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Psychodramatic Structure

All psychodrama sessions consist of three parts. The first part of the session is known as the warm-up, and involves a verbal exploration of individual issues and concerns. During the warm-up, themes emerge and a central concern is developed for exploration in the second phase, the action. During the action phase, the central concern is explored using specific auxiliary ego techniques. Most often, one individual emerges as the protagonist and explores a personal manifestation of the concern. If the warm-up portion is thorough enough, each group member is emotionally attached to the central concern and benefits vicariously from the work of an individual protagonist (Buchanan 1980). Group members often assume supportive roles in psychodrama sessions, enhancing group cohesion and furthering awareness of the repertoire of personal roles. Occasionally, a group-centred psychodrama session involves all members in a more sociodramatic or generic exploration of a central concern (Sternberg and Garcia 1989). The final phase of the group is the sharing, in which group members are given the opportunity to express personal reactions, associations, or other feelings stimulated by the work during the action phase. De-roling is an important aspect of the sharing phase in which the group members are encouraged consciously to disengage themselves from roles assumed during the action, protecting against role contamination and enhancing role and ego integrity (Holmes and Karp 1991, pp 12 and 58; Altman and Hickson-Laknahour 1986).