

**DRAMATHERAPY
AND STUDENTS WITH
LEARNING DISABILITIES**

by

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B.A., Long Island University, 1976

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DRAMATHERAPY AND STUDENTS WITH
LEARNING DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

(For students with learning disabilities, the school may represent a place of failure and frustration. It is a place where the student often receives assistance for failure in the academic domain. These students may encounter difficulties in the social and emotional spheres but appropriate therapeutic measures are not readily available. The dysfunctional aspect of education is that while it attends to academic needs, it often ignores the social and emotional difficulties that may perpetuate or exacerbate the inherent disability.

This study analyzed the function and identified the therapeutic benefits of psychodramatic techniques with regard to the social and emotional needs of students with learning disabilities.

Psychodramatic techniques and methods have been used for therapeutic and educational purposes in clinical, educational, and professional training (e.g., nursing and police) areas. The use of drama as a therapeutic or educational device incorporates action methods. Its foundation is that of action as contrasted to inactive discourse.

Com. of thought by action.
-ok-

In using drama as a therapeutic agent for students with learning disabilities, educators and practitioners can attend to the affective and behavioural domains as well as the cognitive. Exposure to and involvement in dramatic enactments allows for modelling and rehearsal, an essential element of learning for the student with learning disabilities.

An examination of the history, (theoretical foundations,) and (therapeutic benefits) of psychodrama accompanies a discussion of the principles and various techniques that can be employed in educational settings. Attention is also paid to the applications of dramatherapy.

By offering definitions and clarifying difficulties encountered by the student with learning disabilities, this study analyzed the social and emotional needs of the student with learning disabilities. A review of literature pertaining to social skills intervention and psychodrama is offered.

The effectiveness of dramatherapy as a multisensory technique and one that offers a group experience and utilizes role play is discussed.

Practical application of dramatherapy is the focus of the final section with special consideration given to those working with students with learning disabilities. This section includes goals, framework and strategies, and activities to be used in applying psychodramatic techniques to appeal to the social and emotional needs of students with learning disabilities.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

For students with learning disabilities, the school experience can often be a negative one. Failure and frustration are often associated with the learning experience. Teachers often have to experiment with new techniques and strategies in order to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of the student with learning disabilities.

(The educational system is now beginning to recognize the responsibility of educators to meet the social and emotional needs of the students. In consideration of this, the product of learning no longer takes precedence over the process of learning. The whole person must be taken into consideration while engaging in the process of learning.)

(Teachers of students with learning disabilities must now consider new strategies and techniques that will be therapeutic to the social and emotional needs of the student during the process of learning academic tasks. One such strategy is to implement the techniques of drama into the educational experience.)

My teaching experience involved teaching Developmental Drama at the secondary school level. My classes consisted of a wide range of students including those with special needs. During this experience, (I observed many therapeutic benefits afforded to the students with learning disabilities which

included an appeal to their social and emotional needs. Their enjoyment of the class increased their motivation to become more active learners. The supportive atmosphere enhanced risk taking.)

(Many of the difficulties the students had in the social realm were addressed through group work. In this atmosphere, the students with special needs were involved in enhancing specific social skills such as introducing themselves and joining in. When working toward the creation of projects, such as scenework involving the components of character, place, and mood, the students were involved in expressing their feelings and beliefs. The groups consisted of students with various verbal and cognitive abilities and this gave the students a broad exposure to varying perceptions and behaviours.)

(The learning of concepts and skills was achieved through action. For students with special needs, the action principle allowed them to take an active part in the learning. They not only learned through listening and observing, but also by actually doing.

(Cognitive skills were attended to through creative problem solving activities and various activities and exercises. In role playing, students engaged in perceiving the roles and then incorporating the roles into an enactment.) It was at this time that I realized the significance of using role play as a diagnostic device.

After observing many of the benefits to a class of this type, I began researching the answers to some of my own questions. Why does this class appeal to students with learning disabilities? What are the mechanics that go into making the drama class a proper atmosphere that encourages risk-taking? What are the principles involved in using drama as a therapeutic and diagnostic tool?

I drew on my experience as a teacher of developmental drama while researching in order to synthesize and match the information to provide a model that has application to working with adolescents with learning disabilities.

My investigation took me on a journey through the principles of psychodrama, dramatherapy, and sociodrama. I understood psychodrama to be a form of psychotherapy with an emphasis on direct exploration of the self resulting in catharsis. Dramatherapy appeared to be a form of therapy where catharsis was not heavily emphasized as a goal. Another important aspect of dramatherapy was that it often removed the self aspect: individuals learned through playing the role of another.

Sociodrama and psychodrama have much in common. However, the difference lies in the purpose. Both rely on role-playing and acting out. Psychodrama is concerned primarily with the personal problems of the individual and sociodrama concerns itself with societal problems. In psychodrama the individual (protagonist) reacts to persons who are meaningful to him or

her, while in sociodrama, the individual reacts to roles of group symbols or stereotypes. (In each case, catharsis is achieved through the acting out, and insight is gained through the action, the emotion, and the group discussion afterward (Greenberg, 1974).) Langley and Langley (1983) stated that psychodrama requires a certain level of intelligence and verbal capacity and that it is a powerful method of psychotherapy, whereas dramatherapy "is of value to everyone, no matter what age, intelligence, physical or verbal abilities, provided it is presented at the appropriate level" (p. 20).

(The conceptualization of the practice of dramatherapy seems to be an outcome of psychodrama. Both are centered on the activities of role playing and dramatic action and make use of spontaneity, fantasy, and representational experience. Dramatherapy goes on to utilizing other dramatic and theatrical tools, such as masks, theatre performance, storytelling and dramatization, puppets, and props. The background of psychodramatists usually has its emphasis on psychotherapy, whereas dramatherapists train more in the dramatic arts areas.

In a personal conversation with Adeline Starr (1991), a question was raised regarding the basic difference between Psychodrama and Dramatherapy. She replied by saying that there is very little difference, that basically they are the same thing, however in dramatherapy, one can be removed from the individual or self, whereas psychodrama deals more intensely with the individual.)

Theoretical Foundations of Drama in Education

Drama in education is often seen as synonymous with theatre. It is true that both implement the devices of action and interaction. However, the basic difference is that of emphasis. In theatre, the goal is a product, i.e. a theatrical production. In drama, there is more emphasis on the processes of action and interaction.

The developmental drama class appears to be similar to that of dramatherapy in that the students learn about themselves by assuming the role of other characters. Their real self is not being acted out. However their perceptions and behaviours are clearly represented in their role perception. Catharsis is not an intended goal.)

The methods and techniques used in the developmental drama class have their origin in those used in psychodrama. It is because of this that I chose to investigate the subject of psychodrama for it appears to be accountable for the conceptualization of the theory and practice of drama in the educational atmosphere.

In this paper I intend to explore the therapeutic aspects of drama and how they can be used to positively enhance the educational experience for the student with learning disabilities. During this exploration, I will discuss the history and relevant aspects of psychodrama and dramatherapy.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF PSYCHODRAMA

Beginnings

The etymology of *drama* allows us to understand the foundations of therapy or education based on drama. It originates from the Greek *drao* which means "I do, I struggle" (Barton, Booth, Buckles, & Moore, 1969). Drama involves action, doing, and struggling.

(Jacob L. Moreno, founder of psychodrama, realized the potential benefits of action with regard to therapy. He was critical of the techniques being employed by his contemporaries. (Moreno felt that the individual, one-to-one practice used by Freud was lacking. He felt it to be non-interactive, static, and too verbal. Through his studies of sociometry - the study of the 'social atom' of which people are a part - Moreno was able to develop the practice of psychodrama, and later sociodrama (Jennings, 1987). Like Alfred Adler, Moreno emphasized the social situation or the "social atom". Adler believed that behaviour can be best understood in its social context through an understanding of inter-relationships (Dreikurs, 1955; Dreikurs, 1957). The "social atom" is described by Moreno (1953) in the following manner:

Viewing the detailed structure of a community we see the concrete position of every individual in it, also, a nucleus of relations around every individual which is "thicker" around some individuals, "thinner" around others. This nucleus of relations is the small social

structure in a community, a *social atom* (p. 52).

Moreno's theories of psychodrama began emerging in 1908. The integration of action with elements of group psychotherapy resulted in the concept of Psychodrama. In his book Who Shall Survive? (1953), Moreno defined drama and psychodrama as:

Drama is a transliteration of the Greek *δραμα* which means action, or a thing done. Psychodrama can be defined, therefore, as the science which explores the "truth" by dramatic methods. It deals with interpersonal relations and private worlds (p. 81).

In 1908, Moreno began applying his techniques while working with Viennese school children. He observed the creativity and catharsis brought about by acting out fantasies. Some of the plays written for them were about various problems of behaviour. The children began spontaneously presenting their own plays which represented individual experiences. In Vienna he opened the Theatre of Spontaneity (1922) where he began applying his techniques with adults.

Moreno moved to the United States in 1925, developed his theories and many of the techniques of psychodrama and eventually (1936) opened the Moreno Sanitarium in Beacon, N.Y. Since that time psychodrama along with sociometry and group psychotherapy have been vehicles for Moreno's work. They have been applied in various settings including schools, recreation, rehabilitation programs for the developmentally disabled, military, management, and the training of professionals such as teachers (Blatner & Blatner, 1988).

Spontaneity and Creativity

At the root of Moreno's theory is the idea of spontaneity-creativity. Creativity can be viewed as a goal of spontaneity. Spontaneity refers to the ability and readiness to respond in a new way to an old situation or respond adequately to a new situation. In his book, Psychodrama, Vol. I (1964), Moreno offered an operational definition of spontaneity.

The protagonist is challenged to respond with some degree of adequacy to a new situation or with some degree of novelty to an old situation. When the stage actor finds himself without a role conserve, the religious actor without a ritual conserve, they have to "ad lib", to turn to experiences which are not performed and readymade, but are still buried within them in an unformed stage. In order to mobilize and shape them, they need a transformer and catalyst, a kind of intelligence which operates here and now, hic et nunc, "spontaneity" (p. xii).

The use of spontaneity empowers an individual with a sense of freedom to create appropriate responses to stimuli presented from the external world. In his book, The Passionate Technique, (1989), Antony William stated that, "Spontaneity involves a different world view - one that no longer needs the cognitive, affective, and behavioral state that has been the basis of experience for that person previously" (p. 23). (Fixed patterns of behaviour might be worked out to meet oncoming problems only if the future were known. As life can be unpredictable, a spontaneous individual can respond by being flexible and adaptive. The individual can adapt with

constructive behaviour.)

In contrast to spontaneity, robopathy involves behaviour that is automatic, habitual, fixated, compulsive, rigid, stereotyped, or overpracticed. In their book, Foundations of Psychodrama (1988), Adam and Allee Blatner commented that on the social level, nonspontaneous behaviours can take the form of prejudice and rigid policies. Any patterns of behaviour or perception that are fixated or habitual are said to lack spontaneity. (However, they commented on experience or familiarity as being the foundation for improvisation. Habitual behaviour allows the freedom to be spontaneous when the unexpected occurs, such as driving a car. They are not implying that a spontaneous individual lives in a vacuum, responding to new situations with entirely new behaviours, but that the behaviours comprise those that are habitual and adequate to similar situations along with new adaptive behaviours that reflect a degree of spontaneity and allow the individual to respond to the new situation in an adequate manner.)

(Spontaneity operates not only in verbal dimensions, but in nonverbal communication or expression. Moreno (1964) categorized four distinct forms of spontaneity thusly:

- a) the spontaneity which goes into the activation of cultural conserves and social stereotypes; b) the spontaneity which goes into creating new organisms, new forms of art, and new patterns of environment; c) the spontaneity which goes into the formation of free expressions of personality; and d) the spontaneity which goes into the formation of adequate responses to novel situations (p. 89).

The first form considers the dramatic quality of the response. This quality adds newness in the responses to old situations. The second form, that of creativity allows the person to use his or her resources to produce novel experiences within himself or herself. Spontaneous individuals do the most with their own resources and can surpass one who is superior in these resources but does nothing with them.

The third form of spontaneity is that of originality. It may not be a true form of creativity. However, it does vary from the cultural conserves (that which has already been established or preserved) that may serve as models, such as variation on a poetic theme.

The fourth form takes the characteristics of adequacy or appropriateness. The response must be appropriate to the situation. Although some responses may prove to be dramatic, original, or creative, they may not be adequate to the situation. When faced with a novel situation, the individual may respond in one of three ways. He or she may lack spontaneity and show no response. He or she may utilize an old response, or the person may create a new response.

(In a psychodramatic session, through spontaneity and creativity, an individual is given the opportunity to "act-out" a situation. The definition of the term "act-out" in psychodrama differs from the term in psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis it refers to oppositional behaviour. It is viewed as the discharging of internal impulses which is seen

as a defense mechanism that occurs largely outside the consciousness. Thus the individual does not experience any growth of self-understanding. In psychodrama, it can be referred to as "acting-in" which leads to insight. The action is channelled in a constructive manner. It is a cooperative act leading to integration of behaviour. It enables the individual to recognize current emotional problems and the unconscious past. Feelings and behaviours involved in an enactment are made consciously explicit, which allows feelings to be expressed and self-awareness to be enhanced (Blatner, 1988; Starr, 1977).

Role, Role Play, and Self

(Role playing is an integral part of psychodrama. Role playing involves imagining and assuming roles and situations and sharing them with others in one's own frame of reference. Role perception is cognitive and role enactment is a skill of performance.)

As stated in a letter to I. Greenberg (1974), Moreno included the concept of role in his list of nine principal concepts of psychodrama. They are (1) warming up principle, (2) creativity, (3) spontaneity, (4) encounter, (5) tele, (6) co-conscious and co-unconscious, (7) role, (8) role vs. ego, and (9) role-reversal.

(Role is seen as something that is changing. It redefines itself according to its needs. From the many roles emerges

the self or ego. Moreno (1964) defined role as;

the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved. The roles do not emerge from the self but the self emerges from roles (pp. ii-v).

Here lies the positive theory of man held by Moreno. To assume a contrasting theory, one would believe that roles are predetermined, being imbedded in the self, and are called upon when needed. Moreno felt that such a theory is unacceptable in a dynamic, changing, and self-creative world.

Role can be seen as an action and/or a reaction of the self responding to the environment. At first an infant is born into an environment that he or she incorporates into a role. The individual then adapts and takes on new kinds of roles to meet his or her needs in response to the environment.

A. Starr (1977), in agreement with Moreno, stated:

The role, then is a unit of behaviour that is the spontaneous result of the self with the group.... Some roles are adequate, productive, and useful. Some are not. And other roles never develop. The pattern and development of a person's repertoire of roles, then, describe, in part, his personality (pp. 22-23).

Moreno (1964) categorized roles into three types; psychosomatic roles (role of eater, eliminator, sleeper), social roles (mother, son, daughter, teacher), and (psychodramatic roles (personification of imagined things, both real and unreal)).

