

## **The Power of Connection**

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Our Connections determine who we are and our ability to connect emotional, and spiritually determine the quality of our lives, whether it's a connection to self, others, or to the God of our understanding.

Stone Center at Wellesley College did a recent study regarding connections: They determined the following:

### Outcomes of Disconnections:

- Diminished zest or vitality
- Disempowerment
- Confusion, lack of clarity
- Diminished self-worth
- Turning away from relationships

### Outcomes of Connection:

- Each person feels a greater sense of "zest" (vitality, energy)
- Each person feels more able to act and does act
- Each person has a more accurate picture of her/himself and the other person(s)
- Each person feels a greater sense of worth
- Each person feels more connected to the other person(s) and a greater motivation for connections with other people beyond those in the specific relationship

Our work as professionals in the eating disorder field is to assist our clients on their journey from disconnections to one of meaningful life changing connections. I recently heard a powerful quote by Elizabeth Kubler Ross, a woman we associate with the grief and loss cycle but this quote should have been her hallmark. *"It's not the end of the physical body that should worry us. Rather our concern must be to live while we're alive, to release our inner selves from the spiritual death that comes with being behind a facade designed to conform to external definition of who and what we are."*

The above task is not simple but a complex remarkable journey to the inner self, to the body, to the soul, to the spirit. I am sure we all have unique methods to assist our clients on this journey but like any journey, there is always planning, preparation and pursuit. I have found psychodrama, as an energizing, directive, innovative tool in this journey.

Psychodrama is an action method that helps clients understand the roles they play and gives therapist tools to assist clients with change. J.L. Moreno, the Father of Psychodrama, believed the self emerges from the roles we take on. In observing our clients we come to understand the more fragile they are, the more rigid one becomes where they take a role and hang on to it until they become role locked or role fatigued. Roles are developed by first taking the role, second playing the role and thirdly

creating the role. Remember when you first became a therapist? That's when we took the role and followed all the rules and was fearful of making a mistake and always checked with others to make sure we were doing the job correctly, later as you began to play with the role you relaxed a bit and started adding some of your own creativity to the role, and lastly after some time you were able to make the role yours, adding your own unique styles, methods and moving into a new level of spontaneity and creativity. Then something new comes along and we go back to the beginning and work our way through the new learning. This process continues for a lifetime, as we create change and new cultural conserves.

Within the role theory, we can access the act hungers, the desires, wishes and needs that originate in the body and can only be fulfilled thru actual body movement or interaction. The body shuts down movement in order to protect feelings and it shuts down feeling in order to lock down the body. This is where action techniques helps to release our clients from the body/mind disconnect and brings awareness through relationships. In relationships there can never be a we until there is an I. It is about forming connection with the parts until they become real. Reality equals how I think, feel, behave and how we are in our body but often in an addictive process the thinking is distorted, the feelings are shut down and the behaviors are not appropriate and there is a major disconnect from the body.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The methods of psychodrama involve the ABC'S of connection. Affect, Behaviors, Cognition and Spirituality. This method allows one to experience the past, the future all in the present here and now which allows for reality testing. The following is an exercise you can safely execute with your clients. It's called the play of life: Designate an area in the room to represent a stage about 4feet by 5feet and mark it off with tape so the client is aware this represents the action area. Have client pick someone in the group to be her body at present (this person is called and auxiliary) and put them in the stage area and sculpt them according to how the clients feels about her body. They may be standing with their back to the client, lying down on the floor with their face on the carpet, or curled up or bowed down. Now ask the client to stand where she feels she is, in relationship to her body, whether on the stage with the body, or across the room. Look for distance, and stanch to determine how they feel toward the body. Now have the client reverse with the body, where the auxiliary becomes the client. From this role reversal, ask the body, what do you want to say to your owner?

Reverse back to the original position and have the auxiliary body speak what the client said in the body position. Continue this dialogue to gather information about the client and the extent of her anger, hate and fear of her body. At some point, ask the client, what would it take you to make one simple change in your stance toward your body? It might mean I could turn around and look at you from across the room, then ask, what behaviorally would that mean to you? Ex. It might mean I will start to connect with you in keeping a food journal when I eat to connect to my body, it might mean I will start to do a daily affirmation regarding my body. If the client is ready, ask her what the second and third step would be if she started connecting with her body. This becomes a rough treatment plan of the work the client needs to do. **THE CLIENT ALWAYS KNOWS WHAT THEY NEED TO DO IF YOU WILL GIVE THEM AN INROAD TO ACCESS THE INFORMATION.** Check in with your client regarding their fear of connection with their body.( Question, If you got connected with your body what do you think would happen, if they say

I'm not sure, have them become the part that is sure and speak from that place. Ask the same question as related to their emotions and their spiritual connection)

This simple technique will assist you to gain insight into your client but it even more affective because the clients experiences the disconnect in her body and the process of change. If you want to encourage the client, ask them to step into a future projection and show us how you would like it to be with your body? I have seen them move into a bone-crushing hug but in reality, they could not tolerate that level of connection yet and in action, they will acknowledge that. Always give the client permission to be where they are but to encourage them on their journey. It critical that we as clinicians have our own powerful connections so we do not ask any clients to fill our own needs.

I am available to answer questions about these procedures and psychodrama as a method for individual and group work. I am a Trainer, Educator, and Practioner of Pscychodrama and can give training hours toward certification. I am also an IAEDP approved supervisor.