

My innovative system does not depend on a knowledge of psychology, psychiatry or how to do therapy. You need not even be sophisticated in the field of psychodrama. Are you culturally aware, having taken in your fill of movies, TV, plays, magazines, newspapers...etc?. This may seem like a walk in the park. Turn your pleasure, escape or 'whatever' to your advantage. You have more relevant resources at your disposal than you ever imagined.

Every since you were an infant you've tuned into the emotional expressiveness (=affect) your care givers showed as they took care of you. In high school outside class you assessed the emotional climate about you in order to survive among your peers. So I advocate for the beginner here. There can be a long list of emotional expressions but you need not be able to label them. I've listed five possibilities:

1. anxious-fearful, 2. negative-depressed, 3. angry, 4. mobilized, and 5. positive-happy--each one adjacent to at least two of the others..

The only label not obvious to you may be "mobilized," the word to which I gave a specialized meaning to cover plots, stories and themes we may call "PURSUE, EXPLORE. SURPASS, SAVE, NURTURE and HEALED. This entire cluster stands midway between ANGER and POSITIVE-HAPPINESS stories.

If you think you need them I have more than a dozen pages of definitions and examples of the 24 story model list. Ask.

Having noted the affect, find the examples under each. The list above includes those within the mobilized category and has available a similar list for the other four (anxious, negative, angry, and positive) below.

The total comprehensive list consists of 24 story models, a rather short list, actually. The group leader's impression of the protagonist candidate's affect takes him to a small sample within that affect category, consisting of just 4 or 5 of those. we'd expect the leader to have had abundant examples from one's own personal experience of every possibility.

The minimum components for a story consist in answers to orientation questions such as WHO, WHAT, WHICH, WHEN, WHERE, and HOW. For our convenience we refer to them as "CONTEXT QUESTIONS." Social and cultural practice treats what stands there as background enclosure.

A conspicuous omission is WHY. Of course, WHY is the key to our interest in a particular story, and points to what has gone amiss in a particular situation. Call this "the PLOT QUESTION." Daily usage doesn't analyze, but experiences them as one, as if story and plot were interchangeable

So the 'raw' (=unanalyzed) story as the protagonist presents it has the plot embedded within the story. It is not necessary, or even desirable to make the distinction with the protagonist we make here. We do so in the interest of expanding the director's options. The audience begins to see more clearly how protagonists resemble and differ from them.

The "raw" story is the protagonist's reality. Our first ploy is to make the protagonist aware of the range of his reality. Often there are contextual matters glossed over which may be vital to a problem's solution. Of course protagonists grow impatient with the director's obsession over all that artistic detail, but the leader counts on the positive relationship between protagonist and director to take as much time as may be necessary.

Simple enactment of the full story using persons and things present gives the director, protagonist and audience all an adequate picture of the situation. The protagonist brings up considerations he may have discarded along the way and is now prepared to take another look. He wants to go beyond what he has been doing to something else. About half way through the session we help him choose through playing out the likely process.

This means moving into the future. We use imagination in the service of conceiving of an alternative to the old 'why.' In the process a possible future may serve as more adaptive for the protagonist's reality (which in psychodrama we call 'surplus reality'). It creates hope for a better life-story.'

Each of the 24 models offers roles, which facilitate translation into action, pressing us toward in constructing an identity or self. We have moved from "who I am not to who I want to be," and from there through anticipating the future declaring for myself and others, this is who I am (already),

Keep in mind that psychodramas are protagonist centered, though often good literature and movies are not. In those situations it is the audience who are vicariously protagonists. Indeed, this is the classical cathartic point of view, going back to Aristotle, and it is central to the entertainment business. Often this happens in our sessions too, but this is not the goal of our production. We are there primarily to meet protagonist need, secondarily to meet group need. Over time with a continuing group these prove to be complimentary and converge, especially in a cohesive group.

Though psychodrama is the more efficient and inclusive modality. application of the *open story system* brings a favorable outcome to individual and couples therapy, and lends itself to spiritual growth and personal development. We don't have to wait for something to go wrong in order to be at work with our own life story. Proper prevention may let us bypass remedial 'cures' altogether.