Starr (1977) expanded on Moreno's basic types of roles as being (1) psychosomatic or physiologic roles, (2) fantasy or psychodramatic roles, (3) social roles and (4) cultural roles.

Psychosomatic or physiologic roles are at the nonverbal level. These roles begin at birth and are characterized by physical functions that exist for survival. The first social role emerges from the interaction between the mother and infant.

(Fantasy or psychodramatic roles are the roles that are imagined as outside or separate from the self such as God, the devil, witches, or objects such as trees and tables.)

Social roles represent the roles the individual has with the real people in his or her life. Cultural roles are social roles that can be distinguished from other groups (eg. cowboys).

Definitional Aspects of Psychodrama

The definitional aspect of psychodrama appears to be an area of controversy. Kellerman (1987) stated that psychodrama does not have a consistent definition and that because of this problems may be encountered when conducting empirical research. He offered a procedural definition which is considered by Kipper (1988) as "descriptive". Kipper, in response, offered a general, brief, procedure-related, formal definition, and commented that a descriptive definition adopts a "theory-free" position. This would be unlike that of traditional psychodramatic thinking as it would then be a self-contained unit separate from Moreno's theories. He felt that a descriptive model does not allow for justification of

the techniques used in psychodrama. The two definitions are cited below.

Formal:

A method that uses dramatizations of personal experiences through role playing enactments under a variety of simulated conditions as means for activating psychological processes (Kipper, 1988, p. 167).

Descriptive:

Psychodrama is a method of psychotherapy in which clients are encouraged to continue and complete their actions through dramatization, role playing, and dramatic self-representation. Both verbal and nonverbal communications are utilized. A number of scenes are enacted, depicting, for example, memories of specific happenings in the past, unfinished situations, inner dramas, fantasies, dreams, preparations for future risk-taking situations, or simply unrehearsed expressions of mental states in the here and now. These scenes approximate real-life situations or are externalizations of mental processes from within. If required, other parts may be taken by group members or by inanimate objects. Many techniques are employed, such as role reversal, doubling, mirroring, concretizing, maximizing, and soliloquy. Usually, the phases of warm up, action, working-through, closure, and sharing can be identified. (Kellerman, 1987, p. 79).

Kellerman stated that his definition makes it possible to characterize various applications and styles according to dimensions such as therapeutic goal and therapeutic factors emphasized (eg. emotional release, cognitive insight, interpersonal feedback, behavioral learning).

The area of controversy appears to be an argument between traditional psychodramatists who employ Moreno's theories and those practitioners who wish to employ the techniques but do not necessarily adhere to Moreno's theories.

Methods and Techniques of Psychodrama

Psychodrama may be viewed as an extension of the clinical interview where the key concepts upon which Moreno's theory of personality rests are put into use. These concepts would include spontaneity and creativity, tele, situation, catharsis, and insight. *Spontaneity* refers to the response to a new situation or a novel response to an old situation. *Tele* refers to the interaction between two or more persons. *Situation* takes into consideration the concept of the "here and now" which is apparent in psychodrama because the event is dealt with during the therapy session. *Catharsis* and *insight* are seen as the end product. Catharsis is considered to be an "emotional purging". Insight is gained during the discussion that follows the enactment. During this time, members of the group discuss what occurred during the session and share some of their individual problems that relate to the problem presented by the protagonist (Greenberg, 1974, p. 12).

The methods involved in psychodrama integrate the cognitive mode with that of the experiential. Its use involves action, employing both verbal and nonverbal communication. An individual is allowed the opportunity to enact a situation as opposed to merely talking about it.

The action techniques described here are some of those that can be applied during a psychodramatic session (Starr, 1977; Greenberg, 1974; Treadwell, Stein, & Kumar, 1990). Treadwell, Stein, & Kumar (1990) cited the number of

psychodramatic techniques to range from 200 to 300.

The first phase of a psychodramatic session would be that of the *warm-up*. This involves psychologically warming up the group members which increases spontaneity. Blatner (1988) described the components as "(1) the director's warm-up, (2) building group cohesion, (3) developing a group theme, (4) finding a protagonist, and (5) moving the protagonist onto the stage" (p. 57). This phase is seen as an essential part of the session as it moves the group toward risk-taking and exploration into novelty, develops a sense of trust and safety and helps the group to focus on the situation.

The role play involves interaction between two or more individuals. It may include the patient (*protagonist*) and the therapist (*director*). It usually includes an *auxiliary ego* who may be a trained aide or another member of the group. The auxiliary ego portrays an individual with whom the protagonist interacts in actual life. The *double ego* technique is often used in situations where the protagonist experiences difficulty with verbal expression. An auxiliary ego stands beside the protagonist and will express thoughts of the protagonist. It often results in the protagonist feeling that others understand him or her. Sometimes in areas of conflict two double egos may be used to explore both sides of the conflict.

The *audience* is made up of the other members of the group. They serve as the protagonist's social reality. They react to the events on stage with comments, laughter, or

silence. An audience member may relate to the protagonist's situation. He may then join the action and serve as a double.

A discussion may follow each episode. During this time members are allowed to comment on the scene, expressing identification or empathy. The director may ask guided questions leading the group to help the protagonist arrive at resolution.

Other methods involved may include the use of an *ideal other*. The ideal other serves as the ideal type of person that the protagonist wishes the other could be in actual life.

Action techniques may include some of the following. *Mirroring* involves having an auxiliary assume the identity of the protagonist and mirror his or her behaviours. This enables the protagonist to observe his or her behaviours. The *dream* technique enables the protagonist to stage a dream, casting other members in the parts mentioned in the dream. In *role reversal*, the protagonist can switch positions with the director or with auxiliaries. The *soliloquy* and *aside* allow the protagonist to express feelings that are not part of the dialogue. The use of *future projection* allows the protagonist to practice desired future behaviours or skills and receive reaction from the auxiliary.

Through spontaneous or impromptu scenes an individual is given the opportunity to create new ways of acting or reacting to situations. The protagonist is given the chance to "act-out" a problematic situation. The director will

direct the other actors (representing persons with whom the protagonist interacts in "real life") in a scene that has been introduced by the protagonist as being a problem that he or she would like to work on.

Through this action method, the individual moves from narration to motor representation. As the intensity of the scene develops, the individual becomes more involved, losing emotional inhibitions that may depress cognitive functioning. This results in his relying on cognitive and affective traits that he exhibits in actual life situations. At this time the psychodramatic session serves as a diagnostic device enabling the therapist and other members to observe verbal and non-verbal expression.

Psychodrama as a Diagnostic Tool

Role playing is used not only as a therapeutic device but as a diagnostic tool as well. The behaviour of an individual can be studied by understanding the concept of role. When considering assessment of roles and attitudes, A. Starr (1977) recommended that four factors be considered (1) warm-up, (2) spontaneity, (3) creativity, and (4) role-taking.

The warm-up takes into consideration the cognitive experience of focusing on a specific task, attitude, or an activity. The subject will exhibit nonverbal clues as to whether he or she is able to attempt the task. Spontaneity allows the individual to initiate a behaviour at the moment of

action and move freely, without compulsion. The behaviour demonstrated will reveal whether spontaneity has a creative, adequate form or not. The degree to which the individual adequately takes the role will reveal whether that particular role is part of his or her repertoire.

Starr went on to state that "creativity is the goal of spontaneity, that moment when a person causes something to happen.... As soon as the new element exists, it becomes a role conserve, a part of the role repertoire" (p. 29).

Therapeutic Aspects of Psychodrama

(Psychodrama utilizes activity in its therapeutic approach using the stage to house this activity. It uses the drama to reflect "real life". Protagonists are enabled to explore the affective and cognitive areas of a situation through activity. The activity happening on the stage is only one part of the therapeutic aspect of psychodrama. The benefits derived from group therapy are also in operation. The members in a psychodrama group become a community.

Moreno's theories are often referred to as religious or ritualistic in nature. They depict ceremony involving participants. This can be seen in the benefits derived from the group experience. A. Starr (1977) explained:

The inhibiting forces of our times have isolated and cut people off from regarding themselves as sources of creativity. Self-expression and integrative catharsis have become submerged as social stereotypes replace spontaneity in a society where science and technology,...

have further encouraged passive withdrawal. Alienation has become a gigantic problem (p. 10).

Starr compared the group experience to that of the rituals of ancient people who did not just sit and view but actively participated in the ritual chanting and ceremonial rites. The Greek theater at Epidaurus, a temple dedicated to Asclepius, god of healing and therapist demigod, served as a meeting place for those seeking relief from mental and physical distress. Treatments often included dramatic involvement. The creative arts allowed for participatory involvement in contrast to a spectator event.

In psychodrama, the group develops cohesiveness. Yalom (1970) stated that, "group cohesiveness is not per se a curative factor but instead a necessary precondition for effective therapy" (p. 38). He went on to say that cohesiveness is "both a determinant and effect of inter-member acceptance.... groups with members who show high mutual understanding and acceptance are, by definition, cohesive" (p. 38). Group cohesiveness allows an individual to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. Transference is observed with success in this supportive setting which cultivates a desire for affiliation outside the group setting (Blatner & Blatner, 1980). The group experience offers a supportive and safe atmosphere for expression.

Other benefits observed as a result of the group experience are listed by Yalom (1977) as curative factors that he divides into ten primary categories (p. 71):

1. Imparting of information
2. Instillation of hope
3. Universality
4. Altruism
5. The corrective recapitulation of the primary family group
6. Development of socializing techniques
7. Imitative behaviour
8. Interpersonal learning
9. Group cohesiveness
10. Catharsis

(Psychodramatic techniques enable individuals to share or disclose personal feelings or events with others. They often look to others for validation of feelings or corrective help. Often during a session the universality of feelings is discovered. Individuals often come to realize that the problems they perceived to be uniquely their own are often experienced by others. Feelings of alienation dissipate as a result. The benevolent attitudes of group members lead to a sense of altruism. Members of a group offer suggestions, support, and insight as they help one another.

Although group therapy operates in the here and now, the dynamics of an individual's past experiences often come into focus. The behaviours, feelings, and attitudes can have their basis in past learning experiences. Corrective measures can be taken to work out problematic areas in the supportive atmosphere. Often a member may transfer feelings he has towards a person in "real-life" to the group leader or another member. In a supportive atmosphere, the problems the individual is experiencing with the "real-life" person can be

expressed, realized and resolved.

Socialization and interpersonal learning are a result of the discussion and enactment of scenes. Nonverbal communication is emphasized in the psychodramatic sessions. Problem solving techniques as well as learning more ways to effectively express both positive and negative feelings result from the interaction (Blatner & Blatner, 1980).

Catharsis, which means a cleansing and purifying, is often experienced in group therapy. The word has its roots in Aristotelian ideas about tragic drama. Tragedy affects spectators by arousing both pity and fear in the spectators and eventually produces a catharsis of emotions (Starr, 1970). As in group therapy or the unfolding of a psychodrama session, the protagonist and other members may be moved through the tension-release aspect of the conflicts.

The aforementioned therapeutic benefits of psychodrama comprise only a few. The following table composed by Blatner (1988) provides us with a breakdown of the dimensions of personal development that may be enhanced (pp. 121-122).

Dimensions of Personal Development That May be
Enhanced Through the Use of Psychodramatic Methods

Self-awareness

Clarification of inner feelings, goals, strengths, weaknesses, needs, fears.

Growth of a wider role repertoire, more realistic body image, awareness of one's own interpersonal style, habitual responses.

Sense of responsibility and ego boundaries strengthened.

Interpersonal skills

Greater capacity for trust, autonomy, initiative, self-disclosure, self-assertion.

Increased awareness of other people's weaknesses, fears, needs, temperamental differences.

Knowledge of some common interactional and semantic communication difficulties; ability to express oneself congruently and clearly.

The ability to listen, empathize, with less distortion.

Value systems

Philosophy of life, some idea about the meaning of one's own death, significance of life, relations with spiritual concerns, engagement in nonrational experiences, meditation.

Spontaneity

Playfulness, improvisation, participation in art, song, dance, drama, humor, wonder.

Sensory-awakening

Body-movement, sense of rhythm, points of balance, appropriate use of touch and sensuality.

Imagination

Cultivation of skills in using associations, dreams, symbols, images, guided fantasy, intuition, storytelling in personal growth.

Summary

(Moreno's philosophy and theories have had considerable influence on the procedures used in therapy and in education. His ideas have directed clinicians to appeal to action methods in understanding human relations. In a day and age where individuals are confronted with an existence comprised of nonliving entities such as computers, robots and other technological advances, the culture reflects a society devoid

of emphasis of traditional interpersonal relations. This barren existence has its impact on the functioning of its people. Psychodrama attempts to rebuild and nourish human encounters. As Moreno stated in his third volume of Psychodrama, Action Therapy and Principles of Practice, (1969):

There is no one and nothing which can teach you more about your neighbor than you can find out and experience yourself:

A meeting of two: eye to eye, face to face.
And when you are near I will tear your eyes out
and place them instead of mine,
and you will tear my eyes out
and will place them instead of yours,
then I will look at you with your eyes
and you will look at me with mine. (p.8)

CHAPTER III

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

In the last twenty-five years, the field of learning disabilities has come into existence. The term, learning disabilities, was first introduced in 1963 by a small group of concerned parents and educators. These people had met to establish an organization that would appeal to the needs of parent groups. Out of this meeting, the term, *learning disabilities* was coined and the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD) was founded (Lerner, 1988).

Definitional Aspects

In arriving at a clear, concise definition of learning disabilities, one finds difficulty in the fact that students with learning disabilities comprise a heterogeneous group. In this category, there are more than a few disorders. B. Wong (1986) stated thusly;

The answer to these questions, lies, at least in part, in the difficulty of resolving issues in four areas: (1) problems in operationalizing the definition of learning disabilities (LD), (2) the role of processing disabilities, (3) the different demands of administrators, teachers, and researchers on the LD definition, and (4) problems in research (p. 3).

Wong claimed that, "the key components in the definition of learning disabilities are basic psychological process problems and the discrepancy between ability and achievement."

In 1968, the U.S. National Advisory Committee introduced

a definition while establishing Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989):

The term "children with specific learning disabilities" means those children who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. Such disorders include such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (p. 185).

Characteristics of Learning Disabilities

Being a heterogeneous group, students with learning disabilities will exhibit different behaviours and/or capabilities/deficits. A student may display more than one of the characteristics but no one individual will display all characteristics. In her book, J. Lerner (1988) cautioned that some disorders are symptomatic problems for many but not for all and that some characteristics are age dependent, i.e. a language disorder may appear as a speech problem in early years and then as a reading problem in later years. She offered a breakdown of the common characteristics.

Disorders of attention: hyperactivity, distractibility, poor concentration ability, short attention span.

Failure to develop and mobilize cognitive strategies for learning: lack of organization, active learning set, metacognitive functions.

Poor motor abilities: poor fine and gross motor coordination, general awkwardness and clumsiness, spatial problems.

