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## **Chapter 9**

### **Psychodrama**

**By**

**Antonina Garcia and Dale Richard Buchanan**

Psychodrama is a deep action method developed by Jacob Levy Moreno (1889-1974), in which people enact scenes from their lives, dreams or fantasies in an effort to express unexpressed feelings, gain new insights and understandings, and practice new and more satisfying behaviors. A variety of intervention strategies have been developed to help accomplish these aims. Moreno (1953) said that the only true goal of therapy is nothing less than all of humankind.

#### **Section I Genesis**

The history of psychodrama to a great extent is also the history of its founder, Jacob Levy Moreno, M.D. This chapter could not possibly document all of Moreno's contributions. An in-depth review of his work can be found in two fascinating and well-documented biographies (Marineau, 1989 and Hare & Hare, 1996).

While Moreno is best remembered for his creation of psychodrama, sociodrama and sociometry, his legacy lives on as a pioneer and innovator in other fields as well. Corsini (1955) credits Moreno with being one of the founders of group psychotherapy, and Thomas and Biddle (1966) credit Moreno as one of the founders of role theory. Compennole (1981) credits Moreno with being the first family therapist and Abraham Maslow (1968) attributes many of the Human Potential Movement exercises to Moreno.

While Moreno's professional training was as a medical doctor and psychiatrist he was a man of many interests. He invented a magnetic sound recording device; he founded an Impromptu Theatre Company at Carnegie Hall; he taught fencing to actors and human relation skills to Macy's employees and became a prize fight prognosticator, successfully predicting the outcome of many fights including Joe Louis' win over Max Baer.

Rather than focusing exclusively on psychopathology and treatment as so many of the other great psychotherapists have done, Moreno was interested in all areas of human behavior. William Wellman said,

"The really distinguishing fact is that he broke all conventional stereotypes in order to live and deal with the universal in man -- the ordinary man in all places and states. " (Hare & Hare, 1966, p.120).

Rene Marineau (1989) describes Moreno as a prophet, scientist and a revolutionary. Moreno's life span can be divided into three parts: The European Years (1889-1925), The Early American Years (1925-1941), and The Later American Years (1942-1974).

#### The European Years (1889-1925)

Moreno was born and educated in Europe and received his medical degree from the University of Vienna. During the years 1908-1925 he formulated his theories of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy. From 1908-1911 he played spontaneous theatre games with children in the parks of Vienna and discovered the importance of spontaneity and creativity.

In 1913 he organized and worked in groups with prostitutes. He dates this as the beginning of group psychotherapy. This experience revealed the power of the group and he discovered that each member of a group is a therapeutic agent for the other.

Sociometry, the measurement of groups, had its beginnings when Moreno was Superintendent of a World War I resettlement camp at Mittendorf. Observing the unrest in the refuge camp, he petitioned his superiors to reorganize the camp along the lines of choice. He wanted to empower the refugees, torn from the comfort of their homeland, to make here and now choices of the people they worked and lived with, thus maximizing their chances for positive human interaction in an already difficult situation.

Between the years of 1921 - 1923, Moreno returned to Vienna and developed his Theatre of Spontaneity. Moreno dated the first psychodrama session as occurring on April 01, 1921.

Moreno trained a group of professional actors in spontaneity work and as social researchers. Audiences would suggest topics from the current events and the troupe would spontaneously enact them to explore and resolve the underlying social issues.

During this period, the husband of one of the actresses complained to Moreno about a marital problem. One of the interventions he made was to have the couple enact onstage a scene that had occurred

before they arrived at the theatre. The two set up the stage as if it were their apartment and recreated the scene in an effort to resolve their difficulties. In this way psychodrama was born.

#### The Early American Years (1925-1941)

Finding Europe to be too conservative for his revolutionary ideas, Moreno immigrated to the United States where he hoped his ideas would be better received. During his early years in the United States he coined the term group psychotherapy, conducted sociometric studies at the Hudson School for Girls and in Sing Sing Prison, opened a private sanatorium and founded and published several journals. He also wrote his magnum opus *Who Shall Survive?* and continued to develop psychodrama as a therapeutic modality.

#### The Later American Years (1942-1974)

In 1942 he met Zerka Toeman, who became his wife, his muse and his equal partner. She organized and edited his writings and maintained and nurtured his professional connections. She also encouraged Moreno and accompanied him as he traveled extensively promoting the uses of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy.

While Moreno was a visionary thinker and prolific writer of great breadth, Zerka made an enormous contribution to the theory and practice by expanding upon his ideas and deepening them as well as developing practical applications for everyday use.

After a prolonged illness, Moreno chose to die by abstaining from all food and water. At his request, his epitaph was "the man who brought laughter to psychiatry."

#### After Moreno

Since Moreno's death the field of psychodrama has continued to thrive. Zerka T. Moreno continues to be actively involved in the training of the next generation of psychodramatists. There are now more certified psychodramatists and training institutes than ever. While most of Moreno's books were published through his private publishing company, Beacon House, and were difficult to obtain; today there are scores of books on psychodrama and sociodrama published by major publishing companies and available on the shelf of any Barnes & Noble or Borders Books.

## **Section II Discussion of Approach**

Underlying the practice of psychodrama is a strong theoretical foundation that informs the work. Moreno developed four cornerstones of psychodrama: 1) role theory; 2) sociometry; 3) the theory of spontaneity/creativity; and 4) psychodrama intervention constructs. Each of these interlaces and interfaces with the other. While each can be used independently and often is, Moreno created and envisioned them as interdependent parts of an organic whole. Let's see how.

### **Role Theory**

Moreno believed that each person is a composite of the roles he/she plays. Human beings are known and evaluated by self and others through the roles they play. When we say someone is a nice person, what do we mean? We mean that we have observed the person acting in a positive way toward someone else or toward ourselves. The father picked up the fallen child, comforted her, cleaned up the cut on her knee, and put a Band-aid on it. We notice he is a father (role), she is a daughter (role), and from his behavior in the role, he appears to be a "good father."

In *Psychodrama: First Volume*, Moreno (1946) said, "Role can be defined as the actual and tangible forms which the self takes." (153) He also considered role as a cluster of behaviors that is culturally recognized and labeled. A particular behavior may be utilized in a variety of roles, but isolated behaviors don't make up roles. For example, the behavior of reading may be present in scores of roles: student, teacher, researcher, secretary, etc. So, the specific joining together of behaviors is what makes one role different from another.

The cultural aspect is important as well, since all cultural groups don't have the same roles. Nor do all cultural groups have the same expectations for how roles should be played. The roles of husband and wife, for example, may carry different cultural expectations among different ethnic groups. Clinically, it is essential to treatment to understand the role expectations members of a couple have of each other, particularly if they are from different ethnic groups.

Attitudes and emotions also add personal descriptors to role enactment. Although there are collective components to every role we play (and it is through these that we recognize a particular role), each of us has our own unique way of playing a role.

For every role that we play we have expectations of how we “should” play the role. Our expectations come from how we have seen the role modeled by others, by our own personal dynamics, and the demands of our culture. Functionality exists when a person has a wide range of roles available to him or her and flexibility in playing those roles. One measure of dysfunction is a limited role repertoire. This can occur when individuals become role locked in a particular role, thereby excluding other roles from their repertoire. Burnout is an example of role-lock. Other examples of dysfunction include role fatigue, role confusion, role conflict, role tension, role crisis, and role stripping.

Moreno said that there are three types of roles: the psychosomatic, the social and the psychodramatic. These are hierarchical in nature in that our psychosomatic role needs must be satisfied before we can warm up to our social and psychodramatic roles. Our **psychosomatic roles** are those which manifest physically, e.g., roles like eater, runner, sleeper. These roles may or may not have a psychological component. For example, in the role of eater, I may have a larger breakfast than usual because I’ve just come back from a seven mile hike (physiological) or I may have a larger breakfast because I’m nervous about the interview I’m to attend in an hour, and I’m eating from anxiety (psychological).

The **social roles** are those that we enact in relation to other people, e.g., mother, friend, lover. They exist in the social sphere. These roles are always reciprocal, requiring others to take roles in relation to us: husbands need wives in order to enact their roles, and vice versa. One of the reasons that people seek psychotherapy is that they are in unsatisfying role relationships or are mourning from the loss or lack of a reciprocal role partner.

The **psychodramatic** roles are those that are enacted inside our heads. They are the interior or intrapsychic roles of imaginer, problem solver, and creative thinker. They also comprise wished for roles that exist in our minds until they become externalized in social reality. They are a manifestation of the imaginative process of who we think we are and who we would like to become.

For example, if I want to enact the role of ice skater, I may imagine myself in the role long before I actually take ice skating lessons. On the other hand, if I imagine myself a Rock star and neither sing well nor have any intention of working to become a Rock star, I am also engaging in a psychodramatic role when I play out in my mind and take pleasure from a scenario of myself singing before thousands.

Dysfunction occurs when a person has a lack of either social roles or psychodramatic roles, and function is seen as having a balance of both. One of the aims of psychodrama is to activate the birth of psychodramatic roles by stimulating the imaginative processes through play and fantasy. Another aim is to assist individuals to give birth to social roles through behavioral rehearsal and therapeutic role assignment.

Another type of dysfunction comes from inaccurate role perception. For example, a husband buys his partner a vacuum cleaner for a special birthday and is shocked that she doesn't seem to appreciate it and wants to know why he couldn't give her something more personal. He has perceived her in her role as housekeeper, but has ignored her role as romantic partner. Functionality comes when one accurately perceives the role of the other as well as one's own role.

Dysfunction comes also when a person accurately perceives a role but is unwilling or unable to enact it. For example, take the worker whose boss tells her to complete certain tasks by a particular deadline. She has the time to complete the tasks but she'd rather do something else. She doesn't like to be told to do things so she balks and doesn't adequately enact her role.

Moreno believed that the self emerges from the roles we play. Moreno postulated that when people learn a new role, they follow a particular pattern of role development. The arc of the learning curve begins with role taking and proceeds to role playing and role creating.

