

**Michael Klassman**

## **Some psychodrama warm-up techniques**

Certainly, one of the most spontaneous and creative things we can all do is move and dance to the music that turns us on. One fact about music that affects us all is that it can help us get in touch with a certain feeling. Think for a second of the many times your mood was affected by a musical encounter. Think, if you will, of the impact on contemporary society that the songs of the Beatles have had. The same can be said about many other musical performers. Yes, music has set many a mood, and it is for this reason that I have used mood music as an effective psychodramatic warm-up.

Before I explain the warm-up exercise, I think it is important to mention the music used. By no means do I want to imply that the records I am going to mention are the only ones to use. But the choice of records is most important! There are three basic moods which are explored in this warm-up - pain, pleasure (fun), and sharing (loving). For the exploration of pain, a good song to use is 'The End', done by the Doors rock group. This is a record dealing with the innermost feelings of a very disturbed individual. There are several songs that can be played, for the pleasure sequence: The Doors' 'Light my Fire', The Beatles' 'Here Comes the Sun', and 'Come Together', and 'The Circle Game', by Joannie Mitchell, to mention a few. The final record I use, for the sharing of thoughts and feelings, is 'Bridge Over Troubled Waters', done by Simon and Garfunkle.

In this warm-up, it should be explained to the group members, that they are about to take a journey into the world of feelings. The room is made dark and the group is asked to find a comfortable place on the floor. The members are then requested to be non-verbal from this point on. The group members should be allowed to move around and use lots of space during the exercise. The participants are asked to close their eyes and to forget that anyone else is around. They are asked to concentrate on the sounds around them, and the floor they are sitting on.

After an adequate time of focusing in on himself and his environment, the group member is asked to think of the one place in his body that hurts or tenses up when a painful situation is encountered. He should allow himself to feel the pain, and then to physically emulate the part that hurts.

When each individual is in touch with, and emulating, the part of him that hurts, he is asked to think of the kind of situation that lead to this 'uptight' feeling. (i.e., 'My wife is forever nagging me, but I never fight back. All I ever do is get knots in my stomach.')

By now, it is hoped that each member is into a 'whole' feeling - physically and mentally. Without further words spoken, the first record is played. When the record is finished, each individual may be into some degree of his pain. I have always seen some sptial movement in this part of the warm-up, but usually the participants crawl into

their pained areas. A period of silence should be allowed to ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to grasp what has occurred. After this, the group members are reminded that there are other people who have gone through the same experience. All are encouraged to find a partner (eyes still closed) and to non-verbally share the experience.

After a short period of exchanging feelings of pain, the pleasure phase begins by my playing a lively, happy record. This encounter always seems to bring the group closer and opens people up to more spontaneous feelings. A 'togetherness' may evolve and it is not unusual for the whole group to be moving as a unit in spontaneous celebration. This phase should last the longest.

When the records have finished, everyone is told to think for a moment of what they have thus far experienced. All members are asked to open their eyes, and as a group, non-verbally share their feelings. As this sharing is taking place, the final record should be played.

When the record is over, it is wise to have a long period of silence take place, so that everyone can feel what has happened. The group is usually very together, and a great deal of trust may have been built. When the lights are turned on, anyone who wants to share a non-verbal feeling with another group member is encouraged to do so. After this, each person is encouraged to verbalize what he's feeling.

From my experience, this warm-up has been very effective. It has a most stimulating effect on the individuals involved in that it helps to facilitate insight and new perceptions. Also, there evolves a loving-sharing warmth with the group, and these are elements that are conducive for a psychodrama session.

### **Acting Out Your Life Story: Non-Verbal**

I find that the vast majority of people in group encounters are too verbal. Sometimes an unnecessary amount of time is spent by group members to warm-up to one another. There exists an air of 'intellectual bullshit'. A non-verbal warm-up could cut through all the superficialities and get right down to feelings and insights. One such warm-up is to ask each group member to take a turn at presenting to the group, his life story, non-verbally.

This can be a powerful technique for the people experiencing it.

