

Considerations on Closing the Psychodrama Action

This begins with the warm up. The director has noted the nonverbal behavior of the person who has emerged as protagonist. More than anything said, this indicates his emotional state. With director and protagonist on stage together, they negotiate a contract---which is a lot less formal than the word 'contract' itself sounds. And sometimes it is so subtle, only a few are aware of what's happening.

The director's whole attitude reflects his **acceptance of the person** beside him. What does the protagonist want from the session? If he's been a regular, both have a more realistic notion of how much may be done in a little over an hour. The psychodramas which have impressed the protagonist give hope of what he may obtain for himself. He may expect a dramatic catharsis, and regard that as if it were the sole evidence of success. The director asks how he feels about the emotional expressiveness he's seen. This may be the time to modify what the protagonist presumes is realistic.

Long before coming to the stage the protagonist has tried to "solve" his problem on his own. The director wants to hear what hasn't satisfied the protagonist. That may or may not get us into immediate action. Some are not yet willing and would rather tell than do what still embarrasses them. Either way the director supports the protagonist's pain.

The "solution" may seem as clear as day to observers. Chances are his peers have hastened to tell the protagonist where he's 'wrong,' and hasten to give him good advice, but more often than not the protagonist may feel they don't respect him. He has '**good reason**' to follow the course he's been following. The director's task is to bring out the so-called good reason, and then to show his **appreciation for the attempt**. Then the protagonist feels **validated as a person**. Now he's convinced the director understands him and is fully on his side. Very likely this may be the crux of the difficulty, **WHY** the protagonist repeatedly does this rather than that (which seems more promising), but we **do not say so out loud**. It's too early to interpret (=criticize). We don't know enough yet, though we have clues, which the session as it progresses put to the test.

Back to the contract: The **director doesn't agree to tell him how to change other persons**. He points out that 'the other' isn't on stage in person. "Our effort is to bend what we may do in **RESPONSE** to the problem they present for us. "Who's right and who's wrong is beside the point. The group is not a jury to make that decision for you. Besides, even if a judge were to rule in your favor, would you be any better off than you are right now? Are you a better person, and the other lesser, even if you're right?"

The director asks "Is this a relationship you want to keep? If not, let it go. But if it is, you must become aware of what you want from the other, and what the other wants from you. Maybe you can't answer that at this moment. Our task is to help you tap into the emotional dimension. Let 'reasons' be an afterthought, which reasons normally are.

"We review how you've been functioning and then explore your picture of the situation. Consider that the 'other' may see things quite differently. Do you know the other's perception? Have you asked?" (But maybe the other doesn't know either).

This is a way of construing the situation we enter into on stage, and the contract to be reached. Once we review the protagonist's present view of his situation, and then explore available options in action, use the full range of psychodrama techniques, especially **surplus reality**. 'Rehearse' the future feared, or wished for, or what is considered likely. Look for the protagonist's nonverbal indications he's done, and then ask if he is.

The audience does the rest through sharing.

Don Miller, 2012