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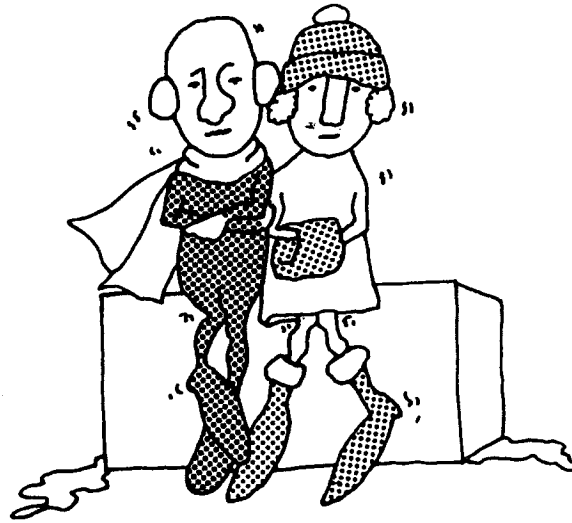

3

The Warm-Up

As a family therapist accustomed to the intense focus of a family in crisis, the idea of a warm-up was difficult for me to accept when I started. Who needed a warm-up? Pain is strong and each one of us lives out a multitude of psychodramas. I could see no need to use our precious time in a potentially artificial group activity. I thought: *the thing to do is to plunge in. Go in with the expectation that group members want to work on their problems, ask for volunteers, and find a dramatic form which will help produce insight, catharsis, and then try various alternative solutions.*

By now, the reader will have guessed that therapeutic optimism of this sort is bound to run up against resistance. Each risk of self-discovery is bound by paradox. *I want to change but I don't want to risk anything new. I want to risk something new but I'm afraid I might change. Anything's better than what's happening now. Anything's better than the unknown.* A psychodrama group stimulates additional resistances particular to acting, role playing, psychodrama, and staging. *Do I have to be able to act? I'm not an actor. I can't be phony, pretend to be someone else. Do you have to perform? In front of an audience? They'll just*

make a fool of me, make me act out my problems and then ridicule me. Who is that new lady? A client? Oh, she leads it. What's she going to make us do? I heard they really got emotional here last week—Anne left crying that day. I don't want that to happen to me. Not in front of the whole group. I'm just going to sit quietly and hope she doesn't look at me.

I learned that groups are different from families in crisis who come in to the session with a common concern. Whether they are familiar with each other or are strangers, group members enter the session from a wide variety of different places. Each time it meets, the group needs to experience something that forms them into a whole. I soon realized that both the group members and I needed a warm-up, a relatively neutral activity that would allow us to learn something about each other. By relatively neutral I mean a warm-up that gives the participant a choice about the amount of personal disclosure she is willing to make.

The warm-up should also illustrate the dramatic nature of the group work as opposed to other—possibly more familiar—talk therapies. In my psychodrama groups, I discourage talking about an event whenever I can, preferring—right from the beginning—that participants show us by doing. Rather than talking about her father, I encourage the client to portray him; rather than describing a crisis that took place at home, I ask her to pick some members of the group who could play the important roles.

The following are examples of verbal and nonverbal group warm-ups. These exercises will provide the director with valuable information about the group tele. It will show her which members are willing to participate, give her clues about whether there are any problem areas common to several members of the group (always a preferable choice for later work), inform her about group members who react strongly to each other. By setting up a warm, easy going atmosphere, the warm-up also gives the director an opportunity to dispel misconceptions about psychodrama—such as the demand for performance—by encouraging shyer members and rewarding all responses. The best warm-up relates to other activities that bind the group together. In groups with a common goal, these are easily thought up.

