



Psychodrama

Techniques and Principles



psychodrama and sociatry

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What is Psychodrama?

- A method for exploring problems and conflicts by enacting relevant events instead of simply talking about them.
- The enactment explores not only external behavior, but also ‘inner’ aspects, such as unspoken thoughts and feelings, fantasies of what others might be feeling and thinking, envisioning future possibilities.
- A kind of laboratory for the exploration of psychosocial problems, but instead of physical equipment, the devices of drama and participants' own behavior are vehicles for experiments.



Five Elements in Psychodrama

- **Protagonist:** individual who is seeking to work out a problem, gain insight, or develop an alternative response pattern.
- **Auxiliary** (supporting player): a group member who plays a role in protagonist's drama.
- **Audience:** group watching the drama who provide a safe container and supportive witnessing.
- **Stage:** area where the enactment takes place
- **Conductor:** the facilitator, catalyst and observer who knows how to use the method to facilitate the exploratory process.

Some Psychodramatic Techniques (1/2)

- **Role reversal**: When the protagonist changes roles with the supporting players, it helps to empathize with the other person's viewpoint.
- **Replay**: Scenes may be reenacted with changes in order to experience a happier ending, a more effective interpersonal strategy, etc.
- **Mirror**: protagonist stands back and watches while her role is replayed by a supporting player, serving a function like videotape playback. The conductor can ask:
 - "What do you see going on?"
 - "How else might you respond in this situation?"
- **Soliloquy**: The protagonist shares with the audience the feelings and thoughts that would normally be kept hidden or suppressed.
- **Doubling**: The conductor or a group member feels her way into the inner world of the protagonist and expresses the 'inner voice'- to bring awareness to obscured feelings/ thoughts.

Some Psychodramatic Techniques (2/2)

- **Empty Chair:** Instead of another person playing the complementary figure in a protagonist's enactment, an empty chair represents that position. Has been incorporated as an integral part of Gestalt therapy.
- **Intensification:** feelings made more intense and explicit by having protagonists put their bodies in the shape of their feeling, or locating the feeling in their bodies, etc.
- **Cutting the action:** Enactment is stopped, with the possibility of using a brief Mirror technique i.e., standing "outside," in a sense, and reflecting on alternative strategies.
- **Role Training:** helps in the development of a more effective behavioral repertoire, combined with group feedback and support and attention to nonverbal communication.



Three Phases of Psychodrama

Warm-up: Initial activities build group trust.

Action: the protagonist :

- acts out her conflicts, instead of talking about them
- acts in the 'here and now', regardless of when the actual incident took place
- acts out 'her truth' - it may be completely subjective.

Sharing: Group members share in what ways the enactment reminded them of aspects of their own lives.



Concepts and Principles (1/2)

- **Creativity:** Moreno believed that an essential feature of transformation is to facilitate creativity in exploring the self and discovering new coping skills for life.
- **Spontaneity:** the best way to encourage creativity is through spontaneous exploratory activities. Moreno sought to implement activities which fostered the courage to improvise.
- **Working in the present moment:** An important element of psychodrama is to reinvent previously experienced events and learn new reactions through role playing.
- **Encounter:** Group members connect with one another in a meaningful and genuine manner.



Concepts and Principles (2/2)

Tele: Moreno referred to it as ‘the cement which holds groups together’. Similar to the concept of rapport.

Surplus Reality: Re-enactments of the protagonist’s psychological world without the constraints of reality.

Catharsis and insight: Catharsis is the release of emotions during psychodrama. Insights are the cognitive shifts in awareness that are produced by catharsis.

Reality testing: The testing of behaviours in scenarios that would potentially not be socially acceptable in a safe environment.

Role theory: Moreno’s ideas that we are all actors engaging in improvisation in daily life on the ‘Stage of Life’.