**Role taking** refers to an enactment of the role in a routinized, somewhat stilted way. When a person is just learning to play tennis, for example, he is likely to appear awkward as he tries to coordinate his stance with his arms and both of these with the racket and the ball. He may have to practice long hours simply to get the ball over the net, or to serve to one spot on the court.

As he progresses with his experience, he will gain ease and will be able to move around the court freely and feel comfortable making choices spontaneously as the ball comes his way. He won't have to

think every minute about the basics of the game. They will have become second nature. He has entered the phase of **role playing** in which a person enacts a role with comfort, flexibility and spontaneity. Literally, he infuses the role with a playfulness that is lacking in role taking.

Finally, when he has mastered the rudiments of the role and has become comfortable enacting the role, he is ready to move into the phase of **role creating**. When one role creates he is able to add new and sometimes unique elements to the enactment of the role and to think beyond the confines of the role to develop unexpected solutions for difficulties that emerge in the enactment of the role. At this point, the tennis player may devise a new method for serving the ball, and his method of role enactment becomes a model for others.

### **Sociometry**

As was said earlier, each of us is a composite of the roles we play. Many of those roles are social roles, and social roles have reciprocal partners. This aspect of reciprocity brings us to another of Moreno's basic contributions: **sociometry**. Put simply, sociometry is the assessment of social choices and a set of intervention tools designed to facilitate social change.

In life, each of us is engaged in making many choices every day. When we make a choice that places us in proximity to others, in avoidance of others or in a neutral relationship to others, we are making a sociometric choice. Moreno was very interested in the choices we make and the criteria upon which we base our choices.

Clearly, families and communities function or dysfunction in part as a result of the choices individuals in the system make in relation to each other. Moreno believed that the more options a person has available to him or her, the more opportunity for satisfaction for the individual and the collective.

All choices that we make are related to our perception of the role of the other. If someone were to say to you, "Whom do you choose?" you would ask, "For what?" Choice of a person is always connected with at least one role related criterion: "Whom would you choose to accompany you to the movies to see a romantic comedy?" Based upon specific criteria, we have reasons for our selections. For example, a functional person may choose to invite one friend to accompany her to a romantic comedy film and another

to accompany her on a backpacking trip in Appalachia. She may make these choices because the first friend considers camping out to be staying at a motel and ordering in a pizza and the second talks incessantly during movies.

A colloquial meaning of sociometry is the invisible and visible network of connections in any group. Although the connections among the individuals may not necessarily be observable to us if we step into a room, the connections are there nevertheless. Two people with whom you are chatting at a party may have been in the same geometry class in high school, but you won't know about that connection unless one of them tells you. Moreno referred to this aspect of sociometry as social reality.

A successful group leader understands that there are invisible connections among group members and facilitates the rising to the surface of these connections so that the group may work together to accomplish its goals. This is in part the function of the warm-up in a psychodrama session.

The instruments of sociometry make visible some of the invisible aspects of social reality. One of these instruments is the sociogram. A sociogram is a map of the connections that people have with one another. The sociogram can be completed in action or on paper when working with groups. One example of an action sociogram in a group is to ask the group members to place their hands upon the shoulder of the person with whom they'd like to have lunch at the end of the session. Another is to ask group members to place their hand on the shoulder of the person whose issue is most closely related to their own. Conducting sociometric explorations often stimulates strong feelings in participants and, therefore, should be used with caution.

There are a variety of sociometric instruments and exercises that have been devised for promoting social change. Among these are the social atom, role diagram, spectrogram, social barometer, and diamond of opposites (Buchanan, 1984; Carlson- Sabelli and Sabelli et. al., 1992, Edwards, 1996; Hale, 1986; Sternberg and Garcia, 2000).

Moreno believed that the smallest unit of study of a human being is the social atom, since all of us in the human community are in relationship with others. The social atom consists of the person and all those who are significant to the individual at any given time. In functioning people the social atom is dynamic and changes over time as people wax and wane in their importance to us. Each of us is the center



of our own social atom, with those who are significant to us vibrating in orbit around us. Clearly, though a person is at the nucleus of his own social atom, he is merely a satellite in the social atom of his significant others. In this way, all social atoms across the globe are joined through the interconnections of significant people and none of us are more than six degrees of separation away from any other person on the planet.

This having been said, when a person walks into the therapy room, he in a sense does not enter the room alone, but brings with him all the relationships (real or fantasy, dead or alive) he has with others outside the room. In this way, psychodrama treats the social atom, not the individual and seeks to heal the relationships. When asked what he did for a living, Moreno was fond of saying that he was a "social atom repairman." Psychodramatists conduct social atom explorations with clients to gather information, assess functioning level, set treatment goals with the client, and make interventions.

Moreno also developed an instrument called the role diagram in which a person inventories the roles he or she plays. This can be particularly helpful in working with couples as the pair explores reciprocal role partnerships and which roles each enacts separately from the other.

Both spectrograms and social barometers are based on the continuum between 0% and 100%. They reflect how a person feels in relation to activities and social issues, e.g., going to see horror films in the case of a spectrogram, or, in the case of the social barometer, gun control.

The limitation of traditional sociometry is that it is unsuccessful in melding intensity of feeling with choice of a person. While one can make a choice in a sociogram, that choice doesn't indicate the intensity of feeling that the person has in making that choice. For example, if Joe chooses to ask Marlene to go out to lunch, we don't know from the sociogram if he is excited about that choice or if he just figured, "Well, why not?" Nor does the sociogram, which is linear, provide the opportunity to chart ambivalence. Sabelli and Sabelli et. al., (1992) developed a new instrument, the diamond of opposites that can chart both ambivalence and intensity of feeling and is three-dimensional. It also charts neutrality.

Sociometry can be used descriptively to describe intra- or intergroup relations at any given time. It can also be used prescriptively to make changes in the system. For example, during World War II a study was conducted in which fighter pilots chose their co-pilots. A significant number of those who chose returned alive as opposed to others who were randomly assigned co-pilots.

Moreno and other social psychologists researched sociometry extensively and found that left to their own devices a group tends to over-choose some individuals and under-choose others. This is called the sociodynamic law. Moreno felt that the psychodramatist's work is to assist groups in sharing the sociometric wealth. Moreno also noted that just as individuals without intervention revert to homeostasis, or the status quo, so does a group seek to return to sociostasis, even if the status quo is dysfunctional. In one way the psychodramatist is always a revolutionary, in that he seeks to facilitate change in the status quo in assisting a group to more spontaneous functioning.

When looking at sociometry, one can view it from the perspective of the group or the individual. When using sociometry in a group, there are four basic positions that individuals occupy: positive star, rejection star, isolate and star of incongruity. All of these positions have benefits and liabilities. The functioning individual and group rotates through all these positions over time. The psychodramatist assists the group in shifting sociometry in positive ways.

Those who receive the largest number of choices based on a particular criterion are called stars. A positive star receives the most positive choices, and a rejection star receives the most negative choices. On the surface it may seem that it is far better to be a positive star than a rejection star. However, as wonderful as it is to be regarded highly for some gift, quality or competence, to be consistently over chosen is a burden. If a star is incapable of saying no to the role demands of others, both the individual and the group become stuck. If taken too far, sometimes a star who cannot say no becomes physically ill as a way of removing himself from over-responsibility.

At the same time, while it may seem unpleasant to be rejected, the rejection star is freed from the responsibilities the positive star carries. She is also freed from the norms, rules and expectations of the group. It has been said that the positive star belongs to the group and the rejection star belongs to him- or herself. If taken too far, the rejection star becomes an outcast whom the group engages in scapegoating.

A person may also be an isolate when he or she neither chooses nor is chosen based upon a particular criterion. An example of functional isolation would be a group where Joe is undergoing a chronic fatigue episode. He may choose not to participate in a particular sociometric exercise, and other group members may respect his decision and, not choosing him, would select another member of the group.

On the other hand, if for every exercise in nearly every group, Joe, whether sick or well, neither seeks anyone out nor does anyone seek him out, his isolation will be dysfunctional for him and the group. Those who persistently choose isolation and who are persistently unchosen are true isolates. These people are found among the homeless, the mentally ill and in prisons.

Incongruous choices are those that lack reciprocity. This may occur if there is inaccurate perception of the choice of the other, for example, if Betty chooses Brent, thinking he reciprocates her choice, but he does not. This may also occur if Betty chooses Brent even though she knows he doesn't reciprocate her choice. The star of incongruity is the person who receives the greatest number of incongruous choices.

What we seek is mutuality. In groups when there are high levels of incongruity, group members will express dissatisfaction, feel disconnected, and the group may fall apart if interventions are not made to increase mutuality.

Even grammar school children are aware of sociometric stars, rejection stars, and isolates. The work of the psychodramatist is to provide opportunities to share the sociometric wealth of the group in a group setting and to assist individuals in shifting their personal sociometry in positive ways in individual psychotherapy.

Regarding tenor of feeling between people, Freud talked of transference and empathy. Moreno said that there is another phenomenological experience between two people. This he termed tele. **Tele** is a deep, accurate knowing of the self and the other. Tele is present between two people when each sees the other as the other truly is and accepts the other as the other is. One does not try to change the other even though he or she knows the other is not perfect. Moreno wrote a poem in 1915 part of which describes tele:

“ A meeting of two: eye to eye; face to face;  
  
And when you are near I will tear your eyes out  
  
and place them in place of mine,  
  
And you will tear my eyes out  
  
and place them in place of yours,

And I will look at you with your eyes

and you will look at me with mine.”

*(Invitation to an Encounter, Part 2, 1915:2)*

Moreno believed that each relationship has some degree of tele and some degree of transference. There are some people whom we meet with whom we have very high tele: we are comfortable with them almost immediately, and feel we have known them forever. As we get to know them better and have more concrete information about them, we simply feel reinforced in our original feelings. Even though they have just as many faults and foibles as the next person does, we accept them and they accept us. We feel at home when we are with them and can pick up where we left off when we see them after a long time apart. They are the people about whom we are thinking when we go to the phone and they are at the other end of the line. Or we call them or email them and they say, "I was just thinking of you."

Many of our relationships may have more transference than tele at the outset. Ideally, over time we can diminish transference and increase tele. Moreno felt that through sociometric, sociodramatic, and psychodramatic interventions one could help people to remove the veils of transference and reveal the tele and the true person underneath.