Perceptual and information processing problems: difficulty in discrimination of auditory and visual stimuli, auditory and visual closure and sequencing.

Oral language difficulties: problems in listening, speaking, vocabulary, linguistic competencies.

Reading difficulties: problems in decoding, basic reading skills, reading comprehension.

Written language difficulties: problems in spelling, hand writing, written composition.

Mathematics difficulties: difficulty in quantitative thinking, arithmetic, time, space, calculation facts.

Inappropriate social behaviour: problems in social perception, emotional behaviour, establishing social relationships.

Kirk and Gallagher (1989) differentiated between two broad categories of learning disabilities by stating that there are developmental and academic disabilities. Developmental learning disabilities would include disorders in attention, memory, perceptual and perceptual-motor, thinking, and language. Academic learning disabilities would include disabilities in reading, spelling and written expression, handwriting, and arithmetic.

Social Disabilities

In 1987, another definition was proposed by the federal Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities. One of the key concepts cited by Lerner (1988) included difficulties in social skills. Included in the definition are social disa-

bilities. Not all learning disabled adolescents have social disabilities. Some students may have a social disability and an academic disability; some may exhibit a social disability but not an academic disability while others may be disabled in the academic area and not in the social realm.

Problems in the social realm may appear as if they are due to an unwillingness to perform or an inability to perceive the situation. Some individuals behave maladaptively due to the fact that they do not know the right way to behave. Other observable characteristics of a social disability offered by Lerner (1988) include:

- a) poor performance in the kinds of independent activities expected of students of the same chronological age,
- b) inept in judging moods and attitudes of people,
- c) insensitive to the atmosphere of a social situation, and
- d) displaying inappropriate behaviour and making inappropriate remarks.

Some of the reasons offered include an inability to anticipate the process, inability to confirm whether the action matches what is anticipated, and an inability to adjust behaviour in the light of these results. Thus an inability to perceive the situation results in inappropriate behaviours.

Inability to perceive other's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions can lead to difficulty in social situations. Lerner (1988) named a few problems that students with social perceptual problems may have:

- a) Appear less attuned than their peers to the feelings of others,
- b) may use inappropriate behaviour or language because they do not know if the person to whom they are reacting to is sad or happy, approving or disapproving, accepting or rejecting.
- c) They are insensitive to the general atmosphere of a social situation.

The reasons or explanations for inappropriate behaviours may have their basis in deficits in attention, perception, or cognition. Another explanation might be a lack of exposure to appropriate behaviours and/or a lack of training in appropriate social skills.

The way a socially disabled student perceives a situation or behavioral consequence of a situation may be different from the observer's viewpoint. What may appear to be a lack of motivation due to unwillingness to adhere to rules may be a lack of motivation to seek social acceptance. Attitudes about themselves and others may affect their behaviour (Pearl, Donahue & Bryan, 1976).

Another explanation might rest in the area of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal behaviours are involved in social interaction; communicating our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs to others. Misunderstanding nonverbal cues may result in reactive behaviours that are inappropriate to the situation. Pearl, Donahue & Bryan (1986) noted that often students with problems in the social realm have difficulty in reading subtle social cues given by others. Is this due to an attentional, perceptual, or cognitive deficit? Bryan (in press) cited

studies designed to compare nonverbal sensitivity in students with learning disabilities and those without learning disabilities. In most studies, students with learning disabilities performed less accurately. In one study, differences were not found. In yet a further study where students were told to pay special attention, differences were found to be due to attentional deficits and not to comprehension of nonverbal communication.

Self-Esteem and Self-Concept

Self-esteem is often confused with self-concept. Self-esteem is defined by Webster's as "a belief in oneself; undue pride in oneself". Shavelson and Bolus (1982) gave a broad definition of self-concept as;

A person's perceptions of him or herself. These perceptions are formed through one's experience with and interpretations of one's environment and are influenced especially by reinforcements, evaluations by significant others, and one's attributions for one's own behaviour (p.3).

Shavelson and Bolus elaborated by saying that self-concept includes inferences about self regarding behaviour, self in academic and nonacademic areas, self in general. It is descriptive (eg. I am happy) and evaluative (eg. I do well in school).

One's self-esteem is based on appraisal of one's self-concepts. If one judges his or her attributes to be satisfactory, one feels good about one's self and has a high level

of self-esteem. If the opposite is true and judgement of attributes is negative, one might feel helpless, inadequate, bad or unworthy. The individual would then have low self-esteem.

The idealized-self is an image which one holds as a goal. It is something that one may only dream of becoming or in other cases offers a goal towards which one may strive and eventually attain. The idealized self can be a setup for frustration, failure, anxiety and depression if it is not attainable. If the real self cannot ever become what it would like to be or think it can ever be or what parents or others say we should be, life can seem hopeless. Again, because of the negativity, self-esteem is low (Morse, 1985).

Students with learning disabilities are often described as having poor self-concepts. Studies designed to assess the self concept of students with learning disabilities appear to be inconsistent. While some studies find that students rate themselves lower in academic as well as nonacademic areas, other studies declare no difference. Evidence cited by Pearl, Donahue & Bryan (1986) showed that students with learning disabilities are aware of their status; they rate their ability lower, recognize their social status, expect less social success, and are unlikely to think that failures are due merely to a lack of effort. In her analysis of the studies, Bryan (in press) concluded that:

Students with learning disabilities have lower self concepts on scales that measure academic self concept. This is hardly surprising given their experiences of school failure. Of concern is evidence suggesting that they generalize their negative views to content areas on which they have had little or no experience, and that lower academic self concepts persist across time (p. 8).

In studies cited by Bryan (in press) it was found that differences in self-esteem between students with learning disabilities and achieving students did not exist. These studies focused on elementary and junior high school students. She noted that the results of an anonymous survey with high school students with learning disabilities showed high rankings in problems in self esteem and confidence. Interviews with adults with learning disabilities found a large percentage of problem areas to be those dealing with self image, affect and motivation (along with hyperactivity and organization). Bryan summarized by saying that problems in self esteem "appear to surface" when the student reaches high school age and adulthood.

A study conducted by Waldron, Saphire & Rosenblum (1987) found that gifted students with learning disabilities were usually quieter and displayed more passive behaviours compared with students without learning disabilities. The teachers of these students were not aware of their learning problems but commented that they were more asocial and less accepted by their peers. However, the students who were noted to have academic problems tended to be very hyperactive. In this study, the lowest rating on self concept factors was that of

the students' own feelings of intelligence and school status. In self-reporting, these students perceived that passive and isolated behaviours seem to cause less disruption. In conclusion, it was noted that the passive, asocial students were successful in hiding learning problems but it may be at the expense of internalized anxiety and lowered self-esteem.

All-or-Nothing Self-Concept

The student with learning disabilities is often described as a learning disabled student and not as a student with learning disabilities who exhibits potential or abilities in areas which school learning does not emphasize. With knowledge of his or her disabilities, the student may perceive himself or herself and is perceived by others in a particular frame of reference known as all-or-nothing. This self-concept may be an expression of a fear of failure (Croake & Catlin, 1986). The characteristics of having a learning disability then become the image for the whole person. Often their abilities go unnoticed or unemphasized.

An emphasis on failure in the academic area contributes to the all-or-nothing concept. Tasks in the academic area at which they have failed occur only part of the time. Emphasizing these failures can result in overgeneralizations, such as "I'm a total failure". The student may transfer a fear of failure to other areas of his or her life. The individual may have superior abilities in other aspects of their daily living

but if these abilities are not emphasized, the individual may develop only a negative perception of him or herself.

Situational and Instructional Influences

Situational and instructional influences are considered to be variables that may have an effect on a student's self concept. Bryan (in press) cited studies that showed the self concept scores of students with learning disabilities increased when they were partially mainstreamed and that those students who spend some of their time with other mildly handicapped students in a special education setting have higher self concepts than those who were fully mainstreamed. In self-evaluating, these students perceived themselves as less competent than other classmates in regular classrooms but had higher perceptions of academic competencies when self-evaluating in their resource rooms.

Noting that social comparisons prove to be a crucial factor, Bryan stated that:

Since mainstreaming handicapped children into regular classrooms is a policy that is strongly endorsed nationwide, children with learning disabilities are at risk for negative self concepts if only because they compare themselves with classmates who learn with greater facility (p.9).

The structuring of classes so that the emphasis on individual achievement is lessened might have an effect on the self-perception of these students. As teacher's evaluative feedback contributes to a student's ideas of self-worth, Bryan noted that, "Children with learning disabilities are more

likely to prosper in a classroom in which evaluative feedback is deemphasized, and not so public" (p. 11).

Peer Relationships and Poor Self-Concept.

The causal relationship between low self-esteem, social disabilities and academic disabilities is not clearly understood. Problems in the social realm can lead to lowered self-esteem and poor self-concept. It is believed that successful social experiences help to build confidence and feelings of self-worth (Lerner, 1986). A student may possess appropriate social skills but failure to demonstrate the skills may be due to their self-perception. It could reflect the fact that they are more rejected and less competent in some areas than their classmates.

Peer relationships pose a problem for the socially disabled. Studies cited by Pearl, Donahue and Bryan (1986) found that learning disabled children were often less popular, more rejected, more ignored and rated less positively than their nondisabled classmates. Studies cited by Cartledge and Milburn (1986) found that rejection was often associated with antisocial behaviour. They found that even though the positive behaviours of being kind and saying nice things often attributed to the learning disabled child, that child still rated low for friendship and social interaction.

An area of concern would be that of determining whether the labelling of a student as learning disabled was sig-

nificant in determining low peer acceptance or if the lack of appropriate social behaviours alone contributes to this factor. Stating that although the labelling may play a part, Pearl, Donahue & Bryan (1986) cited studies that demonstrate labelling may not be solely responsible. In another study cited by the aforementioned, it was found that anti-social behaviours displayed by students with learning disabilities were the cause for rejection.

Assessment of Self-Concept

In trying to understand a student's self-concept and/or self-esteem a teacher may rely only on what the student may tell about him or herself, that which the student is aware of and is willing to reveal. The question of level of awareness and ability to express this awareness arises when considering assessment of the student's self-concept. Is the student truly aware of his or her self-concept? Is the individual able to communicate his or her self perception to others? Is the student's perception of his or her self-concept based on a comparison with that of significant others? When we ask a student if he or she is happy, we should consider the fact that the individual may be making a comparison to others. A conscious awareness and understanding of feelings and behaviours and the ability to communicate or express feelings appear to be crucial factors when assessing a student's self-concept or self-esteem.

Failure to Learn; A Vicious Cycle

Academic disabilities often put the socially disabled student into a vicious cycle. Failure to learn creates negative emotional responses such as feelings of self-derision, poor ego perception, and anxiety which augment the failure to learn cycle. In her psychodynamic view of the student with learning disabilities, Lerner (1988) noted that attempts at mastery lead to feelings of frustration rather than accomplishment and the student's attitude of self-derision has an effect on the parents. The parents experience anxiety and frustration leading to rejection or overprotection of the child.

The vicious cycle can result in emotional reactions that are observed in behaviours (Harris & Sipay, 1985) such as:

- a) conscious refusal to learn
- b) overt hostility
- c) negative conditioning to learning
- d) displacement of hostility
- e) resistance to pressure
- f) clinging to dependence
- g) quick discouragement
- h) the attitude that success is dangerous
- i) extreme distractibility or restlessness
- j) absorption in a private world

The vicious cycle continues with the student displaying negativity to further learning which will then result in negative social outcomes.

Attribution Styles

Another factor related to social disabilities is that of attribution. The student holds certain beliefs regarding the cause of failure. Bryan (in press) commented that students with learning disabilities often do not follow the same developmental pattern with regard to attributional style as do their non-disabled classmates. In comparing the achieving student to one with learning disabilities, Bryan commented on studies that found that achieving students tend to attribute successes and failures to their own ability and effort while students with learning disabilities tend to attribute failures to lack of ability and successes to external factors such as luck.

In view of the attribution styles of the student with learning disabilities we can see the negative self-blaming resulting from failures as contributing to the vicious failure-to-learn cycle. The successes are not viewed as a positive for the self due to an external locus of control. Thus the student develops a helpless attitude towards learning. He or she no longer feels in control of his or her achievements. Learned helplessness develops out of this belief that nothing one does can prevent bad or good things from happening.

Learned helplessness can generalize from the academic realm into the social realm and vice versa. It is often a situation where the student has exhausted his or her adaptive coping responses and has failed. The inability to cope

generalizes to the point that even when the individual possesses an appropriate coping response, he or she does not use it (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989).

Summary

The literature on the student with learning disabilities clearly indicates problems in the emotional and social world of these students. A relationship between the cognitive and affective domain exists. An overwhelming impact results from the vicious cycle affecting the whole person. When attending to the academic areas, teachers should include attention to the social and emotional needs of these students.

CHAPTER IV

ISSUES IN SOCIAL SKILLS INTERVENTION:

A REVIEW OF PERTAINING LITERATURE IN PSYCHODRAMA

Social Skills Intervention

An examination of the interpersonal social skills of students with learning disabilities reveals that a need to implement social skills intervention does exist. To whom the responsibility of teaching social skills falls is an issue that is met with disagreement.

In addressing this issue, Vaughan (1990) noted that while teachers are aware of the need for social skills training, it is not reflected in their planning of goals and objectives. Some of the explanations cited are centered around the value placed on social skills as a part of the curricula. There is more value placed on the academic skills and that time spent on social skills would take away from the development of academic skills.

Lack of administrative and parental support were cited as issues that might deter the implementing of social skills intervention. Administrative and parental priorities may emphasize the academic skills. Vaughn (1990) stated that,

Some teachers feel that teaching social skills is important but do not feel that they receive support from the administration to justify teaching social skills. These teachers may highly value the importance of teaching social skills, but since social skills are not valued by the school system and/or parents they do not teach them.

It was also suggested that the acquiring and practice of positive social behaviours should be the responsibility of the parents and not that of the school. Vaughan also suggested that some educators feel social skills are something that students acquire quite simply in the process of growing up, becoming characteristic of the student, as opposed to behaviours that can be changed. Finally, Vaughan noted the rationale of most educators that teachers simply do not know how to teach social skills. Teachers have been trained to teach the academic subjects and manage behaviours. This simple toleration of behaviour does not include understanding the development and acquisition of social behaviour. Thus, the teacher lacks the skills and confidence needed to address and teach the appropriate social skills.

In attending to the social and emotional needs of students with learning disabilities, educators are met with many other problems when considering the implementation of appropriate programs. Questions arise regarding the generalizability, maintenance, relevance, and importance of social skills intervention programs (Keogh, 1990). In her discussion on social skills intervention programs, Keogh commented that programs differ in addressing issues that are contributors to program effectiveness which she defined as maintenance and generalization. The issues included targeted social skills, content of instruction, length and intensity, structure or format of intervention, and who does the training. She

related the inconclusive and inconsistent findings of training programs to the differences in program content and techniques and in the variations in outcome measures.

