

Strengthening the Sociometrist's Eye: training for Psychodrama Directors by Ann E. Hale, M.A., TEP

You are preparing your trainees to become more adept at matching the sociometric procedure or approach to specific situations. Talk about three procedures which may easily be applied in one to one counseling and what criteria you use to decide which works best when.

Developing a "sociometrist's eye" is an important aspect of the training of psychodramatists. Throughout their training choice points present themselves: choice of director, choice of protagonist, choice of auxiliary ego. Even the choice to study psychodrama. Being able to name the specific criterion on which one is basing their choices helps to develop the "eye" and strengthens the trainees sensitivity to nuances related to choices of all kinds, the formation of group norms effecting choice, and matching the procedure to the here and now situation.

In exploring the sociometric criterion as a regular group activity for trainees, the degree of relevance and the degree of threat or risk can be explored using a simple 1-5 scale. When matching a particular sociometric procedure to a situation the sociometrist explores with the group or the individual the risk they are willing to take in a given moment. The sociometrist also exercises his/her judgement assessing the ego strength available and the capacity of persons to benefit from examining (a) the choice he/she makes; and (2) choices others are making for him/her. The trainee, who has become more used to examining choices, may need to be prompted to remember the early days in their training when they experienced anxiety, fear and resistance to the whole issue of choice-making. This recall will help them to recognize these states when introducing sociometric procedures to clients in one-to-one practice.

Three procedures:

Exploration of roles of high value 1

In instances when a client is discussing their involvement in a particular family, work or social group, the therapist can have the person identify a wished for role, and explore with them the underlying dynamics in the group which impede or facilitate access to the role. This procedure can allow for varying degrees of risk. The person is encouraged to mentally role reverse and make statements about whether they this person considers them for a role, and who else is a contender for the role. For example, the person wishes in family gatherings to have their opinion valued, to be asked to contribute to a discussion of options. The therapist can ask, "Whose opinion matters most in this point in time? What is it that they do to gain this attention? What skills have they? Next, explore the value of the role and their readiness for the role (relevance and risk). Help the client to identify those persons who are more able to recognize their capacity to be helpful and create an action scenario where they "drop hints" begin to "act in the role of contributor".

Conflict Warmup 2

This exercise is ideally suited to persons who have a dread of conflict, or find themselves embroiled in one conflict after another. The warmup is a pen and paper exercise which helps the person manage their intensity and learn something important about their style of conflict and the resources they have available. Throughout there are ways to go into more depth or to manage the problematic aspects and move to closure. This warmup asks the person to be thinking of a particular group, family or team when completing the exercise. There are several points when the person can explore roles in action.

Psychological Social Atom 3

This is a pen and paper exercise designed to focus on intimacy based on Rubin (1974) 4 The person fills in the blanks with names of persons from their social atom:

- (1) I feel I can confide in _____ about virtually anything.
- (2) I would do almost anything for _____.
- (3) If I could never be with _____ I would feel miserable.
- (4) If I were lonely, my first thought would be to seek out _____.
- (5) One of my primary concerns is the welfare of _____.
- (6) I would forgive _____ for practically anything.
- (7) I feel responsible for _____'s well being.
- (8) I would greatly enjoy being confided in by _____.
- (9) It would be hard for me to get along without _____.

A list of names is compiled from the answers and a social atom is drawn, using nearness and distance to reflect the here and now importance to their inner life. The therapist can also have the person choose another point in time and do a comparison between there and then and here and now. In instances when the person is feeling particularly bereft and unconnected, the therapist might make another list which allows for the person to identify relationships which have importance yet less strongly intimate as the above list suggests.

1. Hale, Ann E. "Group Exploration of Act hunger for Roles of High Value" in Conducting Clinical Sociometric Explorations , Roanoke, VA, Royal Publishing, 1985, p. 153-154.

2. Hale, p. 100.

3. Hale, p. 23

4. Rubin, Vick. "Lovers and other strangers: the development of intimacy in encounter and relationships" American Scientist Vol. 62 (1974) p. 182-190.

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