A group of teachers, for example, can be asked to think of a specific teacher-pupil conflict. I may begin by asking the group to form pairs. The next task is a simple one. Each member of a pair has to choose to be either No. 1 or No. 2. When everyone has made

a choice I ask the ones to be teachers, the twos to be pupils, and request that each pair decide on a specific conflict. Each pair is given a short period of time to work it out. The director may want to walk around, taking a look at the different pairs and then, perhaps, ask one to demonstrate, depending on the confidence level of the group. Whether or not the conflict is seen by the other group members, the content of the work can be developed further later on.

Many of the warm-ups in this section suggest that individuals or pairs demonstrate their work in front of the whole group. The warm-up can also be structured to begin in a small group that is only observed by the director who will then find a way to use the material for further work.

On a psychiatric ward, a community meeting with compulsory attendance precedes my weekly session. Often, the nurse's description of what went on in the meeting will provide a warm-up. The content of one meeting, for example, concerned planning the day-clients' activities on weekends. A lot of apparent helplessness and loneliness had appeared to be beneath the surface, but the clients' discussion had avoided painful emotions by centering on plans for weekend picnics, bus rides to the park, etc. The warm-up consisted of asking each client to imagine coming home from the hospital that Friday night and showing us what happens, using chairs and existing doors for scenery, while speaking out loud whatever thoughts and feelings came to mind. The warm-up gained dimension and poignancy, as one experience affected the next, and the feelings of isolation and helplessness no longer remained below the surface.

The director who lets herself imagine a warm-up can choose from so many possible contents: the time of the year, a particular holiday, a common bond of the group, family relationships, the newspaper. Any content can be used to start a sentence, to give to a small group for preparation of a short scene, for creating a sculpture.

There are times when little or no information about the group's background or recent experience is available. No warm-up suggests itself, and as I look around the circle of expectant faces, I feel less and less sure of what I want to do. And here, of course, it is important to remember that the director, too, needs a warm-up. For a reason that may occur to me later or that I may never know—I lack tele, the automatic bridge to the group's needs, with this particular group. I must find one of the ways that's always served me—and they will

differ with each director's personality—to relax, to open myself to what's going on with the others, to lead me out of discouragement and into discovering the needs of the group. For me, this means I need to breathe deeply, to relax my body, and then, perhaps, to tell the group that I'm feeling at a loss and I need help. On another day, I may find that after relaxing and giving myself a chance to start over, I can make a humorous remark that will lead me to a better connection with one or several group members. Once I have improved my own state of mind, I will be able to develop a more appropriate warm-up. At such times, I choose techniques gleaned from encounter groups, acting classes, party games, body movement work—in short, from wherever I can find them. Some examples follow.

VERBAL WARM-UPS

The first warm-up encourages verbal participation, and stimulates body movement. The body is often neglected by psychotherapy where only words connect therapist and participant(s) like the ballooned conversation in comic strips. When group members handle a ball—imagined or real—and move to pass, catch, or throw it, the group becomes enlivened and human contact enlarged.

Ball-Toss

Directions: "I have a ball. While it's in my hands I can talk. Without it I can't. Whoever catches the ball—whoever has it in his hands—has to talk. The others can't." The next step involves an important decision for the director. What will she say before she tosses the ball to someone else? Solutions range from "Who are you? Tell me something about yourself," to more structured tasks such as "I'm your mother, what have you got to say to me?" or "If you were an animal (an actor, a character in a fairy tale or television show, a plant, etc.), what would you be?" After I have asked my question, I toss the ball to the person whose response I want, telling him to throw it to someone else when he has answered me. If two people get into a prolonged discussion, throwing the ball back and forth, I may try

to catch the ball in order to ask that each person try to include someone new when he asks his question or makes his challenge, so that the warm-up reaches as many members of the group as possible.

Discussion: This is an excellent warm-up for a large group in a large room such as a gym or auditorium, in which the ball can be rolled or tossed freely but it can also be used in a very small room—as long as the ball remains imaginary, in which case the therapist mimes the ball.

Questions

Directions: "Look around the room in silence for a few minutes. Find someone whom you don't know very well and ask that person a question."