An important and critical issue regarding students with learning disabilities would be that of transfer of training. If skills are taught in isolation, the student may not be able to transfer the skill from the context in which it was learned. Keogh (1990) referred to the hypothesis that states that a problem may exist for the student with learning disabilities because he or she may not be able to perceive the social situation accurately thus limiting the transferability of a specific skill to a new situation. In view of this, a limited setting or situational influence might lessen the effectiveness of training.

Psychodramatic Literature

An extensive review of literature related to psychodrama resulted in findings that could be classified into the following categories: (1) experimental, such as "Emotional and Cognitive Responses in Role Playing" (Kipper & Uspiz, 1987); (2) theoretical and didactic, such as "Role Playing and Action Methods in the Classroom" (Roark & Stanford, 1975); and (3) anecdotal, such as "Group Psychotherapy and the Learning Disabled Adolescent" (Pickar, 1988). The experimental research articles were minimal and pertained to age groups other than those considered to be included at the secondary

school level. Much of the literature fell under the categories of theoretical and didactic as well as that of anecdotal.

Experimental Studies

Very few articles in the category of experimental studies have been written regarding the issue of psychodrama and the student with learning disabilities. Most studies consider the adolescent in general. Whether we can consider the findings relevant to the student with learning disabilities is open for discussion and future research.

One such study that was directed specifically towards the student with learning disabilities was that of Fincham (1979). For this study, the subjects comprising the learning disabled group were eight and nine year olds who had been administered an extensive battery of educational and psychological tests resulting in their classification as learning disabled by a multidisciplinary team. In this study results demonstrated that normal and learning disabled groups did not significantly differ in role taking tasks. As a result, Fincham hypothesized that, "inappropriate social behaviour in the learning disabled may not be due to an inability to understand another's viewpoint" (p. 30).

Another study (Kipper & Uspiz, 1987), not specific to those with learning disabilities proves to be of importance to those using psychodrama with students with learning disabili-

ties. This study considered cognitive responsiveness to three role-playing conditions:

(a) a spontaneous simulation where the players portray the role freely as themselves; (b) a mimetic-pretend simulation where the players portray the role under an assumed identity; and (c) a mimetic-replication simulation where the players imitate a specific, and a familiar model (p. 131).

In the mimetic-pretend and mimetic-replication simulations, statements made by subjects reflected an attempt to view the role's problems as an outside impartial observer or statements reflected attempts to get to the roots of the problems, such as "I am not willing to change the situation by myself. I would like for someone else to do the job for me." These statements were referred to as reflecting a cognitive component. The statements that reflected an emotional approach indicated an understanding of the mood or feeling experienced by someone in that position, such as "I am very frustrated and angry and feel helpless".

Results of this study prove to be of importance to those teaching social skills to students with learning disabilities as the student's spontaneous abilities may be limited. This may be due to an inability to perceive the situation. The behaviour or situation must be understood which will enable the subject to act spontaneously, thus arousing emotion. An individual acting spontaneously demonstrates that behaviours are a part of the role repertoire and the situation and behaviours are understood.

While the spontaneous simulations had a more emotional

component, it was demonstrated that mimetic-pretend and mimetic-replication simulations tended to increase cognitive activities. In the mimetic-replication simulations the performance was based on replicating the behaviour that had already been modeled. The responses were not completely voluntary and a cognitive component was involved.

While working with students with learning disabilities, it may prove worthwhile to begin with mimetic-replication where the student replicates the behaviour. In this simulation, cognitions are involved as the student attempts to imitate the behaviour as accurately as possible. At this time it may be appropriate to lead a discussion that may enhance understanding of the specific behaviours used.

The teacher may then progress to mimetic-pretend where an understanding of feelings and perception of the situation is explained. The student would be involved in an "as if" situation where he or she is cognitively involved transferring the behaviours learned in the mimetic-replication to a new situation by playing another person with whom he or she is not personally or thoroughly familiar. In this simulation, the information given is scant and the player begins to supplement missing data with personal input.

The cognitive factor involved in the mimetic-replication and mimetic-pretend would promote conceptualization, an essential process for learning.

Finally, the process graduates to a spontaneous situation

where the individual must transfer understanding and skill performance to a new situation where he or she behaves under his or her own natural identity. When working with students with learning disabilities, this should be the final step. It should be used only after mimetic-replication and mimetic-pretend simulations have sufficiently enhanced understanding of behaviours and reflect that the student is able to perceive the situation. Discussions following each enactment aid in enhancing the perception of situations. By successfully enacting the spontaneous simulations, the student demonstrates that generalization has occurred.

In a study conducted by Irwin, Levy, and Shapiro, (1972), with seven and eight year old boys, findings suggested that using drama as a therapeutic technique enhanced verbal fluency due to the emphasis that was placed on mutual exchange of ideas and fantasies. Observations realized an increase in quality and quantity of verbal output accompanied by increased facial expression, less stereotyped and freer use of space and more fluid body movement. Suggestions were made that this form of treatment is important not only for clinic populations but for those who need to learn communication skills.

In a study involving the use of psychodrama with gifted children from the fifth grade, (Kranz, Lund, Pruett, & Stanley, 1982), students were observed to exhibit positive changes in interpersonal relationships and self-concepts. Statistically significant improvement was found on the

following variables:

Sense of Personal Worth, Feeling of Belonging, Freedom from Withdrawing, Freedom from Nervous Symptoms, Personal Adjustment, Freedom from Anti-Social Tendencies, Family Relations, Social Adjustment, Total Adjustment, Democratic-Cooperative, and Total Leadership. In addition, improvement over trials approached significance on two other subtests: Sense of Personal Freedom and Social Acceptance (p.94).

Positive attitudinal change was the result of a study involving elementary school boys and sociodrama (Bell & Ledford, 1978). The authors also suggested that attitudinal changes occur prior to observable changes in behaviour as "the long term effects of sociodrama demonstrated that 'against others' behaviour continued to decrease after completion of the sociodrama treatment" (p. 129). The process of change in which behaviour is influenced is a gradual one.

Findings in a study conducted by Fischer and Garrison (1980) with third grade students, indicated that as a result of group experiences involving discussion, role playing, and role training, qualitative changes in social relationships occurred. These changes included more directness in communication, replacing dishonesty and indirectness in expressing needs and feelings, accepting isolates and rejectees and including them in activities, and respecting individual differences.

Theoretical, Didactic, and Anecdotal Studies

There is an amount of literature that can be categorized as being theoretical, didactic, and anecdotal. Much of the

literature in this category describes benefits afforded through the use of psychodramatic techniques and methods. The articles include positive experiences enhancing individual growth or concept of self, increased communication and social skills, and enabling more efficient learning and concept formation in academic areas (Carter, 1974; O'Neill, 1989; Brown, 1988).

Roark and Stanford (1975) mentioned that role playing and action methods can make special contributions to the student's development that "sit-and-talk" approaches cannot accomplish. Through role-playing a "safe" environment is provided that allows for expression of hostile, suspicious, angry, and anxious emotions which can then be explored in search of other, more socially acceptable solutions. They stated that through role playing and action methods, the student can develop increased self-understanding and awareness of his or her own feelings, develop empathy for and insight into other people, try out new behaviour and experiment with new roles, learn and practice new social skills, develop skills of group problem solving, and improve psychomotor skills. Role playing and action methods can foster creativity and imagination, and enhance subject-matter learning.

Other articles reported that role-taking supports the development of initiative, risk taking and courage, and is intrinsically motivating because it involves the student in an active role where he or she is given responsibility and

control in the learning situation (Gallo, 1989; O'Neill, 1989; Shearon, 1980).

Other articles considered by the writer to be theoretical and didactic offered program suggestions and teaching methods and techniques. Carter (1974) cited an experiment where informal listening tests were given before and after dramatic sessions. It was discovered that listening skills were improved on the second testing and that the improvement was greatest among academically slow students. She recommended the sessions be thirty or forty-five minutes long and held two or three times a week. The space needs to be large enough for freedom of movement and uncluttered. The regular classroom can be altered by moving desks and chairs back to reveal an open area. Carter suggested that the stage, being too reminiscent of production, may tend to diminish desired spontaneity.

O'Neill (1989) differentiated between the teacher as entertainer, the teacher as artist, and the teacher-in-role. An example of a teacher-in-role would be that of the teacher acting out the role of a character, such as the principal in an enactment involving a student and a school incident. As a teacher transforms her role to participate in an activity, she or he is not there as an entertainer for the class, which would result in merely creating a passive audience of isolated and unreflective spectators. The teacher becomes an artist working as performer, director or playwright from inside the

work. O'Neill referred to the teacher's function as that of not acting but instead an act of conscious self-presentation inviting the students to respond actively, to oppose or transform what is happening.

The teacher-in-role unites the students, trades on their feelings of ambivalence and vulnerability and focuses their attention.... Students are challenged to make sense of what they see, to become aware of their own responses, and to use their responses as an impetus to action. Choice and responsibility grow from action and awareness from the reflection (pp. 535-536).

In an article discussing drama and language acquisition, Brown (1988) cited studies that indicated that drama can enhance language acquisition. One of the cited reasons was that through drama activities a language experience is created that children participate in firsthand.

Brown developed a series of activities tailored for those who are language delayed or who have disabilities affecting language acquisition. Having incorporated sign language into drama activities, she used the following four different methods:

1. Signs are used in conjunction with speech to clarify new vocabulary.
2. Signs are used to create or define a character in the drama activity.
3. Signs are transformed into puppets or objects to be used in the drama activity.
4. Signs are used to illustrate a concept or action within the drama activity. (p.6)

In creating activities, Brown recommended using repetition and breaking activities into short segments. Activities should be sequenced, from the simple to the more complex and creative. Imitation of the teacher is fine in the beginning,

but students should be encouraged to try alternative ways to show something new or different. Finally, concepts that have been explored in the short segments should be adapted to a plot in a story, thus promoting understanding and transference of knowledge.

Brown stated that by using drama, a multisensory approach employing visual, aural, and kinesthetic cues as an aid in reinforcement, comprehension is increased.

Techniques for role playing and action methods are explained in an article by Roark and Stanford (1975). They stated that certain conditions must exist in order for role playing to be effective. Of these, a non-threatening atmosphere must prevail. The teacher must adopt a non-judgmental attitude and play a dual role, that of participant and director, remaining objective and taking responsibility for the direction of the group.

One of the difficulties encountered while working with students at the secondary school level is that of inhibitions. Role playing represents a risk for older students and often places them in the position where they feel uncomfortable because they are putting themselves on display and fear ridicule. Because of this anxiety provoking situation, the students may display resistance and reluctance. Roark and Stanford recommended a recognition of this self-consciousness and that the teacher should not force the students but rather move slowly and ease them into action exercises gradually.

The teacher should observe the group carefully and use the giggling, non-cooperation and "messing around" as an index to the students' anxiety level. If it becomes too great, he is moving too fast into threatening activities, and there is nothing to do but back off and move more slowly (p. 38).

Roarke and Stanford suggested structuring the sessions to include five steps; 1) preparing the students; 2) warm-up; 3) choosing the players; 4) the enactment; and 5) the follow-up discussion.

1) Preparing the students.

Step one should consist of the students learning each other's names and include the sharing of information about themselves.

2) Warm-up.

The warm-up helps to mobilize the students' spontaneity and focus awareness on the session's role-playing situation. Activities for the warm-up included activities in relaxation, mirroring, physical awareness, building human machines, verbal games, and/or discussing relevant concerns that might lead to the subject of the session's role play.

3) Choosing the players.

In choosing of players, it is suggested that the teacher rely on volunteers as this prevents embarrassment by those who might feel threatened by the subject and ensures that those participating are warmed up to the roles. With younger

students, it is recommended to involve as many as possible which would require the creation of numerous secondary characters. Another suggestion would be to break the class up into smaller groups and allow them to prepare and present their own versions.

The role of the audience should be that of active observers, having been given explicit instructions for what to look for during the enactment, such as watching to see if the scene seems realistic and alternative ways the scene might be portrayed.

4) The enactment.

Once the students are ready for the enactment, they should be given brief instructions as this will require the students to create the details allowing for more spontaneous behaviours.

Roarke and Stanford mentioned that role reversal is an important technique that can be used in the enactment as it is a practical way of providing players with information about others and situations. Doubling (the use of others to aid in expression) is useful with older students who are becoming aware of unconscious motivation and unexpressed thoughts and feelings.

The use of soliloquy (asides that are spoken to the audience) makes available to the audience ideas the character is thinking but not saying.

5) The follow-up discussion.

The follow-up discussion is an essential part of the role-playing process and one which should not be neglected. The purpose of the follow-up discussion, according to Roarke and Stanford, includes the following:

To give the students a chance to verbalize any insights they have derived from the experience; to give the players a chance to express any feelings generated by the experience; to help students generalize the insights they have derived to other aspects of their lives; and to give the audience a chance to express any feelings that might have been caused by their identifying with the characters in the role-playing situation (pp. 38-48).

(When the purpose of the role playing has been to enhance the learning of subject matter, the follow-up discussion can be used to review the concepts and principles that have been incorporated. It is stressed that even so, students should be encouraged to draw connections between the situations enacted and their own lives.)

Spontaneity testing is briefly discussed in an article by Shearon (1980), who stated that the testing can offer practice situations enabling the student to learn to respond adequately. By placing the student in a difficult situation, he or she is given the opportunity to learn to cope with the situation such as being laughed at and ridiculed by the others. If the teacher feels that it is a threatening situation, volunteers can be asked to enact the situation. This process enables students who are experiencing difficulty with the subject at hand to learn from the other students actively taking part in the enactment.

Often in spontaneity testing, scenes are repeated with different volunteers who have been standing out in the hall and have not witnessed the responses of those who have gone before them. This enables the audience to observe different ways of handling a situation.

When directing psychodrama sessions with adolescents, Knittel (1990) stressed that the instructor give directions in a clear and exact manner. Keeping the drama in the first person is recommended especially in the case of role-reversal. Often the protagonist might slip into saying "I think she would say..." It is advised that role modelling by doubling by the teacher might be of assistance.

In an article discussing a psychodrama group open to those lacking verbal communication skills adequate for other psychotherapy groups, Sasson (1990) remarked on the importance of explaining in a didactic manner the reasons for each activity. Understanding the rationale gave meaning to the activities. Sasson used a small portable board to list the activities of the day's session. Included in her sessions were support and encouragement by the leader. Sasson remarked that it was preferable to compliment the work of the individual and not the individual.

Because of the shortage of professionally trained psychologists, counsellors and school social workers, Ferinden (1972) remarked how this leaves the classroom teacher with the responsibility of managing behaviour problems. Role playing

specific incidents serves as an effective vehicle in remedying some situations. Ferinden cited an example where vicarious psychodramatic technique was used to re-enact a situation involving aggressive, anti-social behaviour. After a general discussion of the subject behaviour, the teacher chose students to engage in a scenario that would offer alternative solutions to the situation. It was mentioned that the discussion and role play did not single out the responsible party but was discussed in a general manner. The students were then encouraged to write short themes about aggressive behaviour.