Moreno had a tremendous interest in the concept of the Encounter. He believed that each of us is at our best when we live in the "here and now," a term he coined. Further, if we live in the moment, not in our past or future, we can fully relate to those whom we meet and they to us. The encounter occurs when two people meet in as honest a way as they are able.

The Encounter Movement of the 60's was based on this concept but went awry as people confused confrontation and attack with encounter. In psychodramatic encounter, both people make room for each other and respect the other, while taking responsibility for one's own feelings and actions. Good will is a necessary ingredient as are speaking from an "I" position and accepting that what the other person says is his/her personal truth.

Moreno said that we are wounded in relationship and can be healed in relationship. He devised psychodrama and sociodrama as modalities for accomplishing that healing.

### **Spontaneity/Creativity Theory**

The third and key cornerstone of psychodrama is spontaneity/creativity theory. It is based on Moreno's belief that all humans are fallen gods.

#### *The Godhead*

While other methods of psychotherapy have either been silent or shunned the very concept of God, Moreno was deeply interested in spiritual issues. Of course, readers should be clear that there is distinction between organized religious practice and spirituality as a base of human behavior. Moreno focussed on the spiritual aspects of behavior.

As Kraus (1984) has noted, the psychodramatic process attempts to bridge the paradoxical relationship between humanity and divinity. Moreno said the central paradox for humans is the wish to be God and the reality that we are not: the fantasy of omnipotence and the need to face reality.

Moreno coined the term “Meglomania Normalis” for that human state of wanting to be at the center of our universe and wanting the rest of the human race to be our auxiliaries. In other words, our desire to create the perfect world for ourselves from our perspective.

As infants we all begin with the experience of being at one with the world and in perfect harmony with all that is. We don't know where we leave off and the other begins. We are boundary-less. He called this the “First Universe,” and it is a state to which we often wish to return. When we are old enough to realize a separation between the self and the other, between illusion and reality, we enter what Moreno called the Second Universe.

In Morenean philosophy anxiety is caused by the breach between the First and Second Universe. Moreno referred to anxiety as a cosmic hunger to maintain identity with the entire universe. One of the objectives of psychodramatic treatment is to help individuals become less anxious and more fearful. This means replacing an individual's generalized anxiety about separation/connection with specific fears about people, places and things. For example instead of an overwhelming anxiety about a job interview, it is far better to be fearful of being asked your employment history. Spontaneity training and role-playing can be used as rehearsals for life to lessen our cosmic anxiety and increase our mastery of our everyday fears.

Moreno's philosophical solution to bridge the breach is to live in the here and now. Unlike many other schools of psychotherapy, Moreno believed that enlightenment can only be found in community.

### *The Canon of Creativity*

Moreno developed the Canon of Creativity to describe how spontaneity and creativity work. The Canon of Creativity (see figure 1) shows the interrelationship and interaction of spontaneity and creativity with the cultural conserve (e.g., status quo). It also demonstrates that it is necessary to warm up to our spontaneity and creativity.

According to Moreno (1953) spontaneity-creativity is the most important problem in psychology. In the midst of the great depression, Moreno hypothesized that only the creative and spontaneous would survive and that the rest would be relegated to the dustbin of history.

Moreno viewed spontaneity and creativity as an open system with limitless potential that cannot be stored for future use. He further postulated that spontaneity and creativity are available to everyone and that all our success is directly connected with our ability to be spontaneous.

### *Spontaneity*

Spontaneity can be thought of as the readiness for an action and creativity as the idea. The twin concepts of spontaneity and creativity are responsible for the formation of our cultural conserves. Cultural conserves are the given patterns, relationships, or products of our society. Cultural conserves define the norms, mores, and folkways of our culture and help transmit these normative patterns to future generations..

God is spontaneity. Hence the commandment is: “Be Spontaneous!” (Moreno, 1920). Moreno (1953) stated that “spontaneity propels the individual toward an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation.” Adequacy encompasses the concerns of appropriateness, competency, and skill in interacting within any given situation.

Our spontaneity is highest when we are infants and decreases with age. As noted earlier in the history section The Theatre of Spontaneity was designed to increase the spontaneity of the actors and the audience.

Moreno called those times when we are most spontaneous as being in the “moment.” The moment may last for a few seconds or it can last hours or days. The moment is the experience of living in complete harmony and unity while staying connected to the social realities of the here and now. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) has called this concept “flow.” According to Csikszentmihalyi, this moment of peak spontaneity is

the point when the ego disappears, the time space continuum evaporates and there is a sense of connection and flow with the entire universe.

Moreno viewed life as a series of spontaneity tests. All dysfunction is caused by a lack of spontaneity and/or creativity; while all functionality can be attributed to an adequate amount of both. The reason that people come into treatment is that they either don't know what to do about a given situation or they cannot spur themselves into action in the situation, or both. There are three threats to our spontaneity: paralysis, impulsivity and reactivity.

Paralysis occurs when we are faced with a new situation and we become frozen and are unable to act. The situation passes us by and we feel disappointed in ourselves that we were unable to find an adequate response for the situation.

Another threat is impulsivity. Impulsivity is simply action without reflection. Our act hunger is so great that we act without contemplation or reflection about the act's appropriateness or its consequences.

The third threat to spontaneity is reactivity. Reactivity is reflection without here and now action. In reactivity we are so mired in the past that our actions today are based upon our experiences of the past. When we are reactive we are unable to be proactive and simply react to the world and the situations around us.

The litmus tests for spontaneity and creativity are novelty and adequacy. Many of us are stopped dead in our tracks because we cannot bear to engage in an activity in which our behavior will merely be adequate. In striving to be brilliant, we sometimes don't even begin an activity for fear of being average or of failing. The Morenean way is to strive for adequacy rather than brilliance. If we strive for brilliance we are often inadequate, and if we dare to be adequate we are often brilliant.

### *Creativity*

Creativity is the spark from whence the new or novel comes. Creativity is the ability to think beyond our own personal limitations and see the world in a new way. To be creative means to risk, to see people and things different than as we might normally view them and to experiment with the new and different. Not all of us are up to the challenges posed by this endless quest for creativity and some of us retreat to pathological creativity, violence and destruction, or passive ascription.

One retreat from creativity is pathological creativity. Pathological creativity is a compulsive drive for creativity that becomes so great that the quest of the new overwhelms the need for adequacy. Pathological creativity is caused by the lack of tangible and challenging creativity in our everyday life; this lack of usable creativity festers into a compulsion for novelty regardless of its adequacy to the task.

Another retreat from creativity happens when we become frustrated at our inability to create new roles and role relationships. Blocked creativity can lead to violence or destruction as the last resort for the impotent creator. In the Morenean philosophy, all rage is viewed as crushed creativity. All intra-personal and interpersonal violence is correlated with an increase in frustration that stems from failing to produce a creative and spontaneous response.

A third threat to our creativity is becoming overwhelmed by the sheer number and complexity of choices in our everyday life and looking for someone or something external to make those choices for us. The responsibility involved in assuming the role of creator and engaging with spontaneity and creativity is too frightening for some. So instead of embracing the role of creator, they retreat to a passive role and vest their creative power to some authoritarian figure. Erich Fromm (1941) brilliantly discusses this concept in his seminal work Escape From Freedom.

### *Cultural Conserves*

A cultural conserve is any finished product of the creative process. Cultural conserves operate on both the individual and collective levels. Whether created by an individual or a group the cultural conserve preserves the values of its creators.

As individuals each of us creates our own cultural conserves of affect, cognitive, behavioral and spiritual states. We have habits and routines and particular ways of doing things or interacting with others. These interactions become our cultural conserves. When others say that we are not being ourselves today, what is really being said is that we are not enacting our “usual” cultural conserves.

As collectives whether in families, small groups or societies there are also cultural conserves of how we as a collective should interact with one another and our environment. When individuals say that is how we should act, they are saying that is what the cultural conserve prescribes.

In the beginning what is now called a conserve was a spontaneous/creative act that met the needs of the situation. The repetition of the act is what institutionalizes the conserve. Cultural conserves are the



springboard for new spontaneity and creativity and inherently are neither good nor bad. Cultural conserves are good when they contribute to our creativity and spontaneity and bad when they stifle or repress any individual or group. As individuals we can thrive through change or thrive by changing.

#### *Spontaneity Theory of Child Development.*

Moreno, based on scientific observation, created a complex theory of child development. A complete discussion of the theory can be found in *Psychodrama: First Volume*.

According to the spontaneity theory of child development, Moreno points out that when we are born, each of needs others in order to stay alive and to flourish. He termed these people auxiliaries and noted that their method of relating to us and us to them warms us up to our first social roles.

As was said before, humans are most spontaneous in infancy. The reason for this is that all situations that the infant encounters are new and require new responses. Our auxiliaries help us to develop roles by their interaction with us. Auxiliaries also help us to put names to what we experience.

In order to develop functionally, Moreno believed that each of us must first be doubled when we are newborns. By doubling is meant that our caregiver joins with us and accurately interprets our cries and body language and responds to those cues.

Later, we are mirrored by our caregivers when we make a face or a sound and they make that same face or sound, not to mimic us but to reflect our experience back to us. The final stage is role reversal in which the child in a rudimentary way role reverses with the caregiver and the caregiver takes the reciprocal role, as when a child initiates a peek-a-boo game that she has seen her caregiver initiate.

Psychodramatists believe that if a person has not been adequately doubled or mirrored, he will be unable to role reverse with others. Treatment may consist in part of doubling and mirroring for the client so that he may learn to role reverse.

#### **Theoretical Constructs of Psychodrama Methodology**

The theoretical constructs form the fourth cornerstone of the practice of psychodrama. Moreno began to write about his philosophy in the 1920's. In 1966, he discussed the nub of his theory. He said, ". .

. The objective of psychodrama was, from its inception, to construct a therapeutic setting which uses life as a model, to integrate into it all the modalities of living, beginning with the universals -- time, space, reality, and cosmos -- down to all the details and nuances of life." (Fox, 1987, 3).