Discussion: This is an unthreatening warm-up, easily performed by a timid group. In leading this warm-up, it is important to accept all questions and answers even though they may appear undramatic and superficial at first. Once the ice is broken the director can move to deeper issues. I may make the transition, saying, "That's good. Now I'd like you to try a slightly different type of question. From now on, I'd like you to ask questions relating to feelings." If the group members are new to each other, I may add, "As you looked at the person you chose, you probably had some idea of how she felt. Maybe you could tell her what you thought and check it out with her." If strong feelings are present, I may say "You have strong feelings about the person you want to question. Maybe you could describe them to her and find out how she responds." As individuals address the warm-up, the director has a chance to ask questions of her own pertaining to feelings a group member may have about another's life, his family members, friends, or job. Once these questions are answered, it is easy to plan work for the rest of the group's time.

Feedback

Directions: "Think of a sentence you'd really like to hear (wouldn't want to hear) from someone else in this room, or from a friend or member of your family. Be that person and say the sentence."

Discussion: I often use this warm-up on the psychiatric ward with clients who have been too depressed to participate in other activities. With very little effort, clients often find themselves opening up to intense emotional experiences. One woman, for example, responded by saying, "I'm my own son, and he's saying, 'I still care for you even if I don't write.' " The scene that followed allowed her to express her withheld feelings about him.

This warm-up also gives people a chance to air complaints. When the remarks we all dread hearing are aired, laughter often ties the group together: "I'm my wife: 'You're late again, Jim.' " . . . "I'm my son: 'Dad, why can't I have the car tonight?' " . . . "I'm my mother: 'I've waited up for you all night.' " . . . "I'm my boss: 'You're fired.' " The blueprint for later enactments are clearly laid out.

Talk to the Place Where You Are

Directions: "Pretend that this social club (school, office, psychiatric ward, therapy center) is a person standing in the middle of the room. Talk to him. Complain, demand, plead, etc. Maybe you want to thank him for something."

Discussion: A director new to the group can learn a lot about a group's common experience from this warm-up. In a group where I already have information about ongoing conflicts, this warm-up can provide a forum for airing them. For example, a social club may be having difficulty getting members to do the work necessary to support its functioning, an office may have endured recent clashes between its liberal and conservative elements, a psychiatric ward may have sent a group member to another hospital, etc. When such conflicts are in the air, this warm-up provides a platform for airing them and using them for further work.

Introductions

Directions: "Be someone in your family (someone important to you) describing you in a sentence or two." This task has many variations, e.g.: "Choose another person in this group. Be that person talking about you"; "Be your therapist (teacher, group director, boss) and tell us about the progress you are making."

This warm-up must be demonstrated immediately after the directions are given, as it is difficult to describe and words may elicit confusion easily avoided by an example. Rather than answering questions, I usually say something like, "Let me show you what I mean. I'm my mom. Let me tell you about Eva. She is a whirlwind! I never knew where she's going to turn up next! I wish she'd settle down. We count on her, though. She's there when we need her."

Discussion: This warm-up acquaints the group with role reversal, provides a great deal of information as well as easy, natural transitions to further scenes. Verbal, extroverted group members often enjoy portraying someone important in their lives, especially if they know in advance that the portrayal does not have to be long and detailed.

An interesting variation is to ask the group members to introduce themselves, telling us two truths and one lie about themselves. Permission to tell tall stories often results in hilarious play and the curiosity aroused by the puzzling direction may last for a long time.

Childhood Play

Directions: "Think of your favorite game or pastime when you were a child. Imagine yourself playing the game, what you looked like, sounded like, what your surroundings were—until you can really see and feel yourself as you were then." A three to five minute silence follows. "Now, staying at the age level you've just thought about, tell us your name—you may have a nickname. Remember, we don't know how old you are, and what your favorite game is."

