

## BRIEF REPORT

### My Response to a Psychodrama Training Course

This course in psychodrama has been much harder for me than I thought it would be. I was in the theater for a number of years during my childhood, so when I found that psychodrama was a therapeutic method that uses an art I was familiar with, I thought it would be perfect for me. However, I did not realize how hard it would be for me to dramatize my own vulnerabilities. Performing in psychodrama involves the self and not a script. And I am unfamiliar with expressing myself.

I have an element of deep shame in my make-up because several childhood traumas placed me and my family in a position to be pitied. We had a strong interject of pride and self-competency. I have grown up with some irrational behaviors such as stuffing my feelings, making everything look okay even when it isn't, and smiling through the pain. I would not admit that I was a surviving child instead of an only child because I could not stand people apologizing and then asking what happened. I have grown to be secretive about my pain and lack of trust in others. I find it is difficult to place these vulnerabilities on the surface and to find words to describe feelings that have previously caused nausea or headaches. I'm lost for words even when the feelings are strong because I haven't let those feelings swell to expression. It has also been difficult to brace myself for others' responses to what I reveal. I loathe pity and reject comfort.

Consequently, I have volunteered only twice to be protagonist this year and was chosen once. Not so surprisingly, I walked away from many psychodramas drained and overwhelmed with what they touched off in me. I've envied the courage of my fellow students to "put it out there!" I've also learned, vicariously, a great deal about myself. This paper alone is a big step for me. I really wanted to write something more scientific and impersonal. But I found that the subjects I picked would not finish themselves and concluded that something else needed to be said.

I've discovered through psychodrama how deeply I've buried my anger. I learned very early to suppress this fairly overwhelming emotion to keep the peace. Such a response became a reflex that led to years of

depression. Through my own psychodrama, I was stimulated to unearth my buried rage. In therapy, I am now able to work on my anger. Although I have by no means gotten in touch with my spontaneity this year, I have found new tools to help me pursue this elusive trait.

I've noticed that I reveal more of myself to others and feel safe doing that. I've discovered that this 30-year-old Michelle is able to create new responses to her life and feels safer and more eager to share.

Moreover, one observation and one question about my self-discovery will keep me thinking all summer.

I have been concurrently studying psychodrama and hypnotherapy. I did not think, when I first started, that these two disciplines were at all alike. Over the year, however, I've become fascinated with the applicability of the trance state in both therapies. I've taken many notes on my observations and feel sure that I will write a paper on this topic at some point.

Someone who knows me fairly well and is also a therapist observed that I am a logical/analytical thinker—a diagnostician—and might not be as empathic as good psychodrama demands. I found this to be an interesting concept, albeit one I really did not want to hear because of my deep interest in psychodrama. In fairness, I must consider this observation and compare it with my own self-image. I see in myself emotional blocks that make empathy more difficult. I also feel that the therapy and growth I am going through will ultimately relieve some of the blocks. I've noted, too, that good directors, auxiliaries, and doubles are empathic. The question for me is, "Is there a place in psychodrama for the style I will develop because of my nature?" If I find out in my development that I am not more empathic, will I still be able to do valuable work in this technique? Because I have not made my directorial debut, I cannot comment on these questions from that standpoint. These questions I plan to explore in my second year of training, as I search for my personal style.

MICHELLE WARNER

This brief report was among those written by psychodrama trainees who have been working under the direction of Antonina Garcia, an executive editor of this journal. The editors invite all psychodrama trainers to encourage their students to write and submit brief reports of their psychodrama experiences and innovative techniques. Trainers should remind their trainees that their reports, which will be subject to review by an executive editor, should be written according to the *APA Manual of Style* and the journal's directions to contributors.