Basic psychodramatic action and closure were described in an article by Treadwell, Stein & Kumar (1990). Brief illustrations were given for the various techniques that are employed in a typical session, such as role reversal with significant others, auxiliary egos, mirroring, doubling, dream enactment, role reversal with the director, substitute role, soliloquy, and The Living Newspaper. The Living Newspaper is a technique where the members of the group act out events from history, or a television or newspaper report. This technique enables the students to have the opportunity to understand how events affect their personal lives.

In the area of dance and movement therapy for the student, Schmitz (1989) described the benefits afforded to students with learning disabilities and mentioned strategies for implementing intervention in this area. As warm-up

activities in a psychodramatic session often involve movement, this article proves to be of significance.

Schmitz listed many benefits of dance/movement experiences for the student with learning disabilities as follows:

Enhancement of self-image; greater risk-taking; development of social cooperation and group sharing; development of kinesthetic sense, which leads to better mobility, laterality, and directionality; development of physical strength, coordination, and flexibility; development of mind/body connections; development of the aesthetic realm; enhancement of motivation; and refocusing attention on ability rather than disability (p. 60).

To meet the needs of the student with learning disabilities, Schmitz recommended dividing the lesson into short segments to accommodate shorter attention spans. Beginning and ending signals, such as a beat of a drum or verbal signals, help with group control.

By using all learning modalities, it was indicated by Schmitz that the students have the opportunity to learn in their preferred way and also have the chance to develop their ability to learn through other means. The use of props can serve as tactile reinforcements. The use of imagery can be provided through the visual, auditory and kinesthetic modalities. Since students with learning disabilities often need more cues, the use of intoning directions to match movements helps the students to sense the rhythm, dynamics, and sequences.

Schmitz recommended that repetition after a delay aids in memorization by requiring the student to focus on all the cues. Modelling behaviour by the teacher or assistant is of

importance. The movement should be briefly described then modelled. The students can then follow along. Mirroring is also effective, but requires the teacher be adept at reciprocal teaching. In reciprocal teaching, the teacher faces the group. When the teacher moves with the left side of the body, the class must move with their right side. Reciprocal teaching allows the teacher to observe the students. If the teacher's back is turned to the students, he or she is unable to see where the problem areas are.

At the end of a movement session, Schmitz suggested time be set aside to talk about the experiences. At this time students can share feelings and insights, allowing them to use new vocabulary, develop listening and attending skills, develop self-concept, build confidence in presenting ideas, and respect the contributions of peers.

Summary

This chapter included an examination of issues involved in social skills intervention programs. The issues included questions regarding generalizability, maintenance, relevance, and who does the training.

Also included in this chapter was a review of literature related to psychodrama. This section included articles of a theoretical nature and those considered to be anecdotal, as they reported personal accounts of experiences dealing with psychodrama. Included too were articles that explicated tech-

niques involved in psychodrama. Many of the techniques and strategies that were discussed in this section will undergo elaboration in the following chapters.

CHAPTER V

DRAMA, THERAPY, AND STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

The use of drama can serve as a unique intervention for social skills training. The effectiveness of dramatherapy as a social skills intervention for students with learning disabilities is realized through multisensory techniques, the group experience, and role play.

Utilizing dramatic techniques exposes the students to activities involving the self, others and the environment. A program such as this emphasizes social interaction. Specific behaviour skills can be taught in isolation. However, the emphasis in a dramatic atmosphere is on applying the skills to the social context where they might naturally appear in a "real-life" situation.

The dramatic experience can be instrumental in creating therapeutic change for the student with learning disabilities by cultivating an expanded role repertoire. In expanding the role repertoire of the student, we are educating new forms of behaviour. By addressing new and relevant issues and situations, we enable the student to incorporate new behaviours that might possibly come into play in future situations in the "real world". Through role training the individual observes alternative behaviours and is given the opportunity to practice these behaviours. Because drama is based on action and doing, the students are active learners as they are

involved in interacting, incorporating, and applying behaviours to actual life situations.

When utilizing drama to expand the role repertoire an understanding of the student's existing role repertoire is encouraged.

Expansion of the Role Repertoire

Students with learning disabilities comprise a heterogeneous group. While each individual is unique, he or she is part of the fabric of society, interacting with others. By examining the behavioural roles, self concept, and self esteem of the student with learning disabilities, one is more able to understand how psychodramatic techniques can be beneficial to the student. The roles reflect their feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. These elements may be in direct response to their unique understanding of their disability.

The way in which they perceive themselves and others and the way in which they believe others to perceive them may be significant factors in the development of their role repertoire. In a study cited by Bryan (in press), it was found that students with learning disabilities rated themselves lower in academic and nonacademic areas than nondisabled students. In comparing themselves to achieving classmates, their perception of their abilities in both academic and nonacademic areas and self esteem were lower.

The quality and quantity of interaction with others may

influence their actions, beliefs and attitudes. Another crucial factor influencing the roles of the student with learning disabilities would be the vicious cycle of failure and frustration.

Lerner (1988) summarized the world of the student with learning disabilities thusly;

The feelings within themselves and the response from outside mold a concept of an insecure and threatening world and a view of themselves as inept persons without identity. Such individuals do not receive the normal satisfactions of recognition, achievement, or affection (p. 477).

The student with learning disabilities generalizes this negative whole person attitude to other areas. The individual has internalized feelings of inferiority and failure. The resulting behaviours may not be of a constructive nature. The individual may withdraw or express feelings in an outwardly aggressive manner. Some students, as a result of a need for acceptance, may turn to antisocial behaviour as a means of association with a peer group. The individual may go to the extent of associating with a delinquent peer group (Pickar, 1988).

Attention must be paid to the capabilities as well as attending to the deficit needs of the student with learning disabilities. The overgeneralizations of being a total failure consist of irrational beliefs which need to be examined. Successes in other areas can be emphasized. The student need not have a self-concept of being a total failure at life.

The student may adopt a maladaptive coping style which often goes hand-in-hand with negative thoughts. Negative cognitions are seen as playing a role in learned helplessness which can become a coping style for some. Their thoughts reflect self-defeat.

In claiming that adolescents with learning disabilities are referred for psychotherapy "with remarkable frequency", Pickar (1988) indicated that the most common reasons are poor interpersonal skills and antisocial behaviour which has surfaced in problems with teachers, peers, and parents. He felt that the years of frustration experienced in the learning environment lead to a far greater handicap in social and psychosocial adjustment which supersedes the limited academic skills.

Although the psychological or behavioral disturbance may be secondary to the learning disability, maladaptive modes of adjustment over a long period of time often become crystallized in the learning disabled adolescent's personality and approach to the world. In cases where the behavioral problems have become severe, therapeutic efforts limited to academic remediation will be insufficient and ineffective (p.762).

Prock (1980) suggested a relationship between the educational experiences and emotional problems for the student with learning disabilities. She expressed it thusly;

It is difficult to visualize a person with learning disabilities who does not have secondary emotional problems. Often, in fact, an emotional barrier has to be broken before the primary disorder can be exposed for treatment. Yet, in our concentration upon academic assessment, behaviour management, task analyses, developmental cognitive skills and learning materials, I fear that emotions have become a forgotten landscape in the field of learning disabilities (p. 203).

The roles experienced by the student with learning disabilities appear to be limited to those that deal with frustration, fear, failure, inability, inferiority, lack of confidence, limited social exposure. Secondary roles might be those observed which are in direct result to the aforementioned. These might be seen as withdrawing, aggressive, or immature roles.

Exploration of these roles may often lead one to address the negative aspects of behaviours. Appealing to the negative behaviours, such as aggressive ones, may lead to responses such as those used in applying detentions or incarcerations of one type or another. Dramatherapy can be used to address pro-social behaviours such as those mentioned by Cartledge & Milburne (1986).

Aggression: Self control, negotiating, asking permission, avoiding trouble with others, understanding feelings of others, dealing with someone else's anger.

Withdrawal: Having conversations, joining in, dealing with fear, decision making, dealing with being left out, responding to persuasion, dealing with contradictory messages, expressing or receiving apologies, complaints or instructions.

Immaturity: Lack of competence in sharing, responding to teasing, responding to failure, dealing with group pressure, goal setting, concentration (p. 306).

If an appeal is made to the negative behaviours resulting in incarceration, the door to an understanding of the behaviour is closed. In attending to pro-social behaviours, a student is allowed the opportunity to become aware of the role he or she is presently playing in the social interaction and

allows for the student to try out alternative roles that might be utilized in the future in similar situations.

Awareness of Self and Others

The therapeutic atmosphere of drama allows a student an opportunity to explore the dimensions of awareness of self and of others. The individual is given an opportunity to become aware of his or her own role repertoire, interpersonal style of behaviour, inner feelings, goals, strengths, weaknesses, coping skills, needs, and fears. Students are allowed to explore avenues of trust, dependence, independence, initiative and self-assertion.

Many of the aforementioned dimensions are explored while the student is involved in preparing projects, such as scenarios to be presented to the class. The process during this experience involves interpersonal interaction with others. During this time, the student is given the opportunity to become more aware of the feelings, attitudes, and strengths and weaknesses of others.

After presentation of a project, the students are engaged in discussion of the issues that were presented. It is at this time that the students are afforded the opportunity to verbally express their own feelings and ideas. An exchange of ideas takes place. Sharing one's own feelings allows for others to understand another's viewpoint. The teacher should encourage listening and empathizing.

The methods and techniques employed in a dramatic atmosphere afford the student the opportunity to be exposed to learning activities involving the components of self-awareness, awareness of others, oral expression, cognitive and affective perception, gross motor development, sensory-motor integration, perceptual-motor, language development, and conceptual skills. All of the above components are essential when addressing social skills involved in interpersonal relationships. The components take into consideration the whole individual with relation to others and their environment including the understanding of the intrapersonal as well as the interpersonal characteristics involved in the socialization process.

Exposure to and involvement in dramatic activities are the prime considerations in using drama as a therapeutic agent for students with learning disabilities. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning modalities are employed. The activities involve the whole person, how they feel, what they think, and how they act and react to others and to their environment. Way (1976) stated that drama might simply be defined as 'to practise living' and that the achievement of skill is dependent on practice.

Functions of Psychodramatic Techniques

In attending to the social and emotional needs of the student with learning disabilities, psychodramatic techniques

can be used to fulfil two basic functions. Psychodrama can be used as a diagnostic tool and utilized as an educational and/or remedial intervention device.

Psychodrama involves social interaction thus making it possible to diagnose behaviour in its natural environment. In using psychodramatic techniques as a diagnostic tool, we are able to take advantage of the principle of the here and now of social interaction. The principle of the here and now is realized in live interaction. The behaviour is happening here, in front of the teacher, and now, in the present, as opposed to a verbal report which may reflect a bias on the part of the reporter.

If a social problem has been brought to the attention of the teacher, by re-enacting the relevant situation we are able to present the situation in the present (here and now) and the students have the opportunity to act and react as they would in the real life situation. It would be appropriate at this time to have the students suggest alternative, socially acceptable or socially more effective solutions to the problem. The students could then divide into groups and create similar scenarios incorporating appropriate behaviour.

When a verbal report is given, we are relying on the expressive and perceptual abilities of the individual. Consideration must be given to the student with regard to his or her level of awareness and cognitive understanding of problem situations. Is the student with learning disabilities

capable of perceiving, recalling, and verbally expressing the situation as it actually happened?

As an educational tool, psychodramatic techniques allow us to teach new forms of behaviour and introduce new issues. The use of dramatherapy as a remedial tool allows us to intervene with corrective measures. When a problem behaviour or situation does come to our attention, we are able to make use of re-enactment, utilizing the tools of role reversal and role substitution to demonstrate alternative methods of handling situations.

Using psychodramatic techniques as an educational tool or as an intervention for remedial purposes affords the student the opportunity to become aware of the cognitions, feelings, and behaviours that are involved in problematic situations. Through re-enactment and role play the individual is given the opportunity to become aware of resolution and is allowed practice and rehearsal of skills to enhance generalization and maintenance. Through rehearsal and practice the behaviours have the opportunity to be maintained in the role repertoire.

Generalization and maintenance can be tested by the teacher requiring the students to enact a scenario that would involve the behaviours in question. This testing does not allow for practice or rehearsal. A brief description of the scene would be given. The students must rely on behaviours which are part of their role repertoire. If generalization does occur, it is then proof that the new behaviours have been

added to the student's role repertoire.

Therapeutic Aspects

Therapy and Change

Using drama in the schools as a form of "therapy", requires an understanding of the meaning of therapy. Often associated with the term is the thought that it is used specifically for the cure of an "illness". "Treatment (or therapy) in a strict medical sense of healing is also bringing about change - changing symptoms in the direction of health ". (Langley & Langley, 1983, p. 11).

Healthy individuals engage in "therapeutic activities", such as walking, needlepoint, jogging, and going to the theatre. Some individuals engage in "therapeutic activities" which allow them to understand more about themselves, to become more aware, and to develop their potential or their spiritual self (Williams, 1989).

Therapeutic changes can occur in one's actions, interactions or the way one acts or reacts toward the community. A change in awareness or understanding does not necessarily mean a change in action and vice versa. Understanding, action, and interaction are encompassed in dramatherapy (Landy, 1986).

Drama, Change, and Awareness

Drama in education appeals to the therapeutic act of educating or producing positive change. These changes refer to those in perception, thinking, feeling, speaking, moving, and relating. They may also be in awareness or understanding of one's self, others, or socio/political environmental views.

For the student with learning disabilities, psychodramatic techniques can be of benefit with regard to the social and emotional domain. The benefits are actualized in the cognitive and affective areas through experiential means with respect to the social interaction of the group experience and role play. The experiential vehicle involves auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning modalities. The self is involved in action and doing. The student is allowed the opportunity for enhancement of awareness of self and others. The student is afforded the chance to become aware of and express his or her feelings and emotions and to understand behaviour. In doing so the role repertoire of the student with learning disabilities may be expanded.

Multisensory Techniques

Dramatherapy employs multisensory techniques which can be of importance when working with students with learning disabilities. These students possess a wide range of symptoms which impede learning. Some students will have difficulty with auditory perception, while others may have difficulty

perceiving visual stimuli. Some students will learn more readily when information is communicated via visual stimuli, others will learn from auditory stimuli, while others may require a kinesthetic approach.

Dramatherapy communicates with the students through the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning modalities. Instruction is verbally communicated and followed by a visual demonstration. The students then engage in discussion along with a physical preparation and rehearsal of scenarios.

The Group Experience

The group experience can be therapeutic for the student with learning disabilities. Often the learning disability impedes quality interpersonal relationships. The individual often does not see himself or herself as a social being. It is often very difficult for the individual to cohere with groups thus limiting participation in school and outside activities. The group experience of dramatherapy can be an important factor in remediation and education.

