

USING PSYCHODRAMA TO INTRODUCE A NEW DRUG  
ADDICT TO MEMBERS OF A CONCEPT HOUSE:  
A CASE STUDY

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After a new member has gone through the initial "screening" and is admitted as a family member to a drug program, there is a considerable amount of initial anxiety felt by the new member. If this member happens to be a female being admitted to a program than has previously been available only to males, such anxious feelings are compounded. Additionally, male members of the program have many varied reactions to the sudden presence of a female in their midst.

When I was confronted with this situation, I decided a good approach to the problem would be one using the methods of psychodrama. At the time, two new females had been admitted to the drug house where I was working as a director of psychodramatic scenes.

The uneasiness of the group became apparent when I first sat down and the male family members nervously explained to me that they had some new "sisters" in the house. I ventured the opinion that this must be creating a lot of feelings among the members and the girls (now also members). I suggested that perhaps something could be done in psychodrama to get these feelings out into the open so they could be dealt with.

As an initial "active" way of getting acquainted, I asked each girl if she would feel comfortable going around to each member of the family present, holding that person's hand, and telling the person how she felt about him while looking into his eyes. There was some initial reluctance to this exercise so I suggested that the two girls stand in the center of the room together with their backs touching two male family members. Each in turn then presented his feelings and worries. They spoke in general terms of their nervousness and anxiety and of the pleasure it gave them to be present there. The males spoke more convincingly of how they really "lit up" at the sight of a female in the house. Then I had them turn and face each other, touching hands, and continue expressing their feelings.

When they had expressed themselves to their own satisfaction, I again asked the girls if they felt they could go around to each member of the family and speak to him personally about the feelings they had about him. In turn each person would also speak back relating his feelings about the

particular girl. This time the girls agreed and began going around the room one at a time.

It was easy for me to see that the male family members felt much more positively about one of the girls, Sue, than about the other, Alita. With Sue they told her they really dug her, that she didn't seem like a "dope fiend," that they felt she could make it in the program, that she made them feel protective toward her. She, in turn, expressed many positive feelings in regard to them.

Alita, however, was received quite negatively. She was told she was a "typical dope fiend broad," that she probably wouldn't make it in the program, that she was distant and made them feel uncomfortable and uneasy.

At the conclusion of the exercise, I felt that Alita had been very hurt by what the group had said to her. I suggested she confront the group with her feelings but she was reluctant to do so. At this point, it was felt that a double might be of assistance in helping Alita to get in contact with her feelings. Sue, as a double, expressed the feelings "I am hurt and the only way I can show my hurt is anger." Sue progressively became more angry until she was screaming obscenities at the "goddam men" in the group. Alita began to become more involved with the action. Suddenly she, too, was yelling at the men, and then, just as quickly she stopped and went back into hiding her feelings. She backed up and began to cry and ran out of the room.

I followed her into the other room and told her I would help her. She could hold onto me and gain some of my strength and that would enable her to face them again. She was shakey but returned with me and faced the group. Holding my hand tightly she began yelling at the group as I yelled also. Again, however, she retreated and became silent.

One of the male family members, Brian, suggested a scene in which he play her boyfriend. It was quickly arranged and he began pushing her around and bullying her, demanding things, threatening. She kept backing away from him. Finally, with the support of Sue as a double and me, she was able to scream how much she really hated him and despised him for what he was doing to her. I led her toward the couch and told her to pretend it was her boyfriend. She said she couldn't, she was afraid. She thought that he would punish her, in some way get back at her. I told her that her new brothers in the house would protect her, and this was echoed by comments from the group such as "I won't let anybody hurt *my* sister." Finally, one male group member stepped forward and said he would help her. Together they began to hit the couch. Suddenly an uncontrollable rage went through Alita and she began screaming obscenities and hitting the couch and kicking

it, pounding it until she was nearly exhausted. When she stopped, she sobbed for a few minutes holding me, as her brothers came over, touching her and reassuring her. We spoke briefly about what was going on in the group, and then a smaller group was organized for later where Alita could talk about the feelings that had come out in the psychodrama.

Now, several months later, Alita is still a member of the house, working hard at the program. She has been active in several psychodramas since the initial one, and her feelings and actions are becoming increasingly spontaneous.