

Psychodrama is a powerful methodology which requires skill and training in application. With more emotionally disturbed people, the question must be asked whether a support system is necessary within which psychodrama can be used, a residential as opposed to a fieldwork setting for more indepth work? It is sometimes useful to have an auxiliary ego in the group who is trained in the use of psychodramatic methods because he may be more perceptive and spontaneous. This most often occurs where there is an ongoing programme of psychodrama, for example, in a psychiatric hospital where certain kinds of personality disorder may lead individuals to be suspicious and slow to reveal themselves. Another factor is that the use of physical movement is especially important for those who have little capacity for intellectual and verbal exploration and also those who tend to over-intellectualise their experience. The experience in mental health shows psychodrama to be a valid form of therapy with the emotionally disturbed and the evidence to date is that this is an extremely promising technique for those working with offender groups.

### References

- (1) Barr 1966 H.M.S.O.
  - (2) Haxby 1978, p.245
  - (3) Probation Journal - June 1977
  - (4) Probation Journal - September 1978
  - (5) Yablonsky 1972
- 

**Helen Jones**

### **The Afan Alternative For Young Offenders**

*"The purposes of training and treatment of convicted prisoners shall be to establish in them the will to lead a good and useful life on discharge and to fit them to do so."*

*The Prison Rules 1964*

The Afan Alternative - a course of group work using role play, sociodrama and psychodrama was set up by Deri Lewis as a viable alternative to Borstal and prison. In this way, the scheme takes on hard-core offenders, ones which the Probation Service does not usually deal with. It runs for a period of six months. About 10 young persons are involved in the group, but it is a continuous process with others joining as some complete the course. The idea is to get offenders straight from Court where an order will be made for 12 months. A medical certificate is required and no one is accepted on the group unless they are fit to take part. Offenders who would probably otherwise receive custodial sentences are told that if they embark upon the scheme it is going

to be demanding and will take a lot of courage. Failure to comply with the demands of the system means that offenders will be immediately brought back to Court and dealt with accordingly. This necessitates a firm line of action from the start, thus avoiding the debilitating effect associated with custodial sentences. Young offenders who "go away" quickly become accustomed to the regime in question; once familiar with the routine, the regime has little, if any, impact. (1) It is fear of the unknown which serves as the effective deterrent, not custody itself. A typical response: "Three months of blind obedience in digging holes, endless P.T. and continual unreasoning deprivation". (2) This is why the Afan Alternative attempts to provide more than routine exercises, which are detached from the offender's environment. The system, involving physical and mental aspects, is challenging and meaningful. A great deal of thought has gone into combining Moreno Philosophy with the Japanese discipline, using the 'DOJO KUN' Maxims, which exemplify an attitude, dictating a way of life. This provides a physical vehicle which the offenders can identify with, and by so doing, combat the pressures of the delinquent peer group, which tends to lead them away from feeling level. Therefore the 'Dojo Kun' allows the offenders to accommodate themselves to the Moreno Philosophy, which is an exploration of the truth and requires an examination of their inner feelings, in order that they can be in control of their own future, on a rational level.

The form of group work involving a fairly rigid physical discipline is linked up in a meaningful way to group sessions, which involve Psycho Drama techniques as well as other creative methods. The main goal being emotional growth, beginning with the realisation of where the individual is at present and where he could be with the required effort. Marcia Karp states that psychodrama, with its concentration on behaviour in the here and now, will provide the means of exploring the truth through dramatic methods. For many this is difficult, because as children we were so often punished for telling the truth. In this way, a false understanding of maturity can be likened to the closing over of spontaneous emotions as one gets older. For example, a child learns in the early years, that it is not acceptable to say what he really feels, at the time he needs to say it. As he grows up, he suppresses what he is really feeling and thinking, to such an extent that his interpersonal behaviour quickly becomes false, and he learns a false pattern of relating, sometimes a delinquent pattern, so that the child never knows what he is really feeling and thinking. In a symbolic way, the soft spot on the baby's head closes over never more revealing the physical pulse, as does the vulnerability of truth and so he then chooses a pathological way of relating which is infinitely more dangerous. The aim of the psychodramatic process is to help reunite that human being with his own truth without being punished.

Any offender involved in this project must be prepared to allow group leaders and workers into every aspect of his life, such as parents, peer groups, school, employers, etc. Therefore he is continually aware of his commitment. Contact with homes and outer cogs in the individual's life will be in the form of a specialised form of through care, which will begin from the nucleus of the

group sessions and work outwards into the community. Should an individual re-offend, he must suffer the consequences with as little delay as possible. During the period of participation, the young offenders will have no contact with any Probation Officer or Social Worker who depends on a casework approach.

Individuals are interviewed on tape before starting the group sessions, to find out levels of integration. We have our own system of analysing the results, to provide us with insight into where the young person is at, in terms of affect, level of cognition and community integration. Taped interviews will take place again at the end of the course, to assess mental development. In addition to this, graphs have been designed to monitor the hierarchical structure of the group. This is done so that the more destructive elements in the group are not allowed to prevent the growth of weaker personalities.

We are aware that difficulties will arise, and have to be faced during the course of training, but our preparation for this means that we are ready to face chaos head on. Our approach has been tough and firm: for instance one of the first group members who failed to turn up for an office interview, was sent back to Court to report, before being allowed to commence on the group. We have impressed that this is no "soft option". It is imperative that each offender realises before initiation that unlike his past experience of casework supervision, this system is not an easy alternative.

Although the scheme is currently in its early stages, the important fact is that it is in operation, and we are optimistic about its success.

---

### **ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS**

**T.G.Thomas** is the author of 'The Danaids' and 'The Red Ching'. Along with Sylvia Hutchinson he runs a psychodrama group for art therapists at Goldsmith's College and a Human Relations course at the City Literary Institute.

**Marcia Karp** trained at the Moreno Institute in New York and is an accredited trainer of psychodrama. She is director of the Psychodrama Centre at Holwell Farm in Devon.

**Jane M Puddy** is a tutor of the Dramatherapy course at the Hertfordshire College of Art and Design and Chairperson of the British Association of Dramatherapy.

**Olivia Lousada** is working as a free lance psychodramatist in London. Before working with Psychodrama she was a teacher specializing in drama. She then trained in group therapy under John Southgate and worked as a staff consultant. She trained in psychodrama with Joel Badaines and Marcia Karp and has been working with in-patients, adolescents and the mentally handicapped.