

Energetic Psychodrama

Learn to facilitate Energetic Psychodrama

In psychodrama we represent externally our internal psyche. We are able to experience physically what has been only experienced psychologically. This allows objective observation and completion of unresolved conflicts through re-experiencing them with a corrective reframe.

Energetic Psychodrama (see Zimberoff & Hartman, 1999) combines the power of psychodrama with the sensitivity of hypnosis, assisting the client to access repressed traumatic material. Psychodrama is highly effective because it is experiential, *concretizing* the abstract visually, kinesthetically, and viscerally. It taps deeply into unconscious material, activating body memories which take us like sonar to early traumatic experiences or other deeply held unconscious material. It provides a “corrective emotion experience”, often taking the form of discovering and releasing repressed emotion and reworking missed developmental stages. And it is a group process. The loving support of a group with healthy norms is invaluable to healing many issues, and provides the ongoing reinforcement necessary to make behavior change permanent. The trance state is useful in promoting suspense of disbelief, lowering of inhibition, accessing unconscious material, and retrieving repressed memory.

Hypnosis and Psychodrama

Energetic Psychodrama incorporates the versatility and power of hypnosis. The trance state is useful in:

1. promoting suspense of disbelief,
2. lessening of inhibition,
3. improving the integration of unconscious material into consciousness,
4. achieving deeper states of spontaneity, and
5. retrieving repressed memory.

The client begins with a bioenergetic exercise to induce the trance state. We set up the scene to stimulate the conflict or problematic situation and follow the *affect* or *somatic bridge* back to its source. This form of psychodrama is powerful, respectful, creative, transpersonal, cathartic, and heart-centered.

Differences between Traditional and Energetic Psychodrama

While many classical psychodramatists regularly use the position of director to assume auxiliary roles in the client's session, in Energetic Psychodrama the therapist is never engaged in playing any role. In Energetic Psychodrama the therapist never has any relationship with the client other than objective therapist and personal coach. Playing the role of a client's projection can only confuse and contaminate the relationship between therapist and that client. And so we deliberately reduce the complications of transference.



In Energetic Psychodrama the re-enactment of a current conflict or experience is usually preparation for an age regression to earlier, underlying source trauma. For example, one's abhorrence for the boss at work is an emotional trigger, leading naturally to a similar relationship with an early critical teacher, and ultimately to an abusive father. The connecting cord between these experiences is the *affect bridge* (Watkins, 1971) of rage, or anxiety, or powerlessness. We follow that bridge in psychodrama just as we do in hypnotherapy. The inclusion of age-regressed scenes helps the person to see lifelong patterns of behavior, and the original decisions that they are based on. For example, one man recognized in this way that his lifelong struggle with authorities began when he decided as a young child that he must fight his abusive father's treatment to protect his helpless mother. Each time he did he was punished, which reinforced both his decision that authorities are unfair and his resolve to fight them.

Heart-Centered Energetic Psychodrama sessions share the following qualities:

1. Include an enlarged perspective of **life-long or karmic patterns**.
2. Incorporate a **corrective emotional experience** and new life decisions.
3. Always end with self-acceptance and **heart-centered love**.
4. **Trance management** is a key to success in any session.
5. **Energy release** is usually very important in any session.
6. Uncovering, identifying, expressing and releasing emotions (**catharsis**) is nearly always present in any session.
7. Combine a **balance** between expansive abstraction (the “wide angle lens” state) and focused concreteness (the “telephoto lens” state).
8. **Dual level of awareness** (the “doer” and the “observer”) in each state creates more objectivity, less defensive examination, more experimentation with variations of behavior or belief, and more self-acceptance (of the blamed and reviled inner child).
9. **Reduce the transference** complication of psychoanalytic or talk therapy.
10. **Strengthen the ego**, empowering the client (Slavson, 1955).
11. Confront **existential issues**, e.g., the meaning or purpose of this earthly life, “Why am I here?” or “Who am I? ” (Yalom, 1985).
12. Incorporate a **spiritual connection** determined by the client, not proselytized or judged by the therapist.

References

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