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# TRAINING MANUAL FOR PSYCHODRAMA TRAINEES

**Introduction** The following manual is a reference for the training in psychodrama. It is stage one of the training and should be used to practice in groups that you lead.

## **What is psychodrama?**

Psychodrama was developed by J.L. Moreno, a Viennese psychiatrist (1889-1974). It is a method that utilizes guided dramatic action to examine problems or issues raised in a group or in individual counseling.

## **The five aspects of psychodrama**

- **The director:** is a trained psychodramatist who guides the group to select a protagonist and then to guide the protagonist
- **The protagonist:** the person who enacts the drama concerning their issue that is representative of the groups' warm up
- **The auxiliary:** is the person chosen by the protagonist to play the role of others in the drama.
- **The stage:** the area on which the enactment takes place. Usually the psychodrama session is conducted in a large room with the seats in a horseshoe shape enabling the area at the front to be the stage.
- **The audience:** the remaining group members who are not directly involved in the drama as auxiliaries.

## **The three phases of a psychodrama session**

- **The warm up:** this may be a director -directed warm up or a group warm up. Here the group focuses on a recurrent theme. From this theme a protagonist is chosen, either sociometrically by the group or by the director, to enact their drama.
- **The enactment:** the director guides the protagonist using a variety of psychodramatic techniques to resolve the issue
- **The sharing:** This important phase ensures that the protagonist is reunited with the group. Clear instructions to group members on how to share is essential. "The protagonist has given a lot of themselves in the drama by showing us their world and now we have the opportunity to give back to the protagonist. Sharing what has touched you as you were involved in the drama. It is not an analysis of the drama or advice giving." Group members communicate emotions and associations evoked by the enactment. Those who were auxiliaries in the drama may share from the roles they played. The director has the responsibility to provide each member with an opportunity for self-expression.

## **Conducting a psychodrama session**

1. **Framing the session:** to create a safe environment for the work to be done it is important to outline the session for the group. "We will work for ---hours and lunch will be at----. You will not be asked to do anything that you are not comfortable with. The more you put into the group the more you will get out of it."
2. **Warm up:** Here the links are made between members of the group. The warm up may be director-directed or a group warm up.
  - Directed-directed warm up
  - Group warm up

When to use each depends on the director. If the group is new or in a reactive fear stage then a director-directed warm-up is used to create a safe structure. A group warm up is used in a well developed group.

3. **Choosing the protagonist** The protagonist is the person who is most warm up and represents the issue of the group. Selection can be by the director, the protagonist or sociometrically by the group. It is important that the group is connected to the issue of the protagonist or the protagonist will become isolated from the group and the group will not be involved in the drama. Psychodrama is a group method in which the protagonist enacts the issues of the group.

### **How to choose a protagonist sociometrically:**

Ask the group who is warmed up to work. If there is more than one person ask each of these potential protagonists to come onto the stage and say what their work would be. Then ask group members to "choose the protagonist on the basis of whose work is most significant for you at this time. Stand and place your hand on the shoulder of the protagonist you choose."

The director then counts the number of hands for each protagonist. The protagonist with the greatest number of choices becomes the protagonist for the drama. The director asks those who have chosen one of the other potential protagonists to share why they chose them. If two protagonists are chosen, the director then asks those who have not chosen either of these protagonists to make a second choice.

4. **Interviewing the protagonist is important** for setting the purpose for the drama and building the relationship between the director and the protagonist and the group. The relationship between the director and the protagonist is the key to a successful drama. The trust is essential for the enactment to occur. Interviewing enables this relationship to be developed and for the purpose of the drama to be established. This purpose is crucial for the drama to be 'on task'. It enables the director to go back to the original purpose if the drama goes off track during the enactment. The contract can be renegotiated at any time during the drama. During the interview the director listens for the action cue after the purpose has been established. This enables the action to go onto the stage and the drama to commence. For example, the protagonist may talk of a scene or image: the role of the director is to put this into action rather than letting the protagonist continue to

narrate to you. Psychodrama is an action method and allowing the protagonist to narrate decreases his/her spontaneity. "Beware of the narrator".

