

been since you celebrated? How long has it been since you shed a burden? Those are stories 23 and 1 in our system, which clear the way for enriching social relationships (story 22) or a fulfilling love life (story 24).

Now take the words I've chosen for the 24 possibilities, and after you've scanned what I've included, choose your own. Take stories from literature, history and the media I've suggested and bring them up to date. I suspect that mine are rapidly becoming obsolete. No matter, they're easy to replace and you can do it. Now let's take a preliminary look at approach-avoidance.

Approach-Avoidance

We would approach what we desire, but upon finding something to fear we avoid it. Desires seem to have a pulling power from a long way off, but fears seldom push us back till we've gone far down the road and find ourselves in deep trouble. Rats in a maze are kept on track by the walls of their passageway. We've no such boundary, but the combination of driving desire up against an awesome barrier creates the same tunnel-vision effect. We come to a halt, too fearful to continue, too attracted to back off. Magic shop, with or without psychodrama, shows that obstacles within us are more the challenge than obstacles outside us.

Let's move ahead by dipping into story 1, to free. Here are the variables, with several examples of each. The variables form a pattern which recurs in all 24 stories, but especially in story 3, temptation or testing. So we begin by illustrating the variables:

Table 2, Approach-Avoidance Options for the Liberate Story

<p>THE WISH: I want to be free from enslavement.</p> <p>a) A woman is totally dominated and abused.</p> <p>b) A child is threatened or molested.</p> <p>c) A woman accepts prison rather than betray innocent persons into the hands of an unscrupulous prosecutor.</p> <p>d) A celebrity, an activist, or a woman is being stalked.</p>
<p>THE FEAR: Suppose I act in accord with what I want.</p> <p>a) My man will beat me, deprive me of my needs, or not let me out of the house.</p> <p>b) Perpetrator will kill me, hate me, never be nice again. My sister will get it all. .</p> <p>c) I'd have to betray those I love and help those I hate.</p> <p>d) I cannot convince others there's a real danger.</p>
<p>I HAVE NOT MOVED BECAUSE:</p> <p>a) I have nowhere else to go.</p> <p>b) Don't want to get anyone in trouble. I can't lose my home. Who would want to take me?</p> <p>c) I avoid complicity in ruining the lives of the innocent.</p> <p>d) I fear the consequences of fighting force with force.</p>
<p>WHAT DO I GAIN BY DELAY?</p> <p>a) Maybe he'll let her alone. He promised to do better.</p> <p>b) They still have their family. It's better than no family.</p> <p>c) Those who's eyes are open respect me as a hero.</p> <p>d) I'll run afoot of the law and be prosecuted myself.</p>
<p>TO GET THINGS MOVING AGAIN: Show that failing to make a choice carries the same consequences as having made the wrong choice.</p> <p>Voice Modes: I/ = ACTIVE: I free you. I free others.</p> <p>/I = PASSIVE: You free me, us. Others free me, us.</p> <p>I/I = REFLEXIVE: I free myself. I let myself go (free).</p>

These are some of the protagonist possibilities. The 23 subsequent stories are all built on the foundation of Liberate Story, No. 1. Antagonists function in complementary roles. e.g. active antagonist with passive protagonist and active protagonist with passive antagonist. Protagonists in therapy progress from passive to active to reflexive. Directors with audience cooperation may arrange to call forth another voice (role reversal) from the protagonist as the way forward. If you require a reference for other stories, see below.