The group offers a supportive background that affords the student the chance to take risks, expand social roles, and leads to awareness of self. The teacher of such a group needs to strive to create a supportive group. This takes open expression and encouragement. If the leader is effective in creating a supportive atmosphere, the group members become accepting of all others and share a belief of equality of

acceptance and social interest. A feeling of belonging is then experienced by the group members.

Acceptance of mistakes is encouraged in the group setting; risks can then be taken. Pickar (1988) pointed out the advantages of the group environment specifically for students with learning disabilities.

The group setting provides a safe and protective environment for improving their means of relating to others. For a child who is forever misperceiving the social cues of others or has little sense of the impact of his/her behaviour on others, the group provides a supportive "reality-testing" environment where such difficulties can be exposed, confronted, and worked on, with the group leader attempting to minimize the anxiety that might typically result from fear of ridicule or rejection. While group members increase their self-awareness through receiving feedback, they can also learn to test or "check-out" their perceptions on others (pp. 765-766).

Taking risks is an area of therapeutic importance for students with learning disabilities. Often, they generalize their failure in one area to anticipated failure in other areas. This can be internalized as a fear of taking risks. If the group is accepting of mistakes, the student then has a supportive environment wherein risks can be taken. Learning and experiencing new behaviours without fear of ridicule or nonacceptance can take place. The role repertoire can be expanded to include these new behaviours.

The group atmosphere allows the students opportunity to interact with their peers. Excessive dependency on the individual teacher for learning is lessened. If the makeup of the group consists of students with and without learning

disabilities, it allows the students with learning disabilities a chance to interact on a social level with those with whom he or she may not ordinarily interact.

Exposure to skills demonstrated by the others allows the child the opportunity to observe, practice, and incorporate new behaviours. Often, in the social sphere, the student with learning disabilities may interact only with others from the special education classes. This is observable during lunchtime or after school. The regular classroom, where the student with learning disabilities may be mainstreamed, may not emphasize interaction with other members of the class. The individual may rarely have the opportunity to interact with peers from regular classroom environments. A mixed group atmosphere in a class that employs dramatherapy allows for social interaction and a greater exposure to a variety of attitudes. This can cultivate an expanded role repertoire.

Peer acceptance, in this atmosphere can be enhanced. Other students have the opportunity to interact with the student with learning disabilities as a whole person and not merely a learning disabled person. Peers are able to see the abilities the individual does possess.

The group experience allows for enhancement of verbal expression. Because of the social atmosphere, exchange of verbal communication is utilized. Increased risk-taking in this atmosphere allows for the student with learning disabilities an opportunity to increase verbalizations.

A supportive group can set the stage for effective role play by encouraging risk-taking, acceptance of other's ideas and cooperative problem solving.

Role Play

Role play is a significant component of the therapeutic process. This section will include an examination of role play as a diagnostic device, demonstrating how it reveals weaknesses and strengths, and how difficulties in social interaction can be detected. The use of role play as an educational tool will be explored focusing on how behaviours can be taught and awareness of self and of others can be explored.

Dramatherapy provides a medium through which students can engage in verbal and non-verbal self expression. It furnishes an activity enabling one to view life from another's perspective. Through role play, a student is given the opportunity to observe and rehearse behavioural skills. Role playing acts as a medium to explore cognitive related skills including those involved in social perception, problem solving, self-instruction, cognitive restructuring, and self-evaluation.

The effectiveness of role play is based on the premise that actually doing something or living it out will enable learning to occur.

Format for role-playing.

There are many role-playing techniques that can be used to aid the student with learning disabilities. For these students, a basic format to teach new skills might include instruction and modelling, rehearsal and practice, feedback and evaluation.

Warm-up.

In using role play as a diagnostic device, warm-up is necessary. As the student is warming up to a role, he or she is generally operating at the narration stage. This may be a verbal or non-verbal narration. The individual is engaged at a cognitive, calculating conscientious level. The student may appear to be cautious and fastidious. He or she is engaged in a cognitive analysis of the role itself and of the situation.

As the student warms up to the role, he or she moves from narration to motor representation. The scene begins to develop and the student becomes involved in a more complex manner. It is at this point that the student begins to "lose himself or herself" in the activity. In actuality the student does not lose the self aspect, he or she is only losing inhibitions, the safeguards that protect and is acting in a more spontaneous manner. When the student warms up to the perceived role, his or her actual feelings and behaviours are exhibited. The individual is relying on the cognitive and affective traits that he or she employs in actual life

situations. It is at this time that the teacher can observe verbal and non-verbal expressions demonstrated by the student and the student's understanding of specific roles.

For the student with learning disabilities, appropriate feedback and discussion need to follow to aid the student in becoming aware of the feelings and behaviours expressed and the reasons why he or she acts and reacts in a particular manner.

The length of time it takes for the student to warm up to a role may be indicative of the spontaneity he or she possesses with regard to that particular role. If spontaneity is lacking and the student is calculative, then the role may not be recognizable as a part of the individual's role repertoire. The individual may never have encountered the particular situation or may not know of or understand the particular behaviours that would be required in this situation. Questions may arise as to why the individual was not able to perceive the role. Exposure to elements of the role is needed. A task analysis of the role would expose the cognitive, behavioral, and affective elements. These elements need to be discussed and understood.

Role reversal.

Often when exposure of a role is being addressed, role reversal provides a unique method. Role reversal allows a second player to play the primary role while the original

player plays opposite to the second player. The individual can then observe the cognitive, behavioral, and affective components which comprise the role. Imitative behaviour can be employed when the roles are reversed once again.

Role reversal can be used to enable students to become aware of another's perspective. By playing someone else's part, the student can become aware of why the person behaves, thinks, and, feels the way he or she does. By re-enacting problem situations using role reversal, the student can take the other's point of view, which may then enable resolution of the problem.

Problem solving.

Role playing can be used to enhance problem solving skills. Scenes can be enacted and then other students can be asked to substitute in taking roles. This allows those students who comprise the audience an opportunity to observe other methods, skills, or behaviours that might be used to solve a problem. For students with learning disabilities, this serves as a necessary rehearsal for problem solving skills. Feedback in the form of discussion can enhance the understanding of the problem and resolution. A rehearsal in small groups may follow the discussion. This allows the students to practice using the appropriate skills and will enhance understanding of the concepts involved.

Due to the fact that groupwork rehearsal involves problem

solving strategies, instruction should be given to aid the students. The students will be analyzing the problem or situation, discovering new approaches and evaluating these approaches. An ideal way to teach students with learning disabilities the components of problem solving would be to role play a scenario which would display the problem solving strategies. Turning this scenario over for groupwork would enable the poor problem solvers an opportunity to practice and rehearse the actual process of problem solving. For example, the teacher might suggest a situation involving a conflict between two friends. A misunderstanding might have resulted in hurt feelings. The students can explore ways to resolve the problem. By gaining an understanding of the feelings of the two parties, the individuals can then explore ways to approach each other and explain their understanding of the conflict. The students can then explore future ways of avoiding the creation of such problems or incorporating methods of dealing with like situations.

Retraining attributes.

Through role-play, a student can learn the role he or she plays in failure, thus retraining attributes. In a study cited by Kirk & Gallagher (1989), students were taught to understand their failure. Understanding the role the students played in their failure was seen as more beneficial to the students as compared to students behaving in a particular way

in order to avoid activities at which failure may be anticipated. The teacher might choose to have a poor example role played, followed by a discussion eliciting more favorable responses to the situation, then finally progressing to a second role play demonstrating chosen solutions.

Generalization.

Generalization can be enhanced in role play. The situations are happening in the here and now, meaning the students act and react to stimuli as they are presented. Effort can be taken to reconstruct natural conditions so that the situations resemble real life encounters or represent ones that the student might encounter in the future. Rehearsal can involve applying the skills that have been learned and transferring them to new and different situations. Improvising situations will enable the student to employ the skills with spontaneity thus aiding generalization.

Groupwork.

Groupwork involved in preparing a role play scenario allows for the students to practice and experience different behaviours that are relevant to the issue at hand. Overt and covert rehearsal are employed as the student engages in a cognitive analysis of the situation, group problem solving, and eventually the employing of the behaviours in their scenario.

Feedback.

Feedback is essential. It is a time for self-evaluation, evaluation by others and correction of problem areas. Exploration of cognitions related to affect or behaviour can occur. Often behaviours can be accompanied by negative self-statements. Alternatives can be offered for these and for negative coping styles.

Transfer of training.

Transfer of training is an issue that needs to be addressed for the student with learning disabilities. Teaching skills in context as compared to in isolation may enable the student to see the significance of the skill as it relates to other situations. Teaching the skill in a role play enables the context to be included and for situations to be varied so that the skill may be generalized.

Maintenance.

Maintenance of skills is also an important issue when working with these students. Spontaneity testing can reveal whether the skill has been maintained. Improvising scenarios can be used to indicate progress. Maintaining a skill often requires a cognitive and affective understanding which can be enhanced through role playing techniques. Maintenance can also be achieved by incorporating previously learned pro-social personal and interpersonal skill and problem solving

skills into future activities.

In order for role playing to be effective, certain conditions must be met. The atmosphere must be one that allows for the students to feel safe and free from ridicule and the students should be warmed up to enactment. To ensure these conditions are met, other dramatic activities serve a significant purpose.

Other Therapeutic Dramatic Activities

Other therapeutic dramatic activities that aid in creating a working atmosphere for role play and appeal to the growth of the student with learning disabilities would be those involving trust, concentration, observation and sense awareness, imagination, movement, mime, and speech.

Trust.

Activities in trust enable the student to feel more comfortable with their teacher and other classmates. These supportive activities give to the student the opportunity to present ideas and feelings. The student with learning disabilities often becomes overly dependent on the teacher for validation of feelings and behaviour. In the supportive environment, the student is encouraged to take risks in expressing himself or herself. The dependence on the teacher is lessened and directed to the other students. An example would be the activity entitled, "How do you feel?". Students

are asked to pair up with another student. One student repeatedly asks the question, "How do you feel?" The other student replies each time with a different response.

Observation, sense awareness, and concentration.

Observation and sense awareness are foundations for concentration. Concentration activities can be directed to aiding the student with attentional problems. These are activities designed specifically to enhance concentration. An example might be one where the teacher asks the students to close their eyes and remain silent. They are then asked to focus on the sounds in the room. After a few minutes, the students are asked to focus on the sounds outside the room. To compare aspects of emphasis involved in concentration, the teacher may follow with an activity where he or she goes to the stage area and recites a poem which at the same time involves bodily expressions. Before reciting the poem, the teacher instructs the students to focus on the physical expressions as they will be asked to express the poem physically without any dialogue. In these exercises students can be guided to acquire components of concentration. By focusing on internal and external elements, the student becomes aware of his or her senses that are involved. Merely telling the student to concentrate does not aid these skills. Way (1967) states that,

Concentration is not an abstraction; one cannot concentrate on concentration. To concentrate is to hold the

fullness of attention on a single circumstance or set of circumstances; practice at doing so regularly and consciously results in an ability to do so automatically, and part of this ability is the unconscious shutting out of factors that might detract from the full attention on the particular matter in hand at any given moment (p. 15).

The student with learning disabilities can become aware of the process of concentrating. Concentration is not viewed as a product, but as a process that considers involvement of the student as an active participant. By developing sensory awareness, the student is empowered with an understanding of the senses involved in concentration.

Concentration exercises not only aid concentration skills, but also give direct practice in using the senses, allowing the student to be more aware of self, others, and the environment.

Imagination and creativity.

Exposure to exercises designed to stimulate imagination take into consideration an awareness of senses. Often, the student is exposed only to others' imaginative products. He or she needs the opportunity to experiment and express imagination. The expression of imagination needs to be in a supportive atmosphere where risk-taking is encouraged; where his or her ideas are respected thus lessening the fear of ridicule for "dumb ideas". Some of the most imaginative ideas may be considered by others to lack rational foundations and are seen as ridiculous. For example, who would have thought

that a mold could cure a disease?

In stimulating imagination and creativity, a student must not be stifled by ridicule. In assuming learned helplessness as one's coping style, the student with learning disabilities relies on others to do things that the individual may be quite capable of doing. In doing so, the individual builds a wall between the self and creativity. He or she fears that taking risks will only lead to failure, so the individual allows others to do the creating and imaginative thinking.

Speech.

Verbal expression proves to be a difficult area for some students with learning disabilities. In exercises involving speech, students explore the affective and cognitive features of language and communication. Verbal expression involves understanding the affect behind the articulations. Through self-awareness, the student begins to integrate the affect with the cognitive functions of language to communicate his ideas and feelings. A suggestion for an activity might be one that begins with the use of "gibberish". Students are asked to use gibberish and express different moods in reaction to different situations such as delight at the sight of a cake, annoyance at the buzz of a mosquito, or fear on hearing an unfamiliar sound. Following this, students are then asked to express their mood by substituting suitable words in place of the gibberish.

Creative movement.

Movement activities can enhance the awareness of non-verbal communication. Exercises in movement allow for the student to understand the ingredients that comprise physical expression. Here again, the student with learning disabilities is allowed exposure to and rehearsal of components of non-verbal language. A popular activity is the game of charades.

Creative movement and dance activities combine cognitive and affective components. Exposure to an integration of these components allows the student to create, using imaginative skills. The individual also utilizes problem solving skills that deal with communicating a feeling or idea through kinesthetic movement.

While teaching a separate component of movement to students with learning disabilities, the writer witnessed on several occasions students realizing how the rehearsal of a step led to success in execution. They realized that their effort contributed to the ability to successfully memorize sequences of patterns. Due to this, awareness of attribution styles were addressed. A good technique to demonstrate this would be to have the teacher perform the entire dance to the students before breaking down and teaching the steps and sequences. The students will express negative comments reflecting discouragement, such as, "I will never be able to learn that dance". At this point, the teacher may choose to

extract a single step or sequence of steps from the dance that the students have previously learned. Often, the students will view the dance as a whole and not realize the intricate parts of the whole dance. The teacher may then tell them they already know most of the dance as they have used the steps and sequences in other dances. A review of the steps used previously might prove to be of benefit. The next step would be to break down the new sequences into steps and have the students repeatedly work on them. After the students have mastered the step, the teacher adds a new step to the previously learned step. The process is repeated until the students have successfully combined the two steps. This same process is repeated until an entire sequence is learned. The teacher may choose to perform the entire dance again asking the students to raise their hands when the specific sequence occurs. At this point, the teacher points out to the students how through repetition they have mastered what they thought was impossible. At this time the students can be asked about their own involvement in the learning of the steps and sequence. They should be directed to reflect on their comments and how they felt when the teacher first demonstrated the dance and compare this to how they now feel. After the entire dance is learned by the students, the teacher should again ask the students to reflect back to the first demonstration. The teacher might then ask the students to report on the process they went through to learn the entire dance. This

report should include not only the physical process, but also the feelings and thoughts that were experienced.