### *Time*

As was said earlier, Moreno was a great proponent of living in the moment and participating in the ever-evolving present. As a result, in psychodrama all time is present. It is as if all time were liquid in a large bowl. Although you may float a little boat sending it from one point to another, the boat is still in the liquid, all of which exists simultaneously and which has no start or finish.

As with all other events, when a traumatic event occurs in a person's life, the information about that event is stored in the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Moreno believed that when we get trapped in our past, it is because our spontaneity and creativity were insufficient to help us at the time, so that a piece of us is snagged on the past as a sweater would be snagged on a bramble bush.

In psychodrama the protagonist has the opportunity to recreate the past, and correct the scene, changing history so that he disentangles the snag from the bramble and moves more freely in his present-day life. He may correct the scene by expressing emotions unexpressed until now; he may gain a new insight into the experience; and he may find another, more satisfying way to end the scene than the way it occurred in his literal past. One might say, "How can you change what actually happened?" The fact is that in re-experiencing the situation in a new way kinesthetically through the body in action, the protagonist is implanting new information about the prior experience in the neural pathways. The aspect of changing history is profound as it neutralizes traumatic incidents and builds a new frame of reference.

One may ask how psychodrama is about the present, if a protagonist is dealing with a scene from the past. The answer is that the protagonist is asked to recreate and step into that past as if it were now the time the event is happening. For example, if a protagonist re-enacts a scene from when he was five years old in 1989, he is asked to imagine that it is now 1989 and he is five years old. He is asked to describe what *is happening* in 1989, not what *happened*.

In the same way that the past becomes present in psychodrama, so too does the future. Through future projection the protagonist steps into a wished for or feared future, as if it were here today, to explore its possibilities, to role rehearse for future situations and to find advice in dealing with current concerns.

One of the most powerful aspects of psychodrama is the collapsing of time. In one psychodrama, the person from today can receive advice, support and encouragement from her future self and then go back to care for her younger self and help her heal an early trauma.

#### *Space:*

Moreno was acutely aware of the evocative nature of place in therapeutic work. Not only is what happened to the client important but where it happened. While it would be painful and difficult for a child to endure being slapped in the face by his parent, it would be even more humiliating if this happened in front of his friends at school. Further, we experience some places as safe while others feel less safe. If we want to have a private, intimate conversation with someone, we might not choose the local diner to initiate it.

When setting up a psychodrama, the client and director decide where the scene will take place and set it carefully, using props and furniture in the therapy room to set the scene. Scene setting warms the protagonist up to the work and anchors the action in space. Further, it quickens the imagination of the audience and warms them up as well. It is not uncommon to hear someone a month or two later say something like this, "You know, whenever I'm feeling stressed, I think of that tree by the stream from your psychodrama. In my mind's eye, I imagine I'm sitting under the tree, and listening to the water flow over the stones. It's so restful."

#### *Reality*

Moreno believed that reality was larger than that which is observable via the five senses. He discussed three levels of reality: **infra-reality** which is our own subjective experience of the world, e.g., *megalomania normalis*; **reality**, which is the group's consensus map of the world; and **surplus reality**, which incorporates a perspective beyond our collective and ourselves (Moreno, Z., Blomkvist, & Rutzel, 2000).

One of the aims of psychodrama is to make our personal world bigger by helping us to integrate other's perceptions into our own world. Every time we have a conversation with a friend and imagine ourselves in their position, we are engaging in surplus reality. Our daydreams and night dreams are also forms of surplus reality as are the fruits of our imagination. In fact, all theatre games, plays, and most play activities are vehicles for creating surplus reality.

In some ways all of psychodrama exists in the realm of surplus reality. Someone re-enacts a segment of his life experience onstage. He chooses people from the group to play the roles of others who were present at the time, and the role players assist him successfully even though they were not present when the event occurred originally. While the original father or mother is not onstage, the protagonist steps into the scene and experiences the reality of the portrayals nevertheless, and is thereby able to suspend disbelief and experience the reality of the moment. It is through the use of surplus reality that the client is healed.

If the client is unsatisfied with the manner in which he plays a role in life, he may through simulation and role rehearsal train himself to play the role differently. He can in this way utilize surplus reality to expand his everyday reality.

One of the most powerful surplus reality techniques is role reversal. Clearly, we cannot literally step into another person's shoes and become the other. However, we can come to a close approximation and expand our view of reality by changing places and changing roles with another. The perspective shift is enlightening.

### *Cosmos*

Moreno believed that, while each of us is an individual and a social being, we are also all cosmic beings, connected to the universe and seeking to find our purpose in relation to all that exists. He felt that a psychotherapy that doesn't address man's teleological and cosmological concerns is incomplete.

As a result, gods and heroes appear on the psychodrama stage. Reality is expanded and we connect beyond the flesh with others as men portray women and women portray men. An older person

may play a younger and vice versa. People can play animals. The unborn and the dead are alive on the psychodrama stage.

Psychodrama explores the cosmos within us and the cosmos outside us, the visible world and the invisible. It helps us to find our place in the universe and restores soul and spirit to those who have misplaced those vital entities.

### **Psychodramatic Goals**

All of us are physical beings with bodies, minds, emotions and transpersonal longings. Moreno believed that psychotherapy should be broad enough so that its interventions could touch all of these factors that make us human. Therefore, there are four primary goals that cover the ABCS, Affect, Behavior, Cognition, and Spirituality.

#### ***A for Affect***

In the realm of affect the goal is catharsis, a deep expression of feelings. There are two primary types of catharsis - the catharsis of abreaction and the catharsis of integration. Catharsis of abreaction occurs when the client regresses to a difficult experience and re-experiences an expression of emotion that is associated with that time. The catharsis of integration is not simply the expression of deep emotions, but also contains a simultaneous action insight. Catharsis of integration occurs when the client is able to gain a new understanding of the situation and imprints a new experience of the situation through the expression of emotion as well as the finding of a new way to deal with the situation. Thus, the catharsis of integration is a vital part of the working through process.

In psychodrama, a person may experience a catharsis of laughter as well as of tears. These are equally valuable in promoting healing and lasting change. If clients are embarrassed at or fearful of their tears, the authors remind them that tears water the seeds of the soul.

#### ***B for Behavior***

Behavioral rehearsal allows people to practice new and more satisfying ways of handling situations. Sometimes in life it feels unsafe or frightening to experiment with new behavior. Psychodrama

provides a safe setting where people can role train, adjusting their behavior as they learn through trial and error. They can learn to restore spontaneity and creativity to areas of their lives where they feel blocked.

### ***C for Cognition***

The goal of insight occurs when the client achieves an epiphany, or enlightenment, regarding the situation at hand. Because it happens kinesthetically, it is thoroughgoing, rather than just in the mind. When one gains insight in a psychodrama, the person will often look startled, or the mouth will drop open or the person literally steps back as if taken aback. One can almost see the light bulb lighting up over the person's head as in a cartoon. There is a re-organization of perceptions that takes place as a result of action insight.

### ***S for Spirituality***

The process of psychodrama is a transpersonal one. Whether in groups or in individual therapy, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In a group, when a member plays a significant other of the protagonist, the auxiliary ego also learns and grows from the experience. The audience, as active observers of the drama, step into the protagonist's life and step into their own as well. They are healed through the work of the other. The protagonist encounters the group both through means of the story of the drama and through the help of group members in co-creating his world in the enactment. Many times the goal of spiritual connection is overtly a part of the contract as when a protagonist says, "I feel so alone. I've lost my faith in people and in a Power greater than myself. I want to stop feeling so empty. I want to feel full again."

It's rare that clients have deficits in all four areas - ABCS. An over-arching goal is to help clients to integrate these four areas in their lives. When behavior and affect are at variance, for example, the goal is to bring both to consciousness and develop a new solution that encompasses both.

### **Act Hungers and Open Tension Systems**

Moreno said that the body remembers what the mind forgets. Act hungers are connected with Moreno's theory of human development. The act hungers are strong urges or desires for expression, for understanding, for mastery in a situation or for connection. Open tension systems are the context within

which we have an act hunger. Open tension systems are the unresolved issues that are emergent in a group at any given time. They may be intrapsychic or interpersonal dealing with people inside or outside the group.

For example, Elise had a terrible argument with a friend the night before the group meets. She is still upset about it when she comes to the psychodrama session. She feels that her friend didn't listen to her and cut her off and walked away. Because of the argument, Elise has an open tension system about abandonment. The act hungers are what we want to do about the open tension systems. Elise is tense and upset and seeks resolution of her problem and relief from her fears. Her act hunger may be to tell her friend off, to reconcile with her friend, to understand her better, or to practice other ways to relate to the friend.

The psychodrama director works to help a group to close at least one of its open tension systems and satiate its act hungers through interventions made in the psychodrama enactment. This is done so that the protagonist can restore spontaneity and begin again to live in the here and now. In fact, the contract which the director makes with the protagonist is essentially an agreement to do just that. The ABCS are accomplished by facilitating the fulfilling of the protagonist's act hungers.

### **Five Instruments of Psychodrama**

Moreno adapted many of the psychodramatic techniques and methods from the theatre. In a speech to the American Psychiatric Association Moreno (1946) said, "Drama is a translation of the Greek word which means action, or thing done. Psychodrama can be defined, therefore, as the science which explores the "truth" by dramatic methods." He went on to elaborate the five instruments of the psychodramatic process – the stage, the protagonist, the director, the auxiliary egos and the audience (i.e., group).

#### *The Stage*

Moreno (1969) envisioned and created a therapeutic theatre where men can play women and women can play men; where a black person can play a white person and the white person can play a black person; and where an old person can play a child's role and a child can play an older person's role. Moreno concluded by saying that as a result of psychodrama a healthy person may live more effectively, a sick person may learn to bear his misery, and the dead may continue to play a part in our lives. On the

therapeutic stage people could act out not only their ordinary everyday lives, but also their dreams and desires.