Table 7: APPROACH/ AVOIDANCE, COUNTERSCRIPT, SECONDARY GAIN

What is the wish?	What is the fear?	conflict unresolved, So what can I do next	Secondary gain, what I can salvage
1.being freed, unbound	vulnerable	captor values me	one watches over me
2. restored relationship	more than I can bear	I'm just not enough	If I feel bad, I'm good
3. that I'll take it.	no one will respect me	savor fantasies	wasn't meant to be
4. to know who I am	that this is me!	alienated from real me	live in my own world
5 (=5+6) to be sure	chaos overwhelms me	vacillating, don't test	pity me, the martyr
6.(=7) Fix my problem	If refused, now worse	where do I stand?	no one helps me
7(8+9) blot out world	have to face my pain	oblivion, then collapse	I frustrate helpers
8.(10) no stress , worry	can't obtain self-meds	others may rescue me	I'm not to blame
9 (11) fully possess	isolation	someone will find out	it's what I deserve
10.(12) fill the void	unremitted grieving	carry torch, depressed	I'm beyond help
11(13) save me, or let me die	no let up, can't get help	I watch myself perish	proof of no good world
12 (14) grab what I can	another will get it first	incessant competing	I won't yield
13 (15) to get even	won't get satisfaction	miss out on living	fantasy of their pain
14 (16+17) to control	I'll slip up, lose my grip	constant vigilance	others fear, envy me
15 (18) self denial	lack of appreciation	living on the edge	to them I'm a hero
16 (19) elude hunters	they'll track me down	capture is imminent	continue to survive
17 (20) new experience	more of the same	go on, not miss out	not held accountable
18(21+22)top the heap	come out 2nd best	strive harder	reputed go-getter
19 (25) saves others	not quick enough	I show I care	at least I'm trying
20 (23) see you grow	you may not make it	I'm doing my part	I did my best for you
21 (24) see you thrive	you'll forget me now	inner critic flays me	something to live for
22 (26) central figure	others overlook me	Own their conflict	loyalty is appreciated
23 (27) to enjoy gaiety	I won't feel their joy	uniting with others,	satisfied with world
24 (28) fuse with you	I'll lose me	keep others away	others don't interfere

First numbers refer to the 24 stories. In parentheses are the original 28 plot numbers. The list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive. I've taken one of the three possible views in nearly every case. Keep in mind the protagonist as active, as passive, and as turned within. Thus the chart does not do justice to two-thirds of the possibilities. Patients have been passive. In treatment they become more self-reflective. As they improve they become more active. All this may take place within the very same story, altering their story, or transitioning to a more positive story where the protagonist's desired outcome becomes more accessible. To do this, spontaneous modification of a protagonist's desires may be required to transform the old story.

Ed did ask grandmother about it, and grandmother said she'd never heard anything like that before. "Why bring it up now?" Ed asked, "with him in the grave unable to defend himself." He supplied the answer himself, "because she can't stand to have someone receive more approval than her, she is so jealous." I asked him what this implied about his mother, and he responded, "That she is a liar."

I pressed on, "What does this lead you to expect from women?" "I have a great deal of difficulty trusting," he replied. And this was manifest in the relationship with the girl friend. I inquired into it without taking the inquiry into a scene, and found it was he, not she who backed off from their relationship, that they continued friends at a distance. "She even advertised in the Jewish newspaper for a date with someone with characteristics like mine!" he declared.

"Then it's your move," I concluded; "whether something ever comes of that relationship is your choice. Your problem is being able to trust her -- and you know where that comes from!"

12) One last time we returned to the imaginary scene with grandfather, with instructions to bring the scene to a close. "I guess I'll never know for sure about what mother said, but I still love you, grandfather." He said goodbye with a hug, and we went to sharing. Several shared well and at length.

Comment

As it happened I started closure strategy a bit early, for I hadn't anticipated mother's disclosure that grandfather molested her when she was a child. How destructive of her. She couldn't let Ed have the kind of father-figure his growth and health requires. I suspect mother made up that story. She couldn't stand to let her son have what she herself lacked. Ed is bright and he's making great strides forward. He's in touch with his anger, and has elicited the support of his peers, overcoming the depressive picture of a year ago.

Aubin Psychodrama, age 16. Father's suicide puts son at risk.

He described himself as friendly and confused. He had his Dad on his mind, and was under some pressure to be protagonist, but he didn't see how he could do it, because his Dad was dead. He told us that the loss of his Dad was the reason he was at the hospital. He identified other issues also: his friends, his exgirlfriend, and his family. Most of his peers supported his intention to be protagonist. I reassured him that we'd had previous experience with situations like his and knew a way to handle the problem, which was enough to encourage him to go ahead.