A Typical Enactment



- Reema takes on the role of protagonist to explore the feeling of ‘not being heard’ at work.
- She first sets up the physical scene, in this case a meeting at the workplace with her colleagues and boss.
- The conductor has Reema pick some of the group (the audience) to be supporting players.
- Reema is asked to briefly role reverse with each to demonstrate some of their behaviors in the situation— who's aggressive, who's quiet, who tunes out, or other patterns.
- The enactment in ‘here and now’ recaptures the immediacy of the experience and the directness of the encounters, thus evoking underlying feelings.
- Nonverbal behavior through the enactment adds a great deal of information.
- Periodically, the conductor may "cut" the action and draw Reema aside for a brief side-conference, in which the previous brief vignette could be re-considered.
- This re-evaluation characterizes the essence of psychodrama, the marshaling of "the observing ego," or as called in spiritual practice, "the witness."
- At these interludes, the contract is clarified as to which direction the protagonist wishes to pursue.
- Further facets may be investigated about Reema's expectations, beliefs, or attitudes.
- Reema may be led to a scene in which she can develop her capacity for more actively and maturely asserting her needs (Role training).

Spontaneity Theory



- Spontaneity is the ability to respond to new circumstances adequately or to react in “old” situations creatively, energetically, and appropriately.
- Criteria to judge whether one is acting spontaneously – PANIC
The action must be:
 - **Parametric** (within the parameters of the situation)
 - **Adequate** to the demands of the situation
 - **Novel**, in order to generate energy to have an impact
 - **Immediate**, in the present moment, and
 - **Creative**, modifying the established pattern from which the action arises in order to increase future adaptability.
- It is a life-force which enables an individual to mobilize roles that lead to a fulfilling life and satisfying relationships



Encounter

- **Encounter** - Assessing others needs and connecting with others in a congruent, honest, open manner.
- To engage in a productive encounter one must be able to recognize the basic structure of the interaction and adapt accordingly (i.e., respond spontaneously).
- To have functional encounter one must be clear about one's own needs and perceptions and must be willing and able to see the situation from another's perspective, (i.e., role reverse with the other being encountered and able to convey an understanding of and respect for the other's view).

Underlying Assumptions in Psychodramatic Philosophy

- People are actors- they perform actions.
- Psychodrama approximates life and brings it out in the open.
- The process encourages full enactment of all dimensions of the personality.
- It consists of reenacting fully a number of varying situations, involving significant others, at critical stages.
- Spontaneity is trained during psychodrama.
- Roles and new roles are activated (or reactivated) and mobilized to produce solutions to internal and relationship difficulties.



Jacob L. Moreno, MD: 1879-1974

Founder of Psychodrama

- 1913- as a medical student in Vienna, he learned of the government harassment of prostitutes. Organized them into "self-help" groups.
- 1925- emigrated to New York city
- 1931- consulted as a psychiatrist at Sing Sing Prison in New York
- 1934: introduced psychodrama at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, DC -one of the most dynamic psychiatric centers in the country
- 1936: opened Beacon Hill Sanitarium, a private psychiatric hospital 60 miles north of New York City on the Hudson River, and built an attached psychodrama theater and facilities for training professionals
- 1941: Zerka entered Moreno's life and began to aid him in writing, editing, and his many other endeavors.
- 1942: organized the first professional association for group therapists, the American Society for Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama (ASGPP)
- Early 1940s: Moreno's work began to be applied in a variety of settings such as schools, recreation, rehabilitation programs for the developmentally disabled, the military, management, and the training of professionals from teachers to salespersons
- By 1950, attracted increasing numbers of students.

Applications

*“A good tool can be used in many contexts
and in the service of humanity.”~ Adam Blatner*

- While Psychodrama first emerged as group-therapy, it is a powerful tool, can be applied in:
 - Business - sociometric and psychodramatic principles used for clarifying group dynamics.
 - Schools - role playing used for cultivating skills of emotional intelligence.
 - Community building - interpersonal and intergroup relations developed more effectively.

Psychodrama:

- aims at going beyond mere acceptance to promote the enjoyment of the fullness of self and others.
- values joy, enthusiasm, excitement, playfulness, vitality, deep feeling, sharing, and also the connecting of these emotions with the greater spiritual field.

References

This presentation has been made with material from:

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