Moreno knew that each space evokes memories and expectations. He created the classical psychodrama theatre with its three-tiered stage and balcony to warm-up the participants to the magic and mystery of psychodrama. Unfortunately most of us do not have a classic psychodramatic theatre so the psychodrama meeting space is often an ordinary room used for other events (e.g., treatment team meetings, birthday party, downsizing seminar, etc.). The residual warm-up from these other events can permeate and contaminate the healing space. Psychodramatists can transform the ordinary space into the sacred space of the therapeutic theatre through rituals such as the forming of a circle of chairs, the placements of a few colored scarves, music, incense, etc.

Whether one is working on a classic stage, within a circle of chairs, or at one end of a room, it is necessary to assign part of the room to the stage. This defines the area where the drama will be enacted and separates the "stage" from the everyday reality of group interactions. When the protagonist, director and auxiliaries step into the space they are leaving ordinary reality and entering the world of surplus reality.

### *The Protagonist*

The protagonist is the term given to the person who is the focus of the psychodrama. The protagonist is encouraged to be as spontaneous as possible. Rather than being an actor in a play who must follow a script, be guided by a director and whose movements are choreographed by another, the protagonist in a psychodrama is encouraged to write his own script, cast his own characters, direct his own life and choreograph his own movements. The protagonist must begin with the affirmation of his own "subjective" truth before the director can ask the protagonist to expand his perceptions of that experience.

The protagonist is encouraged not to tell his story in the third person but to enact the story in the here and now. The goal is for the protagonist to enact his story, not merely be the spectator or teller of his story. The protagonist is also given the freedom to undo the past, redo the present and create a different future for himself.

While the protagonist is encouraged to have maximum involvement and to enact his story with vitality and passion, psychodrama is just as much a method of restraint as it is of expression. For example, a protagonist will not only learn new behaviors, but will also learn to contain feelings or thoughts so as to



be more spontaneous in the here and now. The protagonist encounters not only others that are familiar to him, but he is also encouraged to expand his perceptions and encounter the unknown or rejected parts of himself and others.

There is an ancient Eastern belief that just prior to dying we review all the actions in our own life from the perspective of how they have impacted upon others. This is also the way of psychodrama where a protagonist is encouraged and supported in assuming all other roles so that he can experience his life from the outside as well as the inside.

### *The Director*

The preferred term for the group leader is the director rather than the therapist. Moreno said that the director was a member of the group with directorial responsibilities and that all members of the group are therapeutic agents for each other. The director must be the most spontaneous member of the group. Kellerman (1992) has discussed the four main roles of the director: analyst, producer, therapist, and group leader.

Analyst. As an action analyst (Haskell, 1975) the director analyzes not only the intrapsychic and interpersonal issues of the group but also the transpersonal issues. The critical function of this role is the empathizer who brings understanding and affirmation to the protagonist and group members.

Producer. As a producer the psychodramatist is responsible for the dramatic action that unfolds during the course of the group session. There are many sub-roles to the producer role including: scene-setter, choreographer, coach, dramaturg, time keeper, etc.

Therapist. The director must be the therapist both for the protagonist and all the other group members. In the role of therapist it is essential to distinguish good therapy from adequate drama. The director as therapist observes, monitors and guides the protagonist's production. Kipper (1986) states that the two major vehicles of change in psychodrama are catharsis and role training.

While the drama is unfolding the director must also assume the role of the family therapist and mentally role reverses with each person from the protagonist's social network. The therapist structures the drama in such a way that all the characters in the drama become real, complex human beings rather than stereotypical projections of the protagonist.

Group Leader. As the group leader, the psychodramatist is the manager and facilitator of the group process who helps to co-create a supportive sociometry that maximizes freedom in choice of roles and people. Since sociometry is the base of all the work a psychodramatist does, in a group session, the director notes the currents of feeling that flow between participants and in relation to the director. He is noting what issues emerge as the group members interact and how the members feel in relation to those issues. He makes interventions to include silent members and to encourage participation from everyone. He helps the group to warm up enough that a protagonist will emerge. He makes interventions based on his observations.

### *The Auxiliary Ego*

Auxiliary ego is the term given to other group members who play roles for the protagonist in the psychodrama. The auxiliary ego brings life to the protagonist's world. Auxiliary egos may play parts of the protagonist's self (e.g., double, shy and afraid me, the loud and abusive me, etc.) and/or interpersonal and transpersonal roles. The auxiliary egos may play wished for, dead or absent others in the protagonist's social network.

The auxiliary, in service to the protagonist, is called upon to connect on a deep inner personal level with the role assigned and to communicate the experience of that role to the protagonist, director and group members. The auxiliary ego serves as a bridge between the protagonist and the director, the protagonist and the group and the protagonist and his drama.

The auxiliary must match the spontaneity and creativity of the protagonist and gently encourages the protagonist to embrace deeper levels of connection and experience. An auxiliary who assumes the role too quickly and too strongly can extinguish production from the protagonist, while an auxiliary who takes the role too cautiously and too slowly can deaden the protagonist's production.

As a general rule it is easier to contain an auxiliary who is too creative rather than to expand an auxiliary who is too cautious. The auxiliary ego has the greatest freedom to challenge, promote, extend and expand the protagonist's perceptions.

The group member also personally benefits from the playing of an auxiliary role. Playing the auxiliary role provides an access and opportunity to become connected to another dimension of the self and the other. As an auxiliary we may be called upon to play a role that is foreign, unknown or disclaimed by

our self. If the individual makes a total commitment to the role, that very role will transform the auxiliary's life as he connects with and incorporates new information gleaned from playing the role.

There are several tips for being an auxiliary ego:

1.       Trust your intuition: Trust that you will do a good enough job for the protagonist and embrace the role.
2.       Bring everything you have to the role: A good auxiliary learns to go inward and pull forth experiences, expectations, behaviors and verbal responses that are congruent with the role assignment.
3.       Maximize production: Use both verbal and nonverbal communication to embody the role.
4.       Stay in role. Once assigned a role the auxiliary should respond to all situations from that role. If you are chosen to play the father in a drama don't look to the director and say, "What I am supposed to do?" but use those feelings and speak directly to the protagonist and say "I don't know what I'm supposed to do with you."
5.       Role Reversal. In the role reversed position, assume the body posture, voice and gesture of the protagonist and repeat the last few lines of dialogue from before the role reversal. This will anchor you in your new role and provide continuity to the drama for the protagonist.
6.       Maximize the creativity of the protagonist. Don't be too clever or too smart, but rather encourage and support the protagonist in the production of new affect, thoughts, behaviors and spirituality.

### *The Group*

The group serves as a microcosm for the larger community. The group members serve as both social lubricant and social irritants. They are the witnesses and provide existential validation and objective confirmation for the protagonist. The group functions in both individual and collective roles.

On an individual level the group can represent the struggles within the protagonist. It is one of the major tasks of the director to establish connections between group members (see sociometry). When the protagonist is a mirror for the individual members of the group, there is an experience of awareness and

connection with the protagonist's story. The individual group members discover parts of themselves and their relationships within the protagonist's drama.

As a collective, the group is a microcosm of society and serves as a stand-in for the world at large. The group acts as a mirror for the protagonist. The roles that are present in the protagonist's life are reflected back to him through the group members: the critical parent; the annoyed sibling; the supportive friend, the loving partner, etc.

### **Psychodrama Methodology**

#### **Session Components**

While the time for a psychodrama group may range from thirty minutes to three hours all psychodrama sessions are divided into three parts: warm-up, enactment and sharing. Generally 50% of the allotted time is used for the enactment phase. The warm-up and sharing phases equally share the remaining time.

#### **Warm-up**

The warm-up is an essential component of every psychodrama session. It would be highly unlikely for group members to enter the therapy room and be instantaneously ready to leap into a psychodrama. The warm-up provides them with a gradual readying for the enactment. In psychodrama the concept of resistance doesn't exist. Instead, a client's reluctance is perceived as being connected to an incomplete warm-up. Rather than trying to force the client to go where he doesn't want to go, the psychodramatist meets and joins the client where he is and assists him in the warming up process.

The warm-up is the time when group members begin focusing on the issues that they may wish to explore during the session. The warm-up may be either structured or unstructured. With a structured warm-up the director leads the group in an exercise designed to facilitate the emergence of issues of importance to group members. The warm-up may be cognitive, as with a brief didactic about relapse prevention to a substance abuse recovery group. Or the warm-up may be affective as with putting an empty chair in the center of the room, telling the group that alcoholism is in the chair and asking members to tell the disease what it has done to them.

There are literally thousands of structured warm-ups (Dayton, 1990; Schutz, 1967; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000; Weiner & Sacks,xxxx). Prior to selecting a structured warm-up the director should review the history of the group, the overall goals for the group and the developmental stage of group process.

An unstructured warm-up occurs when group members discuss their issues and the director focuses the group on themes that spontaneously emerge from their discussion. The Central Concern model (Buchanan, 1980) is one way of looking at a group's warm-up and providing a structure and method for selecting a protagonist when the group is unwilling or unable to select a protagonist.

#### *Selection of the Protagonist*

The four ways a protagonist is selected are: 1) system, 2) director, 3) group; and, 4) self-selection. Prior to the session the director should have already developed a plan about the method of protagonist selection. If the protagonist is identified prior to the session (systems or director choice) other group members should be informed early so that they do not become too warmed up to their own issues and so that they do warm up to the pre-selected protagonist.

#### **System Selects the Protagonist.**

The system selects approach usually occurs when the psychodrama group is sponsored by an agency. The selection can be an institutionalized process such as providing an opportunity for each new patient in an acute care psychiatric program to enact a psychodrama as a method of assessing the strengths and weakness of that client. The system selects approach may also be used when a case manager requests that a client be chosen (e.g., The case manager of a substance abuse program requests that Mr. Jones do a psychodrama to see if he is ready to go for a home visit).

#### **Director Selects the Protagonist.**

The director selects the protagonist approach occurs when the director of the group chooses a protagonist. The director can routinely choose the protagonist or this approach can be used on an as needed basis. An example of an as needed basis would be when there is a crisis in the group or a group member and the director wants to ensure that the person(s) and issue will be dealt with. e.g., Ms. Smith, who is a quiet and under-chosen member of the group, just learned that her mother passed away. Ms. Smith wishes to attend the funeral service, but her brother, who was her sexual perpetrator, has already announced that he plans to attend the funeral. She doesn't know what to do and the funeral is tomorrow.