1) We put the protagonist in the role reversed position as his father a couple of years ago and interviewed him. We learned that he was 39, married with 4 children of which our protagonist was the eldest, that this was the only marriage for both he and his wife, and that substance abuse was not a problem for either of them. In Aubin's view he and his father enjoyed a good relationship, often going fishing and hunting together. Father was of French Canadian extraction and mother of Spanish. A lot of father's relatives were around and French was much spoken. Theirs was a 'nominally Catholic' family, he said. Father had a responsible job which he'd held for a long time. Aubin told us his father had not simply died 1 and 1/2 years ago, but had committed suicide. I asked who had broken the bad news to him, and he replied it was his mother who'd told him -- over the phone. He explained that father had gone to the place of employment on Saturday, which itself was unusual and had never come home. Early the next morning mother and her sister went out looking for him, and on the way back stopped at the police station, It was about ten o'clock when his mother phoned him. He anticipated what she'd say, even in matters of detail, such that he already believed his father had shot himself over by the frontage road and the river bank. After hanging up he went to his father's room directly to the place where father kept his guns, and the 25 caliber pistol was gone

2) I asked whether his mother had talked with him about the loss of the father when she came home later. The scene consisted in bringing the young brother and sister into the room and telling them what had happened. The daughter cried, and the son was stoic. Mother's conversation with Aubin himself concerned the particulars of the funeral arrangements. Aubin didn't cry, for he was angry with father for deserting them.

3) I asked when he'd last seen his father alive. It was Saturday morning and Aubin was on the phone. Father made a comment about how Aubin spent so much time on the telephone. Aubin swore at his father on his father's way out the door, but father made no reply. He kept on going. I was trying to discover whether father had given him any reason to suspect his lethal intentions, but he hadn't. Nor had father given the family any indication he was in deep trouble. He was fired that day, but none of the family knew til after the funeral.

4) I set up an imaginary scene, bringing father back from the dead temporarily, just so that Aubin could tell him how he felt. Aubin was furious with father for abandoning them, for not confiding in anybody. 'Father' argued that it was better this way, that the company was involved in illegal activities, that he was fired because he wasn't in sympathy with what they were doing, but that they were under investigation by the government and that he probably would've had to go to prison anyway. Aubin rejected the excuse father gave. "It was a pussy thing to do," he said, accusing father of taking the 'easy way out for him,' but the way which caused everyone else enormous pain. Aubin referred to his father's attitude toward Aubin's friend, who had cut his wrists.

5) I set up a scene within a scene to explore what had happened there. The friend's suicide attempt had not succeeded, and Aubin's father talked about it with the two of them. It was in that context father told Aubin's friend that it was a "pussy thing" he'd done. Now the father himself had gone and done the very same thing. Father had no room to criticize anyone else.

6) Before returning to the imaginary conversation with father, another fact emerged, that the main father-figure in father's life also had committed suicide. Also a loss for the family, for they knew the man well.

Closure

7) Father's suicide was all the more a burden for a family suffering from such losses. Aubin regarded the statement he attributed to father "The family would be better off without me" as utter nonsense. To facilitate Aubin's venting his feeling at the auxiliary representing father, I gave Aubin two chairs, one for the angry feelings and the other for the rest of his feelings about father. Aubin started in the angry chair. I had him rise to his feet and I had the auxiliary playing father sit on the floor. Aubin let go a little bit of his anger, but not enough, and he managed to steer clear of the second chair.

What with Aubin being so aware of the anger and so out of touch with the grief, I became concerned with his identification with the father. Could Aubin follow the father and grandfather-figure in suicide? And his best friend has been suicidal too. No matter Aubin's disclaimers, for when the going gets rough, the suicidal option is sure to occur to him. Let's hope his relationship with family, especially mother, is solid so that he can keep reminding himself of the great pain his following the suicidal pattern would cause them.

8) And then I learned the particulars of how he came to the hospital. Within the last few days he'd had a phone call from the exgirlfriend, the first contact they'd had since he came in. He told me they'd been seeing each other for about 9 months. I asked who'd broken off the relationship and he said that he had, and that this was directly connected with his coming here.

