

VARIATIONS ON PSYCHODRAMATIC SHARING

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There are a number of purposes which are accomplished simultaneously in psychodramatic sharing other than the most obvious one of closure. Potentially, a great number of needs within the group might be met at that time. The sharing allows the knitting of the past experiences of those in the audience with the past experiences of the protagonist, which were just enacted as if in the present. The group members come to appreciate which of their own past experiences are still unsettled or incomplete to the extent that they are activated by the psychodrama. The psychodrama may reawaken similar troubled areas and past difficulties which can be disclosed in the sharing portion of the psychodrama.

An individual who empathized with the protagonist during the psychodrama may want to let the protagonist know the extent of the empathizing and the common bond of feeling between them. An individual who felt compassion for the protagonist may want to be close to and to comfort the protagonist. A group which has experienced a particularly difficult drama may want to experience a mutual catharsis. Those who have witnessed and participated in an especially violent drama may want to share some quietness.

That is, the way that a group may want to satisfy its needs and achieve its purposes is often a function of the psychodrama they have all just experienced. As the psychodrama varies, then the needs may vary, but unfortunately, for the most part, sharing sessions are pretty much the same. Most sharing seems not to take into account either the needs of the group members or the nature of the most recent psychodramatic experience or the stage of maturity of the group. Do recently formed groups interact in the same way that well established groups do? The literature on group growth says clearly that they do not.

Sharing which continues to be the same regardless of group needs, the psychodramatic experience, and the stage of group development are bound eventually to influence the spontaneity of the group, its "health" and attitudes, and ultimately the subsequent psychodramatic sessions themselves.

The "sameness" of such sharings often makes them a chore rather than a joy. They instill a tremendous amount of conformity in the group and are responded to violently by persons who are already acting out counter-

authoritarian roles. Even the most cooperative group members discover after a while that they are beginning to resent the pseudo-communicative interchanges, the ritualistic language ("I got in touch with. . . ." "I identified with. . . ."), the game playing (can you top this!), and the imposed pseudo-mutuality which results from the repetitious format. Add to this the tremendous difficulty of trying to share in especially large groups or in public psychodramas, and the problem is compounded. Persons who have very little investment in the group itself or the psychodrama are still expected to "come up with" some sharing. The director is placed in the awkward position of generating responses from unwilling group members. All in all, it seems far removed from an activity intended to spawn creativity.

A most obvious answer to the problem seems to be to vary the pattern of sharing according to the nature of the psychodrama, the needs of the members and the stage of group development. That the needs of group members vary with the stage of development of the group is well grounded in the social psychological literature. Clearly, because this is so situational, there is no point-to-point correspondence between the existential moment following the psychodrama and the appropriate sharing session format. That decision has to be the responsibility of the director of the session. No doubt a "programmed" sharing in response to certain dramas would interfere with spontaneity and ultimately defeat the purpose of moving away from the predictable sessions characterized thus far.

However, based on clinical experience, it seems appropriate at this point to attempt to suggest some other ways in which sharing might be conducted, simply to illustrate a few of the options:

1. A nonverbal sharing of looking, touching, and making sounds might be good after an especially wordy drama, or one which seems to leave people with very little to say. It might be especially useful if it is apparent that words would "muddy" the atmosphere.
2. An action sociometric view which characterizes the present condition of group structure, noting the position of the protagonist with relationship to others, now that the drama has transpired. Verbal sharing might be done from those positions in space. In this way, the sharing can be for the group as well as the protagonist.
3. A locogram or moving sociogram in space which, for example, shows the inception of the group and its changing relationships up to and including the most recent drama—providing the group with a history of itself, and making explicit those changes of relationship which were only implicit before. The impact of the most recent drama on group structure should be demonstrated.

4. Symbolic gift giving would have each person give a quality (not a thing) to some other person in the group. Some may have more than one gift to give to more than one person.
5. Sharing from particular persons in the group at the request of the protagonist might get information from these people which would otherwise be unavailable.
6. A group hug with the protagonist in the middle, and with the changing of "layers" of participants allows everyone to give and to receive simultaneously.
7. In especially large groups, sub-grouping to save time and allow for fuller participation would be productive so long as the same groups did not always form together, and so long as this method was alternated with other methods.
8. "Private" sharing with a protagonist could be used so long as it was always in conjunction with "public" sharing. Otherwise, much "group property" would be lost and group process would be interfered with.
9. Persons with a high degree of identification with the protagonist and who went through their own dramas vicariously might share the stage with the protagonist and be "given to" at the same time the protagonist is shared with.
10. Form the group into two lines facing one another and give each person 30 seconds to say whatever needs to be said to each other person. Shift the position of each person one space each 30 seconds, rotating the ends from one line to the other. In this way, not only the protagonist gets shared with but everyone else takes care of "unfinished business" and unsaid thoughts, face-to-face in a minimum of time.
11. "Strength bombardment" is feedback which is "filtered" to include only positive statements about the focal person. This is an effective approach to persons with low self-esteem. It may be a way to reinforce a protagonist who has suffered severe ego damage. It should be done one-at-a-time for fullest effect. The receiver of the positive feedback is not allowed to discount it.
12. Let only those three persons immediately in front of the protagonist share. Require that others who want to share, come up and "displace" one of the three, so the sharing is all done directly to the protagonist, rather than from the back of the room. This emphasizes the "encounter" aspect of sharing rather than the "discussion" aspect and intensifies the face-to-face interaction.

13. Convert the sharing to action. Have each person "be" his feelings or "represent" his thoughts, so more than just words are shared. Have each sharer up and moving in order to share and see what develops from the action. Turn metaphors into activity, feelings into movement. Words could accompany the action.
14. Let major auxiliaries share from the perspective of the role taken in the drama. What was important about it for them?
15. If time is short, one word or one sentence sharing might be done.
16. Finally, let each person share in his/her own way. Some have written poems, given messages, offered friendship, drawn pictures, sung songs, given praise, wept, laughed, and kissed the protagonist, aside from the other more conventional sharing. Everyone need not do the same thing in response to the drama or for the protagonist. Some may be too overwhelmed at the time to share at all and may want to save their sharing for a later time when they are more able to give.

The broader categories of these illustrations would seem to be (1) grouping and (2) action. Any one of these variations on a theme may have its drawbacks. Certainly the list is incomplete and great numbers of other forms of sharing are possible. What seems essential is that some versions of sharing other than the narrative ("Listen to my story now . . .") can be combined effectively to accomplish the purposes of the group and the protagonist, and that knowing of some of the options may increase the resourcefulness of the director of the session.

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