Summary

Dramatic activities appeal to the learning deficits that students with learning disabilities possess. Dramatherapy is a multisensory technique incorporating elements of groupwork and role play. The activities involved take into consideration exposure to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic components of learning. With exposure to and rehearsal of the components of a dramatherapy session, the student can become aware of how the self is involved in learning. The therapeutic aspects of psychodramatic techniques involve the skills that are used in the process of learning. Although the product (i.e. projects or scenarios) when completed can enhance confidence and self esteem of the student with learning disabilities giving the individual a sense of accomplishment, the completed project is seen as secondary as compared to the process of learning in a dramatic atmosphere.

CHAPTER VI
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF DRAMATHERAPY

This section offers suggestions to those who wish to consider using psychodramatic techniques to aid students with learning disabilities. Consideration is given to teachers in various teaching situations:

- 1) those who teach specific classes in drama where the makeup of students includes those with learning disabilities.
- 2) teachers of academic subjects who wish to complement their lessons using these techniques, specifically to appeal to the needs of students with learning disabilities, and
- 3) specialists in the field of learning disabilities.

When implementing techniques involving dramatherapy, consideration should be given to the following components;

- 1) Role of the Teacher
- 2) Characteristics of Environment
- 3) Setting and Classroom Organization
- 4) Goals
- 5) Inherent Difficulties for Students with Learning Difficulties
- 6) Framework and Strategies
- 7) Content: Activities and Exercises

Role of the Teacher

In utilizing dramatherapy the teacher should be flexible, supportive, encouraging, open minded, empathetic, and spontaneous. Doing dramatherapy with students with learning disabilities requires one who supports mutual respect. Because the teacher often serves as a model for the students, he or she must try to demonstrate behaviours that would be acceptable. Domineering tendencies of a teacher show a lack of respect for others and may create fear in the students thus impeding risk-taking on the part of the students. Students with learning disabilities need an atmosphere that is conducive to risk-taking. Students with learning disabilities who have a low self esteem may often give into other's ideas thus not standing up for their own ideas or feelings. Respect for others and for one's self must be modeled and communicated to the students.

Students express their feelings because they own these feelings and emotions. They must not feel ridicule or shame for these. There is a need for the teacher to first recognize these feelings, beliefs, and attitudes, show respect for and then direct his or her teachings to accommodate them. Empathizing with a particular student's situation in an open way can model for students' understanding and respect for others. This also enhances risk-taking.

Brief and concise instructions regarding activities should be given. Often students may become "teacher-deaf"

when they are expected to listen to laborious elaborations. If one of the class members has an attention deficit disorder, he or she may try to listen to the lengthy instructions but may become distracted with other stimuli that may be present in the room. Lengthy instructions defeat the learning principles of drama which accentuate learning by doing.

By being open to new ideas and issues, the teacher allows the students to contribute to their learning. The teacher should make every effort to encourage contributions by students. By contributing ideas about issues that affect them on a personal level, students are allowed to center their learning in the context of relevancy which may enhance generalization.

Characteristics of the Environment

The fostering of a climate of mutual respect and contribution will aid in the success of the techniques that will be employed. This can be achieved by engaging in discussion and role playing various situations which would involve ridicule vs. respect, cooperation vs. antagonism, contribution vs. indifference and passivity. A discussion following the role play would involve the students in differentiating between the different concepts and, with the guidance of the teacher, choosing the ones that would be more conducive to a comfortable, working environment. Achieving this environment will lead towards a sense of pride and responsibility.

Care must be taken to ensure the respect of perspectives expressed by others. Whether or not the views expressed are pro-social or negative, they must be respected and recognized. If a student displays negative attitudes, it is often due to the fact that the individual has incorporated that style as a safeguard. Care must be taken to guide negative attitudes toward a more pro-social perspective. This can be done through role play.

Setting and Classroom Organization

The physical characteristics of the setting should be one that ensures safety. A spacious room will accommodate more effective groupwork. Desks and chairs are not needed if a comfortable flooring exists. Arrangement of the group members should initially be in a circle that would accommodate warm-up activities. After the initial warm-up, the group may choose to sit as an audience facing a stage setup.

Organization of participants will consist of small groups, large groups, and entire class participation. Although the emphasis is placed on social interaction, individual work may, at times, be utilized for rehearsal of individual skills such as in movement.

Presentation of scenarios demands a stage and audience setting. Attention must be paid to the fact that the function of presentation is not for the sake of entertainment as can be observed in a theatre class. Emphasis is placed on the

learning process. The members of the audience serve as transmitters of feedback. They will be learning from the display of behaviours and feelings. The audience may react to situations perceived to be humorous by laughing or they may empathize with gasps or complete silence. Detracting from a scene by an audience member for the sake of attention (e.g., yelling out comments) should be discouraged as it can disturb the concentration of the participants. Here again, mutual respect must be considered. In the discussion that follows the presentation of scenarios, all members (i.e. scenario participants and audience) consider and examine the issues that have been addressed.

Lighting and props enable enactments to resemble real life situations. By directing lighting to the stage area, students have the feeling that the scene is isolated from the audience. This allows for more involvement with the scene. Props can be used to symbolize objects, such as doors, chairs, mirrors and televisions.

Goals

The goals of dramatherapy are realized through involvement in activities. In analyzing the activities, the teacher must determine if the activity will meet the goals. The goals are realized in the process and not in the end product (performance of the scenario).

The goals of dramatherapy should address the following cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects.

- 1) cognitive and affective perception
- 2) expressive skills
- 3) gross motor development
- 4) sensory-motor integration
- 5) perceptual-motor skills
- 6) conceptual skills
- 7) social skills

The goals can be realized by involving the participants in activities entailing:

- 1) self-awareness, awareness of others
- 2) perspective taking in role playing
- 3) augmentation of role repertoire
- 4) verbal and non-verbal expression
- 5) creative movement
- 6) creative problem solving
- 7) imagination
- 8) concentration
- 9) groupwork
- 10) spontaneity training

Inherent Difficulties

for Students with Learning Disabilities

The teacher should be aware of specific difficulties that each individual student may encounter and should plan activ-

ities accordingly. Because dramatherapy is a multisensory technique which includes an auditory, visual and kinesthetic approach to activities, the teacher can often manipulate the instruction and activities to appeal to the individual strengths while at the same time therapeutically work to enhance weaknesses the students may possess.

Students with disorders of attention may find it difficult to stay on task for a lengthy period of time. They may be distracted by other stimuli in the room. Instruction should be brief. Excess clutter in the room should be removed. If the students are working in groups, appropriate spacing of the groups should be addressed. The teacher may choose to allow certain groups to work in adjacent areas, such as a hallway.

Activities should be relevant and of interest to the students.

The time allowed for the small groupwork should be kept short. Groups should have ample time only for brainstorming and rehearsal of scenarios. The teacher needs to communicate this to the groups and might prompt the groups while they are in the planning stages as to which stage they should be at. The teacher should visit each group during this time to ensure that they are staying on task. If students with attentional problems have become distracted, the teacher should sit down with the group and bring the attention back into focus by asking what progress has been made and having the group

demonstrate what they have worked out. The change from a working group to a performing group allows for a change in tempo for students with attentional problems. After they have demonstrated their unfinished scenario, the teacher reviews with them the progress they have made and guides them into the next stages of problem solving their scenario.

Some students with learning disabilities may have difficulty with cognitive strategies. Modelling and instructing students on organizational skills would require that the teacher communicate to the class the organization and format of the session. If students are to be involved in groupwork, the teacher should explain and demonstrate goals and methods of reaching the goals. Role playing these strategies as a demonstration can be of value.

Metacognitive functions can be demonstrated by referring to processes involved in groupwork and then applied to the individual's own mode of thinking. The group acts as one entity and should always be asking questions such as, "Are we thinking in terms of the problem?", "Are we staying on task or diverging off the subject at hand?", "Are our procedures in line with our goal?", and "Are we following the instructions and demonstrations that were given to us?" During the groupwork, the teacher might prompt the groups by asking these questions. Following the groupwork, when the groups join each other, the teacher might lead a discussion focusing in on how each group followed the thinking strategies and draw parallels

to individual thinking strategies.

Perceptual and information processing problems pose problems for students with learning disabilities. These students may have difficulty with visual and auditory stimuli. The multi-sensory aspect of dramatherapy lends itself to working with the intact learning mode and strengthening the deficit mode. Some students may learn by instruction alone, while others need to have it demonstrated or modeled, and still others may need to experience it by acting it out. In dramatherapy the instructor first gives a brief description of the concepts to be learned, then may have a demonstration involving the targeted concept enacted before the class engages in groupwork where they will discuss and experience the concepts. Following the groupwork, the class reassembles to view and discuss the demonstrations prepared by each of the groups.

Many of the activities used in the warm-up can be used to strengthen the deficit learning mode of students with learning disabilities and can also be applied to aid those with oral language difficulties. After being involved in concentration exercises that help the students focus on appropriate stimuli, speechwork and non-verbal kinesthetic activities can be implemented.

If written work is to be used, consideration must be given to the reading ability of students with learning disabilities. The use of narrators can aid if written work is

used, which would require the leader to assign player and narrator parts.

Framework and Strategies

This section includes a basic framework upon which a typical dramatherapy session may be built, and strategies for implementing activities.

Flexibility in formatting a typical session should be observed. Strict adherence to specific activities or components of the activity may be met with dissention or boredom. The teacher may realize that a specific activity is not relevant or important to the students or that the climate of the class predicts certain failure of an activity. For example, following a pep rally, students may come to class with more energy than they normally would exhibit. A dismal, dreary, rainy day may drain the energy of the students. Their attention may be scattered or dimmed. Before initiating the activity for the day, the teacher would need to focus the attention of the students.

A basic framework is suggested by Blatner (1988);

- 1) Warm-up
- 2) Activity
- 3) Closure

Warm-up

The warm-up is very important for the student with

learning disabilities. Not only does it help to build a supportive feeling that enables the students to take risks, but it can be used to ease the anxieties of students with learning disabilities.

- A. The teacher (director) begins the warm-up by introducing himself or herself and introducing group members (if they are not already familiar with one another).
- B. The director then initiates action exercises.
 - 1. introduction exercises
 - 2. relaxation
 - 3. concentration
 - 4. imagination
 - 5. physical movement
 - 6. sensory awareness

These serve to encourage group cohesion by involving the class as a whole in physically relaxing and warming up, focusing on sensory stimuli in the room, and participating in group storytelling. The warm-up activities bring the group together as they focus on and participate in the same activity. Spontaneity increases as each student loses inhibitions and feels as though he or she is a part of the group experience.

- C. A discussion following the warm-up will give the

opportunity for students to express experiences or reactions to the exercises. This may lead to a theme of common interest for the group, or to an individual's specific problem which will then serve as the underlying theme for the action segment if a preconceived theme has not already been determined.

The teacher may choose to begin the first class with a discussion about inhibitions. Students, at this time, can be encouraged by suggesting to them that this class promotes all ideas. The students will be involved in problem solving which requires the expression of ideas that might have, in the past, been considered to be ridiculous, stupid, or crazy. Pointing out that these ideas often lead to the most creative and useful solutions will aid the students' verbal expressive abilities.

Until the group develops cohesiveness, the teacher or director will need to attend to some of the fears and anxieties experienced by the student with learning disabilities. Some students with learning disabilities are quite hesitant about the class. They may become quite anxious about verbal activities. It is recommended that they not be forced to partake in the activities. Experience has demonstrated to the writer that these students need time. Eventually, their anxieties succumb to the supportive environment. When new activities are introduced, they may become fearful in antici-

pation of the project. At this time, a one-to-one interview with the student might prove to be of value, pointing out successes the individual has accomplished in other previous activities. Utilizing this as a diagnostic device, the teacher can discuss with the student problems that have been encountered. It is likely to be related to a problem the student experiences outside the drama situation such as joining in a group or expressing feelings.

In the beginning, it is wise to use various games as a method of introduction. Working with a partner puts the student at ease as opposed to putting the student on the spot (or the spotlight on the student) for an introduction to the entire class.

Concentration and sense awareness activities prove to be valuable when working with students with attention deficits and/or hyperactivity. The purpose of these exercises is to assist the students in focusing and attending to the activity at hand. Using relaxation and concentration activities provides the students with learning experiences whereas detentions do not address the real issue.

In group story-telling, the leader may choose to include the option of passing. In time, their contributions will increase. Other students are encouraged to respect a student's right to pass as they are reminded that it may prove to be a handy device in case they themselves, in the future, happen to draw a blank.

Physical movement activities help the students to physically warm up. If self-consciousness hinders production of physical movement, partner work with mirroring can be used. Some students are more comfortable with imitative behaviour. In time self-consciousness may yield to spontaneous and creative movement. Risk-taking in creative movement can then be made in this supportive atmosphere without the fear of ridicule.

Students with learning disabilities may take time to warm up to self-expression. To ease the students into verbal expression, partner work proves to be beneficial. Students may feel more at ease talking with one other person about an issue as opposed to addressing the entire group. The process of expressing feelings about themselves or others can be developed from a one-to-one method to small groups and eventually to the entire group. The teacher may choose to use one-to-one techniques for a few weeks before implementing small groups.

After the group has developed cohesiveness, the teacher may choose to continue the use of one-to-one relationships and then ask the students to share with the small groups some of the issues they discussed. This can then be carried on to the large group for discussion.

Many exercises and activities make use of non-verbal communication. This may be an area of difficulty for some students with learning disabilities and for others with

limited verbal abilities. Non-verbal activities may prove to be of value as they afford the student with an opportunity where they can express themselves.

Exploration of exercises that involve non-verbal communication can reveal a student's understanding of subtle physical cues. Subsequent exercises can be directed to exposing the student to these cues and increasing the individual's awareness and understanding.

Creative movement and dance can be geared to increasing the physical awareness and capabilities of the students as well as augmenting their non-verbal communication skills. Motor control through imaginative concentration work can assist the student's physical skills. Cognitive skills dealing with organization can be addressed through sequencing of creative dance patterns.

Activities in speech work can help the student to understand vocal expression. The students can gain an understanding of the mood or emotions behind the vocal sounds. Students can be encouraged to experiment with different volumes and pitches.

The Action

The action can take one of two directions. The teacher or director can choose to develop the action based on students' experiences during the warm-up or it can be based on preconceived themes.

If the director chooses to base the action on the students' experiences during the warm-up, he or she must redefine the conflict in terms of a concrete example for the purposes of enactment. A protagonist is chosen who is then assisted by the director and possibly the audience in setting the stage. In setting the stage, the individual should refer to the "5W's". A description of who, what, when, where, and why can be given.

Other members of the group are asked to participate or will volunteer to play the other parts. They become the auxiliary egos. The scene is to be played in the here-and-now.

