

TEACHING AND TRAINING GROUPS

1. A comparison of the role of the leader in psychotherapy and teaching/training groups.

Winnicott (Playing and Reality, 1971) says "In playing, and perhaps only in playing, the child or adult is free to be creative". He goes on to say that "it is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living. Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation. Compliance carries with it a sense of futility for the individual and is associated with the idea that nothing matters and that life is not worth living". I would add that when the person is out of balance with or out of connection with the inner self, that is, they are being incongruent in some way, that there is distress. This can happen when the emotions overwhelm the intellect when magical thinking overwhelms rationality and reality testing, when the intellect controls the emotions or when impulsive action overwhelms thinking and the attachment to people.

Winnicott says that "certain conditions are necessary if success is to be achieved in the search for the self. These conditions are associated with what is usually called creativity. He says that it is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.

Winnicott describes three areas of reality. There is the inner world of psychic reality which is somewhere within the bounds of the individual's personality. There is the external reality which is located outside the bounds of the personality. And there is a third potential reality which is located in the space between, in a merged interpersonal space in which through play and cultural experience the world of the individual can change.

He says that it is a general principle that "psychotherapy is done in the overlap of two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist. If the therapist cannot play, then he or she is not suitable for the work".

Russell Meares (The Pursuit of Intimacy, 1977) says that the exchange in psychotherapy is "an exchange of emotionally charged images". I would expand this to say emotionally charged memories, wishes and fantasies which have an imaginal, physical and spiritual component.

Meares goes on to say that the therapists main task is to explore the images which compose "identity" and "the other" and which determine the therapeutic encounter. This exploration takes place in the space between the client and the individual therapist or leader of the group and in between the client and the group, whether the group be a present group or the internal cultural atom (family system) of the client.

Meares suggests that the therapist enters a state in which his imaginative processes are allowed to unfurl over the contents of the therapeutic encounter. The therapist is turning over in an unfocussed way, the matter that is being presented to him.

Freud said that the therapist needs to "surrender himself or herself to his or her own unconscious mental activity in a state of evenly suspended attention, to avoid so far as possible, reflection and the construction of

conscious expectations, and by these means to catch the drift of the patient's unconscious with his own unconscious". Turning over the client's material without sorting provides a way of listening which allows the client to make a new summation, that is, achieve a catharsis of integration.

Winnicott says "summation or re-rememberation depends on there being a certain quantity of reflecting back to the individual on the part of a trusted therapist or friend who has taken the indirect communication. In these highly specialised conditions the individual can come together and exist as a unit, not as a defence against anxiety but as an expression of I AM, I am alive, I am myself. From this position everything is creative" It is the significant moment when the person surprises himself or herself that is significant not the moment of clever interpretation.

Winnicott and Meares have described the experience and task of the psychotherapist. Winnicott also values the position of the teacher when the teacher functions within an experiential framework. He says "In the area of overlaps between the playing of the child and the playing of the other person there is a chance to introduce enrichments. The teacher aims at enrichment. By contrast, the therapist is concerned specifically with the child's own growth processes, and with the removal of blocks to development that many have become evident. Playing has to be spontaneous and not compliant or acquiescent if change is to take place.

I would say that in providing an experiential learning situation one is providing a play space, a space between internal reality and external reality into which the internal reality can be projected and which involves the play relationship between leader and group and each individual. It is the content of the enabling group which provides a trustworthy environment in which play can take place, in which physical, emotional and mental activity can be manifested in the action of play. It is important therefore that the teacher or trainer not be concerned with the artistic output or with their own idea of what is creative or spontaneous but that learn to suspend themselves in the creative teaching process. As teachers their purpose is enrichment and the integration of the enrichment will take place most while the process is one of play and creativity.

The format of teaching and training groups

Teaching and training groups have different goals. Some training groups foster a total dependence upon a philosophy and total commitment to a community which espouses a certain lifestyle, e.g. Synanon A.A. religious based movements. These are usually used where there is a character disorder or personality disorder so that the person requires total reorientation.

Other training groups have a set curriculum which attempts to change personal constructs and to develop the person through changing the organs of thinking. Examples of this are rational emotive therapy and personal construct psychology, business organizational change groups using positive thinking and self affirmation.

Other training groups add an action or rehearsal component. These groups allow for role rehearsal. The particular role is defined and by successive approximations people are trained towards full enactment. These groups include assertion training, social skills training, effective parenting groups.

Other groups have the aim of consciousness raising and of increasing awareness. Women's groups often train the person to become conscious of a life position. Sharing groups for separated, divorced persons or blended families or for groups which share a common issue such as the death of a child may fall into this category as the educative approach raises the consciousness of the participants.

Spontaneity training

Spontaneity training is a growing area. Spontaneity training asserts the person to become a spontaneous actor to respond to the here and now situation.

Psychodrama theory gives a particular definition to spontaneity. Spontaneity takes various forms:

- 1) Dramatic quality gives vivacity and newness to each situation as warm-up to roles is activated.
- 2) Creativity is a form of spontaneity which produces new organisms, new forms of art and new patterns of environment. Creativity is of the substance and must be tangible.
- 3) Originality provides unique expansion or variation of behaviour, organization or production.
- 4) Adequacy relates to the concept of role reversal. It assumes that the behaviour in any situation is appropriate given role reversal with all the persons in a situation.
- 5) Flexibility refers to adaptability.

Creative uses of theatre such as problem-solving theatre where the cast plays out a problem in the position of mirror to the person who has requested an enactment. The feedback is provided in a creative play space.

Playback theatre requires a group of actors to respond with one another in the here and now to produce a mirror of the essential feeling and experience of a story teller who describes an event, an experience or an incident.

Clown uses a pure cultural role similar to that of jester, fool to intensify and expand whimsically the fun, foibles, fancies and failures of the human race.

Spontaneity can be trained in various ways using the arts. Music therapy and dance therapy are means of enhancing self expression and awareness. Art therapy uses painting, sculpture and various other art forms to enhance the expression of the self.

Sociodramatic forms are more appropriate for spontaneity training. It requires analysis of the system, setting up of a particular framework and then allowing spontaneity to occur. "Inner child" workshops, workshops related to topics such as "the wealth within" or marriage enrichment are spontaneity training.

The area of spontaneity training is just being opened out in Australia. It leaves room for a great deal of further creative endeavour.