The girl, age 16, told him that without him she didn't want to live if he ended their relationship, because she loved him. Aubin told her that he loved her too, and that if she did kill herself, he'd kill himself. She was convinced that Aubin would follow through, and in alarm she called the police who came and took him away in handcuffs, he said. Aubin told one of the policemen who was taking him away of his concern for the girl friend, so they looked her up, and sure enough, she had cut herself on the wrist. Now neither set of parents want either one of them to have anything to do with the other. For Aubin to be strong in the face of all these negative role models would require enormous support.

Sharing

Therefore I called on Aubin to identify the members of the group with significant figures in his life who wanted him to live, had them say so, and invited them onto the stage to express their love for him with a group hug. Then they returned to their seats and shared with him as themselves. A female peer was moved to tears, who also noted what she thought was a tear in his eyes. He confessed that he had cried the previous night, when he reflected upon what a mess his life had become, and all the good things he was missing out on. We stressed the importance of his keeping in touch with others, for they had indicated they'd cared.

Comment

As often happens, I'd seen Aubin arrive at the hospital earlier in the week, but I had no direct contact with him before he arrived at psychodrama, nor had I heard any report on him. That he was already here with his group today was a positive sign. His peers had formed an opinion and were eager for him to take the stage. Another good sign. So I looked forward to our getting acquainted on the spot.

We quickly disposed of his initial reluctance, based on his never having seen or heard of psychodrama, and I immediately got enough information from him to get us underway. So I moved ahead with no problems in

sight. It wasn't very long before I had to readjust in the face of the clues that kept on coming. At what point could I say it was time to start the repair work so that we could finish in time? Not the flow, but my watch indicated I must get into the necessary repair work, which I did.

I see that my writeup already contains the comments I would normally have included in this section. He cooperated well. Simply tracking the sequence of events provided relief and gave staff and peers present a lot to go on. Here I'll highlight what are for me the more significant features:

Yes, definitely Aubin is a suicide risk. He's not bogged down, dragging himself along. He's as active a person as we have in the group, which accounts for their having made contact with them. That very energy puts him in a more precarious position. If he decides to, he'll follow through. But we have nothing beyond our suspicion to restrain him, for if he were over the hump, his behavior would be like what we see now.

I thought at first we'd devote the whole psychodrama to dissipating the shock of father's suicide, reviewing the aftermath, and their setting up a surplus reality scene for him to say the goodbye he hadn't had the chance to say while father was alive. That was reason enough to be here as protagonist in a psychodrama, but there is so much more. I hadn't asked til it was almost too late in the session the obvious question of what brought him to our hospital at this time, because I thought I already knew the answer. Big mistake. It wasn't the shock or the grief, so much as his interaction with the girl friend. The families may have decided, probably correctly, that they're not good for each other, for she is suicidal too, and they came dangerously near to making a suicide pact, when she came to her senses and called the police. There is a very frightening tradition in Aubin's family. Not only did his father die at his own hand, but also his grandfather, and a couple of other near relatives as well.

Aubin confronted his father in surplus reality about taking the easy way out, but we know that inevitably he will review the same option for himself. That he is in touch with his anger and expresses it before his peers makes it a bit less likely he'll turn it inward, where the risk is. If he went there, he'd take out his spite at the internalized family suicidal models, particularly his father, destroying himself in the process. The first thing for the hospital treatment team to do is get to his hurt, which is considerable, but he's not looking at it yet. He is well aware of what the suicide has done to everyone, and angry with father for doing this. The solid connection with them, sympathy for their mutual predicament, and acceptance of his new responsibility to look after them, which father has thrust upon him, is the hedge we have against the suicidal solution. We will encourage him to make realistic decisions involving others, welcome practical planning in advance, and listen for any sign of tidying up his affairs or saying goodbye. As I write these lines the outcome has proved good. He has confronted his grief and gone home to do what he can for his family, quite a load for someone so young, but he continues to be equal to the task.

Story 14, Control

You see, I run a tight ship. Everyone knows his place and is in his place. If he can't hold his place, he's out! We make way for those who can. I have my hands on everything. Nothing gets away from me. Nothing takes me by surprise. And I have the final say. I make notes, keep files, have a long memory. I love to see weak people squirm. Never hold out on me. I won't tolerate it. We have no time for sentiment, and we never give anything away. Be glad that I'm in charge. The organization will survive.