The scene is enacted with the director having the protagonist reverse roles with the auxiliary egos until they have an understanding of their part. The scene continues after the initial warm-up to the roles. The director can then introduce other psychodramatic techniques that might serve to enhance the expression of feelings (e.g., soliloquy, doubles, asides, role reversal, mirroring, etc.).

Following the initial enactment, repeat enactments may involve trying different approaches or behaviour skills. Other group members may volunteer to show how they might approach the problem. Role reversals can help at this time by allowing the protagonist to actually experience the other person's situation. This may enhance the individual's awareness of alternative behaviours.

The second direction chosen by the director would involve pre-planning of enactments or scenarios. A day or two in advance, the teacher may become aware of an issue of particular importance to the students. The teacher may choose a test group to rehearse and model the enactment for the students, having the model group display inappropriate behaviours and then ask the others to create a solution involving alternative behaviours. The group is then broken up into smaller groups for the purpose of creating and rehearsing their own versions. Each group will then present their enactments. After all groups have completed their enactments, a discussion will follow.

When working with students with learning disabilities, the teacher should be aware of the anxiety experienced by the students. Asking for volunteers may alleviate the pressure. These students may prefer to opt out in order to observe how the other students take on the problem. The teacher should also be aware of the spontaneous capabilities of these students. Often imitative behaviour is preferred. Modelling the behaviour will assist them in this area.

Another method will be to have the students remove the self and create roles. Self-consciousness often inhibits the students when they are enacting their own roles. Allow the enactments to consist of fictitious characters. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the difference between psychodrama and dramatherapy rests on the use of the self. In dramatherapy,

the student is removed from the self and becomes a fictitious character. Psychodrama is basically concerned with the self. For some students it appears to be safer and more comfortable to play another character. Playing the role of another can be used as a diagnostic tool as it reveals the student's perception about the role. Once warmed up, the student's role perception and own behaviour is often revealed.

Other types of scenes can be enacted. The use of fairy tales and melodramas allow the student to practice roles that incorporate specific behaviours the student may desire to have. Risk-taking in portraying of the roles can be encouraged.

Students with learning disabilities can benefit from the group rehearsals as they are involved in the creative problem solving where ideas are expressed and worked out. They are exposed to different opinions, values, and modes of verbal expression. The rehearsal of the enactments allows them to rehearse behaviour skills thus enabling them to incorporate the skills into their own role repertoire.

Groupwork is an area that may reveal to the teacher specific social problems experienced by the students. Some students with learning disabilities may have difficulty in activities that require them to introduce themselves and they may show hesitancy about joining in with a group. A process for assisting in this area is outlined below. It involves taking them through the procedures step-by-step.

- 1) Have the student sit with the teacher and observe others introducing themselves and joining in. A brief discussion between the teacher and the student may follow.
- 2) Modeling for the student might involve a role-reversal. The teacher may choose to play the role of the student and the student will represent a group member. Then reverse roles with the student playing himself or herself. Rehearse with various approaches.
- 3) If the student is still hesitant, the teacher may choose to accompany the individual the first time. The teacher may also choose to prepare the accepting group beforehand as to what behaviours they should exhibit.
- 4) Private encouragement should be given to the student following successful skill development.
- 5) Subsequent situations may require review and encouragement. The student should be encouraged to attempt joining in without the accompaniment of the teacher. If a teacher continues to accompany the student, dependence on the teacher may result.

In a supportive group, the group members will often become aware of a particular member's problem and may choose to assist the student in overcoming the obstacle.

In the beginning, students with limited verbal ability

often shy away from the major speaking roles. Again, imitative behaviour roles are preferred. These students may have, in the past, experienced ridicule from being in a non-supportive environment. In time, these students become aware of the fact that in a supportive atmosphere it is alright to make a mistake as they observe even the most verbal students making mistakes. Thus, risk-taking is encouraged and enhanced.

Closure

During this time, a discussion will provide feedback and allow for expression of feelings. Students can be encouraged to support feelings that were experienced during the enactment by providing personal experiences that might demonstrate similarities. Closure affords the opportunity to discuss and synthesize the information presented during action segments. It also serves as a debriefing period. For the student with learning disabilities, this can be a crucial part of the learning process. The students have participated in activities and observed others. The closure will work toward a cognitive understanding of the concepts and behaviours that have been taught. The teacher/director will ask for feedback from the students. This will reveal the depth of understanding. The teacher may also ask for relevant situations where the concepts and behaviours can be employed thus aiding generalization. If time allows, the teacher may choose to have

one of the examples role played or this may lead to a topic for the subsequent class meeting.

In terminating the group, one may choose to use an activity similar to those used in the warm-up. Concentration and sense awareness exercises can help the students de-role and prepare them for their next class.

Content: Activities and Exercises

This section will include suggestions for activities and exercises for the three segments of a session; warm-up, action, and closure.

Warm-up

Warm-up activities may consist of exercises in trust, concentration, imagination, sensory awareness, movement, and speechwork. Many of the activities involve not only one goal but may encompass many aspects of other goals.

Introduction: Name Games - Students walk around the room and on the cue "freeze" introduce themselves to the nearest person.

- Students walk around the room and on the cue "freeze" say the name of the nearest person.

- Partners - Have students pair up with the person sitting next to them. They will talk with their partners for a period of 5 minutes. They are told beforehand to try to remember 5 things about the partner. The group reassembles and each person will introduce their partner and report on the 5 items.
- Trust: Blind Walk -One partner is blindfolded and the other partner will guide them by simply saying either "trust me" or using their name.
- Falling - Students assemble in groups of
Log three. One student falls toward the other two and is caught and supported by them.
- Leaning - In pairs, students will face each
Trees other with hands clasped. Taking turns, each will lean toward and be supported by the other. Then they will both lean backward and balance each other.

How Do - In pairs, one student will ask
You Feel? the question, "How do you feel?."
The other will answer. The
questioner will continue with the
same question, each time varying
the intonation and mood. The re-
sponse will be different. At
first, students will tend to
answer on a superficial level,
after which time, they may feel
more comfortable at revealing
and expressing inner feelings. The
same question will be asked until
the students decide to change
position.

What Do - This exercise is similar to the
You See? one above. The only difference
will be the answerer will respond
with perceptions about the other.
At first, the answers will be
based on superficial visual
characteristics, for example, "I
see a girl with a red dress".
Eventually, the answers will tend
toward perception of feelings that

displayed by the other, such as
 "I see a very excited person".

Positive Wins - Entire group assembles in a large circle. Going around the circle, each student will express a positive experience he/she has recently had. Students may state how they helped their brother or sister learn how to tie his/her shoe or that they just joined an activity group.

Concentration,
 Imagination, &
 Sensory
 Awareness:

Story - Telling - Class assembles in a large circle. Each student adds one word to the story that is being developed. This activity can graduate to having each student adding a phrase then to adding whole sentences and eventually to entire segments. If the students feel comfortable, the use of

rhyiming can be employed.

- Students assemble in a large circle. They will be told to lie on their backs with eyes closed. The teacher/director will then proceed by telling a story incorporating sensory stimulating ideas, for example, " The character in the story saw ____; then thought ____; she felt ____; when she heard ____; she ran barefoot over the soft sand and could taste the salty air as the waves crashed with a thunderous roar.

- In time, students will volunteer to be the story teller for the above exercise. They can draw from experiences they have had while sailing, camping, and hiking. Many times, students have enjoyed telling stories based entirely on fantasy such as visits to other planets or being a

miniature being in a giant sized garden.

Uncle Glug - This can also serve as an excellent activity for mime and movement. The teacher sets the scene by placing a desk, chair, and imaginary typewriter on the stage. One student volunteers to play the role of Uncle Glug and sits at the desk. The teacher proceeds by establishing the mood and situation. Uncle Glug is a writer who works day and night at his typewriter, when all of a sudden, as he is typing, his story comes life. At this point, Uncle Glug begins extemporaneously creating his/her story. Other volunteers from the group join in to become the characters. They are not allowed to speak. They will mime the characters and action.

Imaginary - Students pass around an imaginary
Objects object. They must react to the
item in terms of the five senses.
What does it feel like? Taste it;
listen to it. This can also be
accomplished using a real object
and students can imagine and
create various purposes for the
object.

Mime and
Movement:

These activities can graduate
from very simple, non-emotional
(sewing on a button) to more
complex creative movement.

Feelings - The teacher/director calls out
a feeling or emotion and the
students react with facial
expressions. This can also
be done using hands, hands and
arms, or entire bodies.

Expression - Teacher/director calls out using the entire body a situation or action and the students respond with their perception of the activity.

- Examples: Building a brick wall; wading through flood waters; waiting at a bus stop; walking over hot coals; washing the windows of a skyscraper.

Mirroring - In pairs, facing each other, one partner is the leader and the other is the follower. The leader begins by slowly demonstrating an activity while the other tries to follow. This is a mirror image so the follower must use left side actions when the leader designates right side actions.

Creative Movement - These activities may involve individual, pair, or trio work. Examples: Inside a bubble; interaction of chemical elements;

characters on a computer screen;
metamorphosis or mutation;
robotics.

- Speech: Exercises - Students are given sounds, phrases, or vocal exercises and are asked to repeat with varying intonations; changing pitch, volume, mood, and feeling.
- Examples for vocal exercises:
mah - moh - moo - may - mee;
vah - voh - voo - vay - vee;
- Changing pitch on a sustained sound: Loo, mah, moo, or mee.
- Diaphragm control:
ts-ts-ts, ts-ts-ts, ts-ts-ts,
ts..... (taking a big breath before beginning and expelling all air on the last ts)
- Other speechwork may involve rote teaching of tongue twisters and having the students repeat the tongue twisters.

Script- - Selection of scripts should
work take into consideration the
reading level. Students
are asked to read poems or
selections with feeling.
Choral work involving the
entire group can be employed.

Action

The activities used should be relevant to the students' experiences. This will increase motivation and sustain interest. Suggestions can come from the group members or the teacher/director may choose to select an issue or scenario that she feels would serve a therapeutic purpose for the students.

The list of topics for this section is endless. Students encounter many situations in their daily lives that may be appropriate for use in these activities. Suggestions for three different activities are described. These activities are categorized thusly:

Topic generated from warm-up activity

Living Newspaper

Social Skills

A. Topic generated from warm-up activity:

Following the warm-up, a discussion ensued. During this time, a student expressed feelings of being uncomfortable during a particular exercise. She felt that other people knew just exactly what to do and she was the only one who did not. She felt that others might be watching and waiting for her to make a mistake. Another student expressed similar feelings. This discussion began to focus on feelings of self-consciousness and perfectionism. The director led the discussion to include other times in a student's daily life where he/she may feel uncomfortable. The students began to volunteer personal situations such as, P.E. class, school dances, art class, answering questions in class, and first day at school.

The students agreed that school dances would be a good topic to explore. The scene was set. A description of environment and participants was agreed upon. The situation involved introducing one's self to another student and asking if he/she would like to dance. A student volunteered to be the protagonist. Issues that were explored and expressed dealt with confidence to ask someone to dance, feeling that one would not be asked to dance, how to introduce oneself and thanking the other

student for the dance. Feelings of self-consciousness were explored and the students realized that others were not often as perfect as perceived.

Another group of players role-played the same situation including elements of rejection. Students explored how they would deal with rejection and what the reasons behind the rejection might be. It could possibly be that the person might not know how to dance or that they are with someone else. Other volunteers were asked to enact the same scene with different approaches.

B. Living Newspaper:

This can be a planned activity where the students are asked to bring in a newspaper clipping or magazine article. One article can be chosen for the entire group. A discussion of the article will bring to light many of the elements that affect the individuals in the story. The director/teacher may inspire the students to look into the subtext of the article allowing them to realize characteristics of the persons involved.

The article might involve immigration and the problems immigrants encounter when they arrive to a new country. The students may want to focus on making new friends or discrimination.

Following the discussion, the class is divided into small groups. They will then take the situations that were explored and develop them into an enactment. Students are told that they must have a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Problem solving skills will involve developing a conflict and resolution.

After the rehearsal, each group will present their scene. A discussion during the closure will explore the feelings and perceptions presented.

C. Social Skills:

Role playing is an excellent way to teach social skills. It allows the students a chance to observe and rehearse the skill, and a chance to understand the concepts involved.

The groupwork involved in the rehearsed activities incorporates indirect work on social skills. The director/teacher may want to focus directly on a particular social skill and have the students contrive situations where that skill may be used.

At the secondary level, the spreading of rumours can often affect students. An enactment of this type might involve issues dealing with misunderstandings, apologies, and perception of other's feelings. An improvisation can be developed using

the entire class. A student may want to volunteer a personal experience.

A protagonist is chosen along with the auxiliaries. An exploration of feelings will take place. The reasons behind the spreading of the rumour can be expressed along with the feelings of the victim. This is an excellent situation for role reversal. The victim can then be put in the shoes of the verbal attacker and vice versa. Appropriate apologies can be enacted.

For activities involving social skills, it is wise to break up into small groups following the improvisation. The exploration of the issue during the improvisation can serve as a model. The groups can then create their own versions of the situation.

The discussion that follows can include exploration of similar situations and understanding of others' feelings. Consequences of behaviour can be discussed.

Closure

Closure activities involve discussion of the issues presented during the action segment followed by exercises similar to those presented in the warm-up segment.

The discussion is very important and should not be deleted. This is the time when the students can gain a

cognitive understanding the concepts involved. The teacher/director can begin by asking the students' general feelings about the activity. This can lead to exploration of the issues involved as well as the feelings expressed. Students are then asked if they have personally experienced a similar experience. This is a time for sharing. Students can then be asked to give hypothetical situations where they might encounter similar feelings. This will help the students to generalize the skills to future situations. If time allows another role play may be enacted.

The closure activities that follow may involve relaxation and sensory awareness. Music alone or with story narration can be used. "How do you feel?" or "What do you see?" are good activities. Mirroring with a partner or entire class following a leader can be employed. Simple movement exercises involving stretching can be used.

An excellent closure activity would have the students silently walk around the room and meeting eye to eye with those they pass and smiling. Nothing is to be verbalized. The students say goodbye using facial expression and eye contact.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

In ascertaining whether or not the application of dramatherapy is suitable for all teachers involved with students with learning disabilities, the writer recommends that future research consider issues involving teacher education in the therapeutic fields as well as the dramatic arts.

Future studies may also reveal the effectiveness of dramatherapy in classroom settings that are not strictly limited to the teaching of drama.

Prior to the undertaking of this study, three questions were asked by the writer. These questions were in direct response to observations made while teaching developmental drama. Why does a drama class appeal to students with learning disabilities? What are the mechanics that go into making the drama class a proper atmosphere that encourages risk-taking? What are the principles involved in using drama as a therapeutic and diagnostic tool? The answers were revealed in researching the elements of psychodrama, dramatherapy, and sociodrama. By applying the benefits afforded in dramatherapy to the social and emotional needs of students with learning disabilities, the writer concludes that dramatherapy appeals to these students by offering multisensory techniques while involving students in the group process and

role play.

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