Each group member is encouraged to participate, but it is not mandatory. If an individual wants to 'act-out' just one part of his life, this should be permitted. The movement is entirely up to the participant. If the individual, or a group member, is deeply moved by his action, then the director can stop all action and get straight into a psychodrama session.

After all is finished, a group discussion should follow. I've heard people say, *'Wow, I never realized just how I felt about that part of me and my life', or, 'I'm so used to talking about the unhappy childhood I've had, I realize how I have been running away from it and how much I still have to work on it.'*

The beauty of this warm-up is that the participants are *feeling*, as opposed to intellectualizing, and the group members seem to do a great deal of identifying.

### **Seeing You Through Someone Else:**

A director might encounter a great reluctance on the part of group members to talk about themselves. The following is a good and effective warm-up to use in this case.

Each group member is to think back to when he was about 10 years old. Then he is asked to switch roles with someone who was significant in his life at that time. Each group member should take a turn at being his significant person, and, as that person, confront himself with how much he has changed since the age of 10 to 15.

A great deal of insight into each individual member can be gained by this warm-up. It also allows the participant an opportunity to step outside himself for a few moments and evaluate the changes he has gone through over the years.

### **Recognizing Mediocrity In Ourselves**

Something that may be hard for some people to do is recognize and deal with, their mediocrities. A useful psychodramatic warm-up is one that deals directly with this problem.

Each group member is asked to become a part of him which is mediocre. After doing this, the member is asked to soliloquize out loud what his mediocrity is, and what it feels like. Another field of exploration might be to find out how the mediocre part of the individual affects his every day interactions. For example, in a session using this warm-up, a young man said, as his mediocre part, 'I don't like being around my brother because he reminds me of what I'm not.'

While the action of soliloquy is taking place, other group members can tune into what is being said, and this may bring about greater recognition of their own mediocrities.

### **Exposing The Multiple Individuals In Us**

The Director asks the members of the group if they have 'other individuals' within them that never come out. If the answer is yes, then the director should encourage the members to expose the multiple individuals within them, to the group.

The following is an example of what I am referring to: Mark is encouraged to come before the group and become the parts of him that he never exposes. With that, he may expose his uncertainty of what is right or wrong. He may explore the part of him that was a success, a part which never was exposed because of his lack of confidence, yet a part he truly believes exists. He may say, *'I'm as good as anyone here. I am creative with my hands, and I'm darned good!'* After he speaks, the other group members can acknowledge his confident 'person' and the group members are urged to share their feelings about him. This may lead to a session dealing with Mark's lack of confidence.

This type of warm-up is excellent because the person who risks exposing the multiple individuals in him is actually into a session while going through the warm-up.

### **Mirroring**

This warm-up should be used with a group that has been meeting on a regular basis and whose group members know each other fairly well. It is important to note that the group members do not have to know each other on an intimate basis. The idea behind the exercise is to illustrate to each group member how he presents himself to other people.

The names of all group members are written on small pieces of paper and placed in a container. The container is passed among the group, and each person picks a name. Of course, if a member picks his own name, then he should pick another.

When everyone has a name, the instruction is given to 'switch roles with the person whose name you have, and mirror his verbal and non-verbal behavior'. It is important that the person who is being mirrored realizes that he is getting one person's perception of him.

Another way of using the mirror as a warm-up is to have people pick a partner and to talk to one another about their lives in general. After this occurs, the partners switch roles and give feed-back to the other person by mirroring their words and behaviour.

A group discussion should follow this warm-up.

### **Using Music To Describe Who You Are**

This warm-up involves each person's playing a record, or records, that describe who he is, what he's interested in, and any other dimensions of himself he wants to share.

The technique is simple. Everyone who participates should be encouraged to go through some non-verbal motion while their record is playing. This is not mandatory.

A discussion should follow after everyone has finished. Usually there is a great amount of group identifying. In listening to another person's record, an individual may see a dimension of himself for the first time.

### **Writing Your Own Prescription**

This is a fun type of warm-up. It is simple, yet it can get very involved and lead right into a session.