The director selects approach can also be used routinely in the group when the group members are either unwilling (non-voluntary clients such as prisoners and juvenile delinquents) or are unable (psychotic or schizophrenic patients and abuse victims) to participate in a voluntary process. Psychiatric clients and people in crisis may simply not have the ego strength to risk volunteering to be chosen and deal with the consequences of not being chosen.

As noted in the warm-up section, The Central Concern Model was developed for use at Saint Elizabeths Hospital precisely because group members were incapable of making choices and withstanding the rejection of the group selection process.

The director selects approach is also useful in groups that have become fixed and stagnant in their sociometric processes. The director can select a rejection star or isolate to facilitate greater spontaneity and creativity among the group members. For example, the director may choose an under-chosen emotionally expressive person to be the protagonist in a group that is stuck in intellectuality and avoids dealing with emotions.

#### ***A Group Member Volunteers to Be the Protagonist.***

Usually a volunteer protagonist is used for short enactments or demonstrations. The director simply asks for a volunteer who highlights the training issue or the group's issue (e.g., "Who would like to enact a ten-minute drama with a significant other to demonstrate how to use a double." Or "Who would like to do a ten minute drama where you practice some new behavior you'd like to introduce into your life." The first person who volunteers is the protagonist.

#### ***Group Selects the Protagonist***

This is the most common technique for selecting a protagonist in ongoing personal growth and therapy groups. Following the group warm-up (see above) the director informs the group members of the time limit for the drama and opens the process to volunteers. Group members who wish to be the protagonist come forward and gather in a circle. One at a time the "potential" protagonists briefly speak about the issues they would like to explore in the drama.

The director instructs the audience members to place a hand on the shoulder of the "potential" protagonist whose issue is closest to their own issue. The person who receives the most choices is the

protagonist. Following the selection of the protagonist, some of those who chose the other potential protagonists tell these volunteers why they chose them – what in their own lives is similar.

It is helpful for the director to commend the volunteers on their courage and encourage them to be persistent in continuing to offer themselves as protagonists in future sessions. The director may state, “Each story has a time to be told. We need to be ready to tell our story, and we need others to be ready to witness it and participate in the telling of it.”

The authors have observed that virtually all groups have the innate wisdom to know in what order stories should be told in order to provide maximum benefit to the group and to the protagonist. Telling our story before someone is willing to listen is as bad as not telling our story at all.

### **Action Phase**

After the protagonist is selected the action phase begins. This too has a kind of warm-up with the Walk and Talk, Casting and Role Training the Auxiliary Egos, and Scene Setting. These activities further warm up the protagonist and the group to the specific issues and relationships that will be explored in the drama.

#### *Walk and Talk*

After the protagonist is selected, the director and the protagonist walk side by side in a circle and discuss the contract for the drama. The walk and talk serves to deepen empathy between the director and the protagonist, to clear up any distorted expectations, to warm-up the protagonist and group to the drama, and to establish a contract for the drama. The director and protagonist will negotiate appropriate boundaries for the enactment. For example, the director might say, “In the time we have available, I don’t feel comfortable directing a four person exercise with two scenes. Is there a way to do your drama with one character in one scene?”

The director also focuses the protagonist on his own work rather than on changing others. The director might say, “No, I can’t get your father to understand you, but you could tell your father your side of the story and your feelings about his lack of support for you.”

At the end of the walk and talk, the director should clearly and succinctly restate to the protagonist and the group the contract for the work. If the protagonist concurs, the scene setting and auxiliary training begins.

### *Casting and Role Training the Auxiliary Egos*

The first order of business after the establishment of the contract is to cast the characters for the drama. Usually the protagonist is asked to choose group members whom they would like to play the roles.

It is imperative that group members have the right to decline any role. Also, the director encourages spontaneity in the choice of auxiliaries so that group members are not role locked into playing the same types of roles every time they are auxiliaries, e.g., Tashika always plays the mom roles. Occasionally, directors will suggest a therapeutic role assignment, by recommending a specific group member to play a role because they feel it will be particularly useful for the person.

If a protagonist has difficulty casting a role because she believes it is a role no group member would want to play, the director may ask the group who would be willing to play the role. This is done so that the protagonist will know that these people are not afraid to play the role and are willing to assist in the drama. If several people raise their hands, the director will ask the protagonist to choose from among them. Sometimes what happens is that once someone raises a hand, the protagonist feels freer to make a choice and will request that someone who didn't raise a hand be the auxiliary.

One by one the characters are chosen and the formal role training of the auxiliaries begins. There is a basic assumption that the protagonist casts the roles for both overt (you look like my mother) and covert (undiscovered sociometric connections) reasons.

Role training can be done "Hollywood Style" with all the roles being cast simultaneously and role training for one role at a time, or each role being selected one at a time with role training prior to the selection of the next character.

The protagonist begins with a physiological description (height, weight, age, posture, etc.) and moves on to include qualitative issues such as personality characteristics or how the protagonist feels treated by the person.

After the verbal description by the protagonist, the protagonist is role reversed and assumes the role of the other through posture, movement and comments. The director may ask, "What are some things you generally say to the protagonist? Use the tone of voice you tend to use with her." The auxiliary ego is asked if she has sufficient information to play the role or if she has any questions for the protagonist. To



summarize, the protagonist first describes the role of the significant other then assumes the role. After the auxiliary egos are assigned and role trained the first scene is set.

### *Scene Setting*

The scene setting begins with the director asking the protagonist where the action occurs. The first question generally will be, “Where does this scene take place?” When the protagonist is unsure or uncertain of where the scene takes place the scene may be set in the “mists” (i.e., the unknown, the area between heaven and earth).

Setting the scene for the drama is important in that it anchors the protagonist in time and space. If the scene is set in the protagonist’s family home, is it occurring when the protagonist was ten years old or in the home as it is today? The setting may be much the same or quite different.

One of the first tasks of the director is to decide on the time limits that will be allocated to the scene setting and each particular scene. Although it is possible and sometimes desirable to use an entire thirty-minute enactment solely for the purpose of exploring in depth the details of the scene and that scene’s relationship to the protagonist, it is an exception to general practice to do so.

When a scene is being set within an overall psychodrama, the director should be judicious with the use of time and set broad parameters and descriptions for the scene. The scene gives form, function and direction to the protagonist.

After the place of the scene has been chosen, the protagonist is asked to set the scene. In setting the objects within the scene it is important to allow the protagonist time to create their own space. Unless the protagonist is physically challenged, the protagonist is responsible for moving all the objects in the scene. Neither the director nor the auxiliaries should, unless asked, participate in moving objects or creating the space. The actual physical creation of the space is the protagonist’s warm-up to the scene and the warm-up to the creation of his own world.

Whatever objects are available in the group room are transformed by surplus reality into the objects in the scene. The protagonist speaks aloud in the present tense and says, “This chair is my father’s armchair.” The protagonist is encouraged to provide texture and flavor to the object. “My father’s armchair is big and well worn. The cushions are faded brown corduroy, and they sag. You can see the

rings from my father's beer can on the right arm of the chair and the cigarette burns from when he falls asleep in front of the television."

Although it should be used sparingly, a director may request that the protagonist reverse roles with an object. Non-verbal cues from the protagonist and cultural sensitivities may indicate a role reversal with an object could be useful. If the protagonist states that her mother was a devout Catholic, a role reversal with a statue of the Virgin Mary may yield significant results.

After the scene is over, the protagonist is asked to strike the scene. Again, neither the director nor any of the group members, participate in the dismantling of the scene, unless directly asked by the protagonist. The speed and order with which the protagonist clears the scene are additional cues to the protagonist's psychological state.

In these days of managed care and shorter sessions most psychodrama sessions are from sixty to ninety minutes and thus the number of scenes during the action phase are reduced.

### ***Common Production Techniques***

Zerka T. Moreno (1978) provides a full description of basic and advanced psychodramatic production techniques that are designed to increase the protagonist's creativity and spontaneity in the here and now. The five basic and most frequently used production techniques are the soliloquy, double, aside, role reversal, and mirror.

Soliloquy: Hamlet's soliloquy is among the most famous in the world when he says, "To be or not to be; that is the question." The soliloquy is a moment between reflection and action. It brings the protagonist out of his head and into the moment so that the covert is made overt and we can all hear the running commentary in his mind. The soliloquy is most often used as a bridge in beginning or in ending a scene.

The protagonist is asked to perform a soliloquy by walking in a circle and speaking aloud the thoughts and feelings in his head. A protagonist may also be asked to leave the scene for a moment and soliloquize on her experiences within that scene. The soliloquy is analogous to the free association technique in psychoanalysis except that the individual is asked to move while speaking. The soliloquy is done in action so that the protagonist's movement patterns and gestures are visible.

Aside: The aside is another term that comes from theatrical tradition. This technique is used when the protagonist is acting within a scene, but appears to be someplace else. The protagonist is instructed to turn his head to the side (an aside) and speak the thoughts he is thinking but not saying. During the aside, the action continues but the other characters are instructed that they cannot hear the aside.

The aside technique is most commonly used when the protagonist is disassociating from the enactment and is engaged in a residual warm-up. The aside gives voice to the residual warm-up so that the residual warm-up can be incorporated into the scene. A visible indication for the need for the aside occurs when the protagonist's body language is significantly different from his words, or when the protagonist is distant from the scene and appears to be lost in his own thoughts.

It is also used when the person's affect seems incongruent with his words and the protagonist seems constrained from speaking by social mores of the situation. An example of this would be a person not wanting to admit feeling rejected in a situation where the auxiliary is ending a relationship with the protagonist.

Double: The double is the most frequently used technique in psychodrama. The primary purpose of doubling is to provide the protagonist with an awareness, and integration of a domain of self that has previously been underdeveloped (e.g., emotion, mind, body and spirit).

Classical doubling occurs when an individual, chosen by the protagonist, literally reflects the protagonist's physical posture and brings a voice to the underdeveloped domain. There are many kinds of doubles: Affective, cognitive, somatic and amplifying (speaks louder for a quiet protagonist), and containing doubles are the most common. Paradoxical and antagonist doubling is less often used.