Judge Subplot

What's your excuse? Don't tell me. I don't want to hear it. I can't count on you. Never again! Don't lie to me. I always know when you're lying. You need to be taught a lesson you won't forget. Give you another chance? How many have you had already? No, no more. This is the end. We're finished. I'll never go through this again. You're on your own. I never want to see you again. And I'll tell everyone everything you've ever done.

CONTROL: One dominates, asserting power, showing consuming ambition (=Controller). The basic question, *Who's in charge?* Poker-faces reflect emotional constriction (=Controlled), older siblings, bureaucrats, patriarchs, matriarchs, personnel chiefs, wardens, the IRS, and corporate officers generally.

CENTRAL CONFLICT: Independence VS Dependence. On breaking loose, the sense of great gain exhilarates. Only later does one begin to feel vulnerable and alone. Though this story overlaps a

bit with *liberate* outcomes those are usually intrapsychic. Interpersonal factors loom larger here. One must come to terms with this or that power figure to determine who actually has the situation under control. See *Sister Carrie, The Paper Chase, Mommy Dearest, and The Hunsucker Proxy*.

JUDGED: The role of Judge here does not refer to the vocation, but to the critical and judgmental attitude toward the protagonist who feels condemned, sentenced, and punished. One doesn't stand still very long when one feels oppressed, so what's he do about it? Am I angry enough to take vengeance of one kind or another? Judging passes into blaming, but controlling attacks every opportunity to determine what happens next, and resists countermoves.

Directors must be alert to the slightest hint that the protagonist may be suicidal, and inquire carefully so that follow-up may confirm or disallow one's suspicion. Judges nourish consuming hatred toward one who should be loved. When they are internalized parental-figures, it's like having an enemy within. See *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Mildred Pierce, Familial Hatred, Shawshank Redemption, Rambo, Escape from Alcatraz*.

Presley Psychodrama, age 18. Pres described himself as, "tired and anxious." He told us he is planning to be discharged this week, and excited at the prospect. He volunteered to be protagonist to work on the adjustment he has to make when he goes home, and how he will handle it.

1) With Pres in the reverse role position we interviewed his mother. We learned her name is Pearl, 44 years old, divorced for 6 years from Presley's stepfather. She has two other sons, Presley's half brothers, ages: 13, and 7. She has no contact at all with Presley's biological father, nor does Pres. Pearl teaches first grade at a public school. She says she treats all her sons equally. She can be very moody at times, and does not drink or use drugs.

2) We enacted a family therapy session, which included Pres, his mother, and the therapist. Pres confronted her with the fact that she doesn't have the money to cover college cost for him, but she's been sending his brothers to Catholic school, paying four thousand dollars every year. His mother told him that it would be better to work for his tuition so he could learn the value of money. Pres told her that she didn't take a job until she was 35, but "I'm only 18." His mother pointed out how hard the stepfather has to work. A peer interrupted, saying that Pres should be working on the issues about his stepfather. Pres laughingly agreed and said she was right.

3) With Pres in the reverse role position we did a brief interview with the stepfather. We learned his name is Mac, age 46, and works in a machine shop. For the past two years he's been an alcoholic in recovery. He describes his relationship with Pres as good because they never see each other anymore. It turns out Pres is having a family therapy session with him tomorrow.

4) So took the drama one day into the future to create the session. Mac is the one addition to Pres, mother, and the therapist. Pres confronted his stepfather on how he used to abuse him, using "bats, pieces of wood, and belts. He said, "You really messed me up psychologically because of the way you abused me when I was little." We played out the worse case scenario.

MAC: Don't you think your exaggerating. I never did that. I might have hit you a little but I never beat you like your saying.

PRES: How would you know, you were always drunk.

MAC: You kids needed to be disciplined that's all.

PRES: Well, the way you did has messed me up. Maybe I would not have hit that girl if you had not abused me when I was little.