The director asks the group member to think of himself as if he were a doctor filling out a prescription for his emotional ailment. For example: Ted is going to fill out a prescription for his own emotional ailments. *'The first thing I need is a good dose of a 'confidence pill'. Then I need a few extravert pills.'*

The potential protagonist is allowed to name his own ailment in depth, and very often it is the first time he recognizes his 'ailment'.

### **The Kaleidoscope**

This is a warm-up that involves a lot of spontaneous movement. All the group members are asked to form a tight circle. Then everyone is asked to lie on their backs. The instruction to all is that the exercise will be non-verbal.

Each member is then told that he is the insides of a very special kaleidoscope, which, at each turn, shows a part of his life. The director will be the 'turner' of the kaleidoscope. At each turn (all the director has to do is say 'turn'), the group members are to non-verbally, and physically, recall any parts of their lives that are meaningful.

A group discussion should follow this exercise to allow each member an opportunity to verbally express any feelings which arose during it.

### **Using The Doubling Technique**

This warm-up exercise is useful in that it can involve the entire group.

The director asks if there is anyone in the group who is having difficulty getting in touch with 'where they're at'. If there is, then the individual is asked to come before the group and non-verbally share how he feels.

After a few minutes of viewing this, the group members are asked to double for the individual. Many of the comments made by the members can help the individual clarify his own feelings. Also, there is a great deal of identifying that takes place. One other positive aspect to this warm-up is that there is already a protagonist and a roomful of warmed-up doubles.

### **Confronting Individual Resentments And Appreciations**

This psychodramatic warm-up can be used to help an individual contact the parts of himself which he resents and appreciates.

Simply done, the individual confronts the resentment part of himself and explains what effect that part has on his life. The same is done when encountering the appreciation.

Another way of doing this warm-up is having each individual pick a member of the group who has a similar quality that the individual resents or appreciates.

### **Exploring Life Space**

One of the essential techniques in a psychodrama session is allowing the protagonist to explore his life space. When a person acts in the here-and-now, or *in situ*, he is

exploring his immediate world relationships, physical environment, and individual characteristics.

One way to facilitate action would be to ask the group members, at the beginning of a session, to think about their present environment. After allowing them time to think, the director then asks for a volunteer to go to the psychodrama stage and, with the use of chairs, build his life space so that the other group members might begin to identify.

Upon completion of this life space building, the subject is then asked to step back out to the group, and from that vantage point he should start to eliminate, add to, or explain aspects of his life space. As this is taking place, the director may ask the subject if it is all right with him if people auxiliary-ego at certain points. If the subject says 'yes', then a session is in full swing. If no answer is given, then the subject has had an opportunity to explore his life space and define it a bit more.

This warm up can be a whole group session in itself. After a subject has built his life space, the group should be included and people should be given the opportunity to share and identify with the subject.

---

Jerome Liss

## Open your chakras

Modern western medicine and physiology give us very few leads for understanding (and still less encouragement to undergo) the revitalisation forces of the body which are tapped by the new body oriented therapies. As indicated before, we must look to the experiences and surmises of people in the east to gain further perspectives regarding the forces in our bodies. The Kundalini, for example, is a special energy force usually described as originating in the first chakra or 'energy centre' and travelling upward along the spinal column to the very top of the skull. The Kundalini, also called 'the serpent power', is pictured to be like a serpent sleeping at the base of the spine. To picture this power as a sleeping serpent is to attest to its animal mystery, its vital power and potential destructiveness unless aroused with great skill and caution. This is to say that we have great body energies, mysterious in origin, which require great care in their arousal if they are to be channelled constructively rather than destructively.

The Kundalini power is aroused through meditation and special Asanas or physical positions. It is said to traverse and light up the special energy centres or chakras of the body. Each chakra is said to be associated with a particular function. The second chakra, located in the pelvis, is linked to sexual function. The third chakra, in the middle of the abdomen, is connected to strivings for power. The fourth chakra, in the heart region of the chest, is linked to affection and love. The fifth chakra, in the throat, is said to be connected to voicing the truth. The sixth chakra, slightly above and between the eyes, often known as the Third Eye, is linked to wisdom. The seventh chakra, located at the top of the skull, is also called the Thousand Petalled Lotus, and as the Kundalini power