5. **Setting the scene:** using the action cue from the interview, the director asks the protagonist to set out the scene using scarves, objects and auxiliaries. This is the technique of concretization. It is important that the protagonist sets the scene as this is a physical warm up to their spontaneity. It enables the director and the audience to enter the world of the protagonist. Here the inner world of the protagonist to be produced. Here it is important to follow the lead of the protagonist for the drama to unfold.
6. **Getting into action using psychodramatic techniques.** Once the scene is set the director uses various psychodramatic techniques to help the protagonist to warm up to their spontaneity. See below for the techniques and when to use them. Role reversal, doubling, mirroring, maximization, walk and talk, soliloquy
7. **Changing to a new scene.** This needs to be done crisply. Direct the protagonist to put away the scene and set the new scene. Remember it is the protagonist's drama and he/she needs to put away the scene and set out the new scene.  
**When to change scenes:**  
The protagonist has brought up a new subject that requires a new scene.  
The protagonist has a loss of spontaneity.  
The director sees a therapeutic need in the drama to reenact either a past or future scene.
8. **Closing the drama:** The Director asks the protagonist if there is anything she/he wants to say /do to complete this drama. Re-cap the purpose of the drama that was stated at the beginning of the drama. The director may say to the protagonist: "Walk around the stage and say what you have learned from this drama."
9. **Sharing:** The director gives clear instructions of what sharing is and is not. "The protagonist (name) has given a lot of themselves in the drama by showing us their world and now we have the opportunity to give back to the protagonist. Sharing what has touched you as you were involved in the drama. You may share from your role as an auxiliary or from your personal experience. It is not an analysis of the drama or advice giving." The protagonist does not need to say anything but sit and listen as the group share from their own experiences what touched them in the drama. If appropriate, sharing can be done on the stage surrounding the protagonist. Sharing can also take the form of non-verbal sharing such as stroking the protagonist.

### **10. Closure of the group.**

Prior to finishing, ask the group “imagine yourself leaving this group and is there anything you wished you had said or done in the group.” This gives the members the opportunity to bring up any unfinished business. It is important to deal with this in the session prior to the final closing session.

#### **Examples of closure exercises:**

- What I learned and how I’ll use it in life. Stand in a circle and take a step in and say what you’ve learned from the group. Then take a step back and say how you will use this in your life.
- Choose 2 symbols to represent what I’ve learned and how I’ll use it in life. Share and place the symbols on the floor in the center of the circle. Finish with a song or holding hands or holding thumbs.
- Talk in pairs and then share in the large group

Always finish in the large group.

### ***Conducting a Role Training Session***

Purpose to train the person in a role that is underdeveloped for example the “assertive truth teller”

- Set the scene
- Enact the scene
- Mirror: audience members mirror the protagonist.
- Reenact the scene: the protagonist then reacts the scene using the new information from the mirroring
- Model: audience members model the new role of “Assertive truth teller”
- Role test: the protagonist reenacts the scene using the modeling. If the protagonist is unable to enact the new role then further mirroring and modeling takes place.

Role training may take place within a drama.

## ***Psychodrama Techniques***

- **Role reversal:** the protagonist becomes the other person – steps into their shoes.  
This is used to:  
Increase spontaneity  
To give another perspective to the issue  
To give information to the auxiliary  
To understand the role of the other
- **Mirroring:** The protagonist chooses an auxiliary to play themselves and watches from outside the drama. This is used when the protagonist is “stuck” and has regressed to the stage of the double. It enables the protagonist to see him/herself from a different perspective and may bring out another role. The auxiliary needs to re-enact the protagonist as closely as possible.
- **Doubling:** The auxiliary becomes the protagonist; he/she acts, moves and behaves like the protagonist. It is used if the protagonist has regressed to the stage of the mirror and is unable to express their feelings. The double stands along side the protagonist and takes on their body position and expresses their feelings.
- **Concretization:** Using objects or people to represent the inner world of the protagonist. Includes setting the scene.
- **Maximization:** Making the words louder or the actions bigger to increase the protagonist's warm up and often leads to a catharsis of abreaction. (A release of emotion).
- **Soliloquy:** The protagonist shares their inner thoughts and feelings aloud.
- **Walk and talk:** the protagonist walks and talks their inner feelings and thoughts.
- **Sculptures:** Sculptures are interrelation i.e. objects or people are placed in relation to each other to represent some aspect of their issue.
- **Self presentation:** Using the techniques of psychodrama to present themselves to the group
- **Future projection:** The protagonist portrays in action how he/she thinks the future will shape itself. A specific scene is enacted in the future which may include the most feared event, the ideal, the realistic outcome or exploration of a forthcoming event.
- **Surplus reality:** Scenes that have never happened will never happen or can never happen (Zerka Moreno) these scenes often represent hopes fears and unfinished business. This is useful for recreating goodbye death scenes, talking the truth to persons that are not here.