5) We reenacted a scene that took place years ago in the family living room. Mac had been drinking and while watching TV he ordered Pres to get up and get him a beer. Pres didn't move fast enough for Mac so Mac started to berate him. Pres talked back and Mac got up and "belted" him. We noted that this is how Pres dealt with his anger in the past, particularly with the girl he had hit at school.

6) We staged what was happening just before he hit her. They were talking in the cafeteria when the girl began to taunt Pres (something he said his father did to him often). Pres jumped up and punched her in the eye. The school suspended him immediately, and then came to the hospital.

7) The director changed the scene from what really happened to what might have happened if he had the skills back then he has learned here. Pres made a sincere apology to the girl and tried to explain to her that he didn't know how to react to the taunting because of the way his father had treated him. If he'd learned how to control himself he would have never hit her. It wasn't her fault.

The director took it a step further and had Pres accompany her to the nurse's office in school so that he could take responsibility for what he had done. The nurse told him this was not proper, and Pres agreed, hanging his head.

7) We created a future scene with Pres and his stepfather driving home from the hospital. At first it didn't go well. Pres was arrogant. He doesn't trust Mac yet. Mac has been in recovery only two years and hasn't shown Pres that he can be different than he used to be yet.. We had Mac ask Pres what he had learned at the hospital. Pres cited the things he does now to avoid losing control. "I focus on something else until I became less angry, or I would walk out of the room until I cool down." We prompted father to ask if Pres would help him with his anger. Pres agreed, saying that is a good idea.

However, it took a while for Pres to understand how he should try to interact with Joe. Not to try and confront his stepfather but work with him; if possible.

9) We set up a future projection of Pres at home the first night. He told his mother that he was going out to see his friends. But when we suggested his mother may want him to stay home on his first night, he recanted, saying that he would stay home for awhile and then probably go out. Pres told his mother that he was going to get a job, be responsible, and be a positive role model for his brothers.

His mother said to pace himself. "Don't overwhelm yourself." She said she was very proud of him. Pres was satisfied with that so we ended the drama with a hug from mom. Sharing followed.

Comment

The difficulty is that Presley's anger at stepfather is still there. The interaction between them will be tedious. Hopefully the coping skills that Pres says he has learned here won't abandon him when he needs them. More practice and feedback will keep those skills fresh. This was more a role training session than a regular psychodrama. We didn't touch the old issues of his feeling toward his biological father, or the impact of particular experiences with Mac, that Mac may not even remember. Sooner or later it will be necessary to get into those things, but that's up to his doctor.

Story 15, Sacrifice, self-denial

I don't like to talk about this. There's not much to say. You come to the place where there's nowhere else to go. No one else can do what you gotta do, so you do it. You don't stop to think about it because there's no more time, and more time wouldn't make any difference anyway. You come right back to the same spot. So what are you going to do? What you gotta do, you gotta do, and it's done. If I didn't there would be nothing left, no me at all anymore. Should I take credit for that kind of choice? Of course not. That wouldn't make any sense. Walk in my shoes, and you'll do the very same thing. I know you would.

This shows a protagonist's self-sacrificing attitude and behavior, and include consequences of this for herself and others. Observers regard the protagonist as altruistic and unselfish, or out of touch with reality. The theme is important in the history of religion, for religious persons strive to submit to what they believe God wants or expects, no matter how extreme the personal cost. A commitment script, once underway, no longer concerns itself with cost, for that has been settled, and protagonists can get on with what comes next, taking the step which both pleases and appalls others, a reaction the protagonist scarcely took into account at the moment of decision.

Others hadn't noticed anything especially remarkable in the protagonist's life till something happened to precipitate a crisis. Similar incidents produce hardly a ripple in the lives of the protagonist's peers, but the protagonist was over-whelmed. Directors reach back into the protagonist's life to draw out the experiential source for the unique meaning the protagonist has given to the event. What are the options? Has she made the choice? If she has already chosen, what happened? In what way has this become a problem for her today? What keeps her from cancelling the previous decision? What keeps her from taking the next step? These call for future scenes, then a return to the present for the course she will likely take. Directors may say that protagonists aren't obliged to follow through with decisions made on stage, for all we're doing is