The double begins by assuming the same posture and gestures as the protagonist. He stands beside and slightly behind the protagonist in a place where he can see the protagonist's affect, yet not be upstaging the protagonist. The double first establishes rapport with the protagonist by stating the obvious and giving expression to the unexpressed manifest content. After establishing rapport, the double slowly and gently begins making statements that deepen the protagonist's awareness of these unexpressed thoughts and feelings. The best doubling statements are direct, pithy and evoke a response from the protagonist. Sentence stem doubling statements are often useful as well, e.g. "I'm feeling..." or "What I would like to tell you is. . .".

The protagonist and other group members are informed that only the protagonist can hear the double. All other auxiliaries respond only to words and actions initiated by the protagonist. It is a disservice to the protagonist, and reinforces “magical thinking” that an individual can be heard without speaking. The protagonist must incorporate, change or disavow the words of the double so that the protagonist deepens his internal experience. During the doubling, the director must be vigilant in monitoring the protagonist and directing the protagonist either to repeat aloud, clarify or disavow the double’s statements.

In spontaneous doubling, rather than having a particular double assigned to the protagonist for the entire drama, group members are encouraged to rise, stand in the double position, make one doubling statement, wait for the protagonist’s response and then sit back down in the group. Spontaneous doubling is excellent for developing emotional intelligence in other group members and providing the protagonist with a deep feeling of connection with the group.

Doubling can also be used as a method of restraint. Clients with impulse control disorders often benefit from cognitive doubling. A cognitive double builds introspection, reflection, and future projection within the protagonist. For example, a cognitive double of an impulsive, aggressive client might say “I’d like to hit this person but hitting others results in my going to seclusion and losing my phone privileges. I want to call my girlfriend tonight, so I’d better not hit him.”

An assignment of a double is contraindicated when the protagonist is fully experiencing the drama.

Role Reversal: Zerka T. Moreno has called role reversal the *sine qua non* of psychodramatic techniques. A role reversal occurs when the protagonist reverses with another and becomes the other (When A becomes B and B becomes A.). The protagonist and the auxiliary literally change places in the room and switch roles.

When directing multiple role players it is essential that the protagonist is role reversed back to home base before assuming another role reversal (If the protagonist (A) is in the role of B, the protagonist is reversed back to his own role (A) before being reversed with C).

A role reversal is indicated under any of the following conditions:

1. when the protagonist has information that the auxiliary does not have.

2. to provide an opportunity for the protagonist to see himself from the role of the other.
3. when the protagonist lacks empathy or understanding of the role of the other.
4. to avoid physical harm to the auxiliary.
5. when the protagonist lacks spontaneity and role reversing will increase his affect, cognition or performance.
6. to verify the accuracy of the statements from the other.
7. when the protagonist asks a question. The idea here is that all that we need to know is within.

Role reversal is contraindicated when the protagonist is highly codependent and routinely and automatically assumes the role of the other and abandons the role of the Self. Role reversal with abusers is contra-indicated for abuse survivors until the final stage of treatment.

Mirror: The protagonist is asked to “step out” of the scene and choose someone to take his role. The protagonist then observes his “mirror” enact the scene. The mirror technique allows the protagonist to see himself as others see him.

Mirroring was created before audio-visual feedback and can be an excellent way for a group member to gain a perspective on his own actions. This technique is useful when the protagonist becomes overheated or overwhelmed and a cool down is indicated so that the enactment does not get too chaotic. A mirror is also useful in unblocking protagonists who have distorted images of themselves. For example, from the mirror position the protagonist might note that rather than being assertive, he is instead being docile.

This technique is contra-indicated when it would be used to shame or embarrass the protagonist or in situations when the protagonist might feel ridiculed rather than supported.

### ***Other Specialized Production Techniques***

In addition to the five most commonly used psychodramatic production techniques, a variety of specialized techniques have been developed.

Empty Chair: The empty chair technique while coined and first used by Moreno was popularized by Fritz Perls, who borrowed and adapted the empty chair as a Gestalt Therapy technique.

The protagonist is asked to place a person or object in an empty chair and to begin a dialogue with that person or object. This technique is often used as a warm-up for a group. The director can also suggest who should occupy the empty chair. The subject in the empty chair can be someone from the past, present or future, or it could be a part of the Self or someone transpersonal (e.g., St. Peter, Buddha, Hercules, etc.).

In general the dialogue begins with the protagonist speaking to the empty chair. The director can prompt the protagonist by asking the protagonist to make a statement, ask a question or speak a feeling. When appropriate, role reversal is used with the protagonist becoming the person in the chair and speaking back to herself.

Future Projection: As noted earlier in the theoretical constructs section, time collapses in psychodrama. Instead of enacting a scene from the past, the drama can include a scene from the future. According to Moreno (1946) the future is a better motivator for the present than is the past. The future projection technique can be used as one scene within a psychodrama, as a warm-up technique and for separate one-scene enactments.

In the future projection the protagonist is asked to imagine what a specific future might look like. Auxiliary egos are chosen to play the main characters (real or fantasy) and are trained by the protagonist to take the roles. A person is chosen to play the present self while the protagonist plays the future self. At the conclusion of the future projection, the director instructs the future self to role train the present self to identify concrete behavioral actions that will create the wished for future.

The future projection technique is best used to instill hope, provide motivation, and to assist the protagonist in creating a plan to solve a current dilemma. The future projection technique is contraindicated when it may break through a protagonist's denial and cause trauma to the client (e.g., a client who is in denial over a terminal illness).

Psychodrama A Deux: Psychodrama a deux is psychodrama for two (Stein & Callahan, 1982). Psychodrama a deux is often the focus of individual therapy when provided by a psychodramatist.

Psychodrama a deux is accomplished through use of as many empty chairs as there are auxiliaries in the drama. The protagonist places them in the room as she would set the scene in a group session and is

asked to imagine that the chairs are filled with her auxiliaries. The director reverses the protagonist into each role to learn more about the role, and when the protagonist is sufficiently warmed up, she begins the drama. If one does not want to use chairs, scarves or props may be used to mark the spots held by the auxiliary roles. It is best for the director to refrain from playing roles, but to be an active double for the protagonist.

The director can also interview and coach the protagonist in the role of the other at various moments in the drama. For example, if the protagonist is in the role of her usually critical mother, the director may say, "I know that you don't like Mary to be over-confident, yet she's feeling that you don't love her and you think she's seldom competent. Do you love her? Do you want to help her? Would you be willing to tell her that you love her? Can you tell her one thing about her that you admire?"

There are some pitfalls to avoid when using psychodrama production techniques in individual therapy. One of the great benefits to the psychodramatic group process is that more of the transference is projected onto other group members and less is projected onto the director. However, in a one on one setting all the transference will be placed upon the director. The danger in psychodrama a deux is in the director assuming roles within the process. Assuming the role of an antagonistic other in psychodrama a deux heightens the negative transference towards the director and often results in a client's premature termination.

Another danger in psychodrama a deux is that experiential methods can too quickly cut through defense systems and can lead to premature breakthroughs or breakdowns of natural defense systems. In using psychodrama a deux on a regular basis, the director should spend considerable time working with supportive relationships and supportive parts of the self rather than focusing mainly on dysfunctional role relationships (internal or external).

### **Sharing**

The final phase of a psychodrama session is the sharing. The sharing is a vital and integral part of the session. The sharing phase incorporates the protagonist back into the group and offers the group members an opportunity to connect, on a personal level, with the issues and concerns explored in the drama. It is a time for closure and integration. It is a time for group members to acknowledge how the

drama has affected them personally and what they have learned about their own lives through the protagonist's journey.

Prior to the sharing the auxiliary egos are de-rolled from their assigned roles and resume their membership in the group. Just as it is important to warm-up the auxiliary egos to play a role so too is it essential for the auxiliary egos to formally discard the assigned roles and return to themselves. After the de-rolling is concluded, the sharing portion begins.

Sharing is unique in that the verbal statements by the other group members to the protagonist are based on identification and connection rather than evaluation or interpretation. Group members are encouraged to identify with rather than critique or interpret the protagonist. To facilitate this process group members are encouraged to begin their sharing statements with an "I" statement: "When watching your drama, I thought about my own rocky relationship with my partner, and I felt a sense of hope that we could work something out too." The depth and level of sharing from the group members can also serve as an assessment of how adequately the drama met the needs of the group members.

If a group member becomes critical, judgmental or advice giving rather than sharing it may be because that group member has identified with the role of the other rather than the role of the protagonist. For example, "You know, you are very sensitive and as your partner I would have a hell of a time putting up with you." It is best for the director to nip these statements in the bud and refocus the group member to share with the protagonist. The director might say something to the group member, such as, "It would be helpful to the protagonist and to you to share from your own experience and say what the drama brings up from your life." After the group member responds, the director might say, "You noted you feel the protagonist is sensitive. How does sensitivity play out in your own life?"

The director monitors the group members and establishes sociometric connections among the protagonist and other group members. The director can ask for clarification or elaboration from group members who are finding it difficult to make a bridge between themselves and the protagonist. If a group member is having difficulty in finding something to share, the director can gently guide her to a similar issue (e.g., The group member might say, "I've never been married, so I don't have anything to share." The director could respond, "I know you have never been married, but have you ever had a relationship with someone you loved and feared losing that relationship?"



Depending on the time allotted for sharing and the number of people in the group, there are several ways to conduct the sharing. If the group is small and there is sufficient time, the group could share as a whole, with each group member sharing with the protagonist. If there is limited time or if there is a large group sharing can be done in small groups with the auxiliary egos sharing with the protagonist and other group members forming small groups for sharing. After the small groups have shared, the director asks a few group members who have not already shared with the protagonist to share with the protagonist in the larger group.

It is important that the auxiliary egos have time to share with the protagonist both their experience in playing the role (e.g., “As your father I felt...”) and from their own personal life. Sharing from the role often provides invaluable feedback to the protagonist.

In an on-going group the sharing illuminates the next phase of the group and highlights the issues that will be on the agenda at the next meeting. It is to be remembered that sharing is an absolutely essential part of a psychodrama session. It helps a group to cool down from the action, to reach closure, to deepen connections with one another and the self, and provides time for introspection and reflection on the drama.