## **Warm up techniques**

**Guided imagery:** Relax and concentrate on your breathing. As you breathe in and out, think of a time when you felt totally at peace. Take yourself to this place and listen to the sounds you hear, what colors do you see, what smells do you smell, what is the temperature like, is it dry or wet, what do you feel, are there other people with you. Now keep this picture with you and draw this image.

**Drawings:** Use this in combination with guided imagery to concretize a theme.

**Social atom:** Draw your social atom by placing yourself in the center and all the people in your social world around you. Use circles for female and triangles for males. Draw the tele (positive, negative or neutral) between the people and you. This can be extended to your original social atom (childhood), past social atoms (in another time) ideal or future social atom.

**Sociometry:** mapping relationships in the group. Use a continuum to ask participants to place themselves on the continuum in relation to criteria set by the director e.g. who loves groups---hates groups. Knows everyone here ---- knows no one.

**Physical warm up games** – Throw oranges to one person and add an extra orange till there are 6 oranges being thrown. Always throw it to the same person.

**Movement** to music. Ask participants to move their bodies to music. Scarves can be used to enhance this.

**Play of life:** use the dolls and stage to concretize the present situation and the ideal situation.

**Symbols:** choose an object or scarf to symbolize how you are feeling now, what you expect from the group.

**Names:** Introduce yourself and how you got your name. The director can say their name first and how they got it to demonstrate this exercise. Say your name and an animal that starts with the same letter.

**Introducing another person:** in pairs introduce yourself and what you expect from the group. The other person then role reverses with you and introduces you to the group. They become you and vice versa. These are useful for the first session of a group.

## **Glossary of terms**

### **The three phases of psychodrama:**

**Warm up:** the first phase of a psychodrama in which the group is connected to a theme.

**Enactment:** the second phase of a psychodrama in which the protagonist enacts the theme of the group on the stage using members of the group as auxiliaries representing significant people or objects in the drama

**Sharing:** the final stage of a psychodrama where the audience shares their experience with the protagonist and enables the protagonist to be integrated back into the group.

### **The five elements of psychodrama:**

**Director:** the person who directs the drama and the group.

**Protagonist:** the person who enacts the drama for the group

**Auxiliary:** the person who plays the roles in the drama

**Stage:** the place where the drama is enacted

**Audience:** members of the group who witness the drama

**Role training:** a specific structured psychodrama session for the purpose of developing a new role.

**Sociometry:** the measurement of relationships in the group.

**Spectrogram:** the placing of group members along the continuum of criteria e.g. likes groups-----hates groups.

**Locogram:** the placing of group members in places with a specific meaning e.g. where you were born, what you like to eat, favorite music.

**Spontaneity:** the energy which is the expression of the person's warm up. It is the basis of psychodrama and all that the director does in a psychodrama is related to increasing the protagonist and the groups' warm up. Moreno defines spontaneity as "an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation".

**Creativity:** the outcome of a person's spontaneity.

**Tele:** A feeling that is projected into space and time that links people in the social atom. It can be positive (attraction), negative (repulsion) or neutral (indifferent).

**Social and cultural atom:** This is the smallest unit of society. The social atom is the people plus their relationships. The cultural atom is the roles of the person in relation to the other person's roles in the social atom.

**Role theory:** Moreno developed a language to describe a person's behavior in an observable, non-judgmental way. Roles can be described with an adjective and a noun e.g. a nurturing mother, an assertive student.

The self or ego emerges from the roles. At any moment in time a person is in a role. Each role has a thinking, feeling and action component. If these are in harmony the

person is functioning in a healthy way. Roles are always in relation to another counter role. The focus on the relational aspect of human functioning is the basis of Morenian theory.

**Types of roles:** psychosomatic roles (relating to bodily functions and the first to develop in the infant), psychodramatic roles (relating to psychological functions of the individual) and social (relating to the particular culture)

**Spontaneity theory of child development:** the universal matrix of identity (the infant is merged with the universe/no distinction);

The stage of the double (where the mother speaks the infant's feelings); the stage of the stage of the mirror (where the infant imitates the mother);

The stage of role reversal where the infant can step into the other's shoes).