding of the actual life style and situation of that person. The greater the number of people the protagonist can role reverse with, the more links he establishes with the world around him, and he becomes more sensitive and aware of his reality.

## 2) The Soliloquy

The soliloquy is used to open the psyche to a more subtle range of experiences. It is used so that the protagonist may let his mind wonder in spontaneous thought, and he verbalizes them. For example, Joe might be saying one thing about his boss, but it is very evident that his feelings are not truly being spoken. So, if Joe is asked to soliloquise his feelings aloud, it might go something like this - *'I might say anything to my boss to please him, but I really can't stand the bastard. He just raised someone else's salary, but not mine! I'm sure I've done enough ass kissing to deserve a raise'*. Joe has clarified his true feelings through soliloquy.

## 3) Mirror

This technique enables the protagonist to see himself as others see him. While he watches from the audience, members of the group 'mirror' his behaviour on the psychodrama stage. The technique helps to sensitize the protagonist to the reality of how other people experience *him*.

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# Working with another Trainer in a Group

These are random observations made as a result of working with a variety of different colleagues in different training situations during the past few months.

They are an attempt to clarify in my own mind those things which have seemed helpful and vice versa. This could either provide a set of 'expectations' for future colleagues, guidelines for my own memory or a point to which to look back at some future date to see if my expectations or values have changed.

In this paper the groups referred to are the type of unstructured or semi-structured groups usually referred to

as T-groups or therapy groups, or open groups designed to examine interpersonal interactions.

For convenience I have sorted these notes into two general parts. Firstly, what are the areas I need to know before I can begin to work in a group with a colleague? Secondly, what behaviour have I found to be useful or dysfunctional during the actual running of the group?

Firstly it seems that the fundamental areas I need to work on when I know that I am going to be working with a colleague are:-