### **Populations and Settings**

Psychodrama has been used with a broad range of people in a variety of settings, including but not limited to: the severely and chronically mentally ill (Buchanan, 1984); alcohol and substance abusers (Fuhlrodt, 1990); both normal and emotionally challenged children and adolescents (Hoey, 1996); eating disordered clients (Hornyak and Baker, 1989); clients and staff of the criminal justice system (Buchanan, 1981); and individual and group counseling and psychotherapy clients (Blatner, 1996, Garcia, 1984, Holmes and Karp, 1991, Holmes, Karp and Watson, 1994, Williams, 1991).

There are also several recent adaptations of Moreno's work including Jonathan Fox's (1994) *Playback Theatre* and Peter Pitzele's (1998) *Bibliodrama*.

### **Clinical Indications and Limitations**

Psychodrama can be used successfully with virtually every population, provided that the psychodramatist is skilled enough to modify treatment to suit the population. Psychodrama can be preventive. With psychodrama, one can help clients cop with stressful situations and learn how to enact alternative solutions to repetitive problems. Psychodrama can also treat specific symptoms. For example,

psychodrama is highly effective in the treatment of phobias. It can also be used for personal growth, such as improving relationships and restoring a sense of joy in life.

Psychodrama treatment can be brief (1-6 sessions) or of longer duration. Psychodrama is the original brief therapy. Goals and interventions are specific and behaviorally oriented and tested.

While practically any client could benefit from psychodrama, careful screening must be done so that the person can be placed within the appropriate psychodramatic treatment setting. A client with a substance abuse problem, for example, would best be treated in a homogeneous substance abusers group rather than a generic group. Clients with fragile ego boundaries would be best placed in groups where the treatment focus is on behavior and interpersonal skills development rather than in a group dealing with strong emotions and regressive early childhood dramas.

Psychodrama is a powerful treatment modality, and it has a unique ability to heal or to harm. Moreno cautioned against the use of psychodrama to rehearse homicidal and suicidal fantasies. Psychodrama should also be used judiciously with individuals with severe impulse and acting out disorders so that they do not rehearse destructive actions. While Van der Kolk (1987) has stated that psychodrama may be helpful in working with abuse survivors. Hudgins and Drucker (1998) caution that psychodramatists working with abuse survivors need specialized training in the application of psychodrama techniques with this population.

The trained psychodramatist will have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to design the right treatment for each specific client rather than rely upon a cookbook of structured techniques. A skilled practitioner understands dramas can range from the behavioral (role rehearsal) to the affective (catharsis for release of tension) to the cognitive (re-organization of perceptual patterns) to the spiritual (establishing and deepening transpersonal connections).

For issues regarding competency, the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy has set standards of professional practice and certifies individuals based upon these standards with a written and an onsite examination. The minimum requirements for certification are a Masters Degree in a related field of practice; 780 hours of training from certified trainers and one year of supervised clinical practice. While it is not essential that all individuals who use psychodrama are certified, it is essential that they have received proper training, education and supervision for its use.

### **Section III. Case Examples**

#### **Case Example One**

##### **Psychodrama in a Group Setting**

Joan had been dating a wonderful man who had asked her to marry him. She had also been dating another man off and on over a period of years. She felt that this man, too, was ready finally for marriage. Tom, the first suitor, was a civil servant, a sweet and loving man with a wonderful sense of humor. Andre, the second suitor, was handsome, exciting, and charming. Joan and Tom loved the same kinds of activities and shared basic values. Joan and Andre went to chic nightspots and had differing views on life.

Joan was in a quandary. What to do? Which man to marry? In the walk and talk it seemed clear that she was in love with Tom, but the lure of excitement with Andre was compelling, especially since she felt that her deceased mother would have wanted her to marry Andre. Her mother had known Andre and liked him and would be disappointed if Joan didn't marry him since he was so handsome and charming, apparently a mover and shaker. The contract made in the walk and talk was to help Joan move closer to a decision. She decided that she wanted to encounter both men in the drama as a way of clarifying her feelings about both. As she brought them in she continued to talk about what her mother would want her to do. We decided to bring her mother in too and give her a chance to encounter Mother about choice of mate. Joan placed the men in a tableau and in a surplus reality scene talked to her dead mother about both men. As Joan spoke to her mother she began to realize that Tom was very much like her father, whom she deeply loved and admired. It became clear in the scene through role reversal that Mother did not share Joan's love and respect for Father. Joan's mother would far rather have married a debonair and handsome man like Andre.

The director reversed Joan back into her own role to hear her mother's statement and respond to it. Then the director doubled, "Well, if you think he's so great, you marry him." Joan said, "Yeah, you marry him" and began laughing at the thought of her mother marrying Andre. The director asked her if she'd like to see that happen. Joan's mouth dropped open at the prospect of such an odd event but she quickly decided she'd love to see her mother walk down the aisle with Andre since they seemed "perfect for each other."

The scene was quickly set up and Joan watched gleefully as her mother greeted churchgoers and asked them if they were impressed that she had finally landed such a great catch. Joan stood at the side with Tom. In a soliloquy she noted her relief at seeing her mother happy.

She recognized that she had been hanging onto her unsatisfying relationship with Andre as a way of making up for her mother's unhappy relationship with her father. Up to that moment she had been a bit ashamed that she was in love with Tom, a sweet, ordinary guy like her dad, rather than the exciting Andre.

The truth was she couldn't make herself love Andre as she loved Tom. "I don't really trust Andre. He doesn't have much substance. And I don't think he's as financially stable as he implies. I think it's all flash. And – I think he'd spend the rest of our life together running after other women."

When she saw her mother as Andre's happy bride, she felt so relieved of the burden of her mother's wishes and unmet needs. She ended by telling her mother how much she loved her and how delighted she was that Mother was now happy. She asked Mother for her blessing with Tom. Reversing Joan into the mother role, she told her daughter that now that she was so happy, she wanted Joan to be happy too and gave her blessing for the marriage to Tom. Joan reversed back to her own role to receive her mother's blessing. She ended the drama by telling Tom how much she loved him and why she did. Within a couple of months after the session, Joan and Tom were happy. When the director saw her some years later, she said how happy she was that she had married him and that they were still very much in love. She had found a soul mate.

## **Case Example Two**

### **Psychodrama in an Individual Setting**

Moreno felt that each of us needs to spend as much time as possible in the present moment, not fretting over the past or obsessing about the future. As a result, he designed psychodrama so that all scenes are placed in the here and now. Because all of the work is done in the present, we are able to collapse time and change history, as it were.

Bob's father had died of a heart attack at work when Bob was only seven. His mother was distraught, depressed and unavailable to him for nearly a year afterward. During that time he had no one to

comfort him in his grief and he devoted himself to cheering up his mother and taking care of her in any way his child's mind could imagine. He grew up to be a very responsible but emotionally remote young man.

He married and when his wife became ill during a pregnancy, he became angry with her and depressed. Since his emotions and responses to the current situation seemed confusing to him, Bob began to explore his past. He noted that because of the suddenness of his father's death, he had had no opportunity to say good-bye. Because of his mother's state after the death he had never explored either his own grief or his feelings about being emotionally abandoned by her, a woman who loved him very much.

In a psychodrama, using an empty chair, with a scene set in the mists, Bob encountered his dead father and told him what life had been like in the family after his death. He told his father how deserted he had felt when he died and how hard it had been to take care of his mother. He noted that he still felt overly responsible for her and how angry it sometimes made him feel.

The director role reversed Bob into the role of his father. As Father, he tearfully told Bob how sorry he was to have left him so abruptly. The director doubled and coached the father in telling Bob other things he wanted to tell Bob and that he felt Bob needed to know. His "father" then told Bob how much he loved him and how proud he was of him. Reversing back to his own position, the director repeated the father's last words and Bob sobbed with tears of joy and relief. The director returned to the double position behind Bob as Bob told Father how much he loved him. He also said the good-bye he had not been able to say as a seven-year old.

In another session, Bob spoke to his "mother," telling her what he had not felt comfortable saying to her in life, for fear of wounding her. Without blaming her, he expressed his childhood worries and feelings of loneliness and responsibility. As he spoke to his mother, he began to realize that his wife's sudden illness (which necessitated his taking care of her for a brief time) had triggered his worries and angers from the past.

This realization helped him to acknowledge that his wife's illness was temporary and that there were many ways in which she was available to him. Also, he saw that he had been fearful that he would somehow lose her and that she, like his father, would die and abandon him.

At this point, another empty chair was used to represent his wife. Bob had been contaminating her role by confusing his wife with both his mother and father. He spoke to his wife and acknowledged both

how she is different from his parents and that the situation was different as well. In a role training moment, Bob also tearfully acknowledged her importance to him and his deep love for her, something he had been unable to tell her in the past.

When reversed into his wife's role, Bob-as-wife noted that in fact her sickness wasn't life threatening, that he had been over-reacting to her illness, that she loved him deeply too and that he wasn't getting rid of her so easily. Bob reversed roles and chuckling at "her" final comment, contracted with the psychodramatist to tell his wife directly that he loves her and is beginning to trust that she won't leave.

Bob continued with treatment for another six weeks, deepening his relationship with his wife, and beginning a new and more openly affectionate and supportive relationship with his mother.

#### **Section IV. Further Study**

For further information on psychodrama, individuals are encouraged to contact The American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama,

301 N. Harrison Street, Suite 508

Princeton, NJ 08540.

The telephone number is (609) 452-1339, email: [asgpp@ASGPP.org](mailto:asgpp@ASGPP.org).

Or one can contact

The American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy

PO Box 15572, Washington, DC 20003

The telephone number is (202) 483-0514.

The Society has been the general membership organization for over fifty years and publishes a newsletter, sponsors an annual conference and several regional meetings. The official journal of the Society is *The International Journal of Action Methods*, which is published quarterly.

The Board of Examiners publishes an annual directory, which includes the standards for certification and names and addresses of those who are certified. The directory is available free of charge

to individuals who request it. The Board also maintains an ethics committee to oversee the professional conduct of all certified psychodramatists.

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