Discussion: This warm-up facilitates the awakening of vivid childhood memories. The participants must be encouraged to make their contributions in the role of the child that experiences the game, rather than the adult recalling it. Other childhood experiences useful for further work will naturally arise. This particular warm-up facilitates work in the area of early socialization—the joy of being accepted, having a friend, the dreaded rejections by other children, by the coach, the teacher, the scout leader.

The following warm-up also recalls vivid childhood memories.

Time Travel

Directions: "Imagine yourself as a child. Choose whatever age first vividly suggests itself to you. Give yourself some little time to really place yourself at that age, so that you can re-experience what it was like to be you then. You may close your eyes if you wish." A three to five minute silence follows. "Now, I'd like you to stay at the age you've just been imagining and tell us as that child how a typical day passes for you. Start by telling us when and where exactly you wake up and go on from there."

Discussion: All warm-ups involving childhood memories stimulate recall so vivid that the participant, who hadn't realized how exactly he had stored his early experiences, is surprised. This phenomenon has consequences for the director. Participants may need more support and encouragement because, without their usual adult defenses, they may feel particularly vulnerable. Most of the time the memories produced are recalled with a mixture of feelings—some anxiety, some remembered warmth—and the participants share a delightful and real sense of rediscovery.

There are also times when an individual recalls an important childhood experience so vividly that she may appear to become stuck there and need the director's help to make a bridge back to her present adult role. The director can ask the individual to make some then-and-now statements. ("Then I felt little, now I don't feel little but I still feel insecure; then I was never mad, now I get irritated easily.") Other methods are (1) a second exercise that duplicates the warm-up except that this time she is to use the silent time to think herself back to her present self and environment; (2) to see if she can form a mental image of herself as a child and then another of herself as a grown woman and to describe what she sees; (3) to ask her to recall her present self and then to have a conversation with the child-self using an empty chair. (See "The Empty Chair," chapter 14).

A variation of this warm-up is to travel to the future. "Imagine yourself at this same time next year . . . in ten years . . . 20 years . . . and tell us something about yourself."

Another childhood recall technique I use quite frequently, "Writing with the unaccustomed hand," is described in the nonverbal warm-ups section of this chapter.

Then and Now

Directions: "I'm going to give you a sentence and I want you to fill in the blanks. The sentence is, 'In this group I'm a . . . (I feel . . . , I want . . . , I can . . .); outside of this group I'm a . . . (I feel . . . , I want . . . , I can . . .). It doesn't matter how you fill in the blanks. I'll start by saying, 'In this group I'm a psychodrama director; outside I'm a gardener having a hard time with the deer who eat my beans.' "

Discussion: This is another technique which helps break the ice in a shy group. Its disadvantage is that it is not dramatic and a transition is necessary before role playing can begin. Exploring material brought to light during the warm-up will help to dramatize it.

Next Step

Directions: "I'm going to give you a sentence to finish. The sentence is 'The next step I want to take in my life is. . . .' "

Discussion: I have used this warm-up successfully when I have learned someone in the group has just taken a new step in his life. I may, for example, hear that Henrietta, who has just graduated from high school, has applied for her first job. With her permission, I will discuss it in a little more detail with Henrietta in front of the group, and then proceed with the warm-up.

Also on the "talky" undramatic side, this exercise provides a safe beginning. The director might follow up by asking each group member to tell the group what would be involved in taking his own next step, what would favor his doing so, what would hinder him, and use the answers to set up further scenes.

Another Path

Directions: "Today I want you to try something really different. I want you to fantasize a dream existence. If you weren't who you are, who would you like to be? Where would you live, what would you do with yourself? You can choose any life-style you've ever heard about."

Discussion: In a group where spontaneity and willingness to deal with fantasy exist, this warm-up can be quite exciting. The Walter

Mitty in each of us takes pleasure in being given an airing. Group members often develop a sense of spontaneous play in this warm-up which can be extended by scenes in which the individual chooses others in the group to help her role-play her fantasy existence. In one of our groups, for example, a famous ship captain conducted interviews with other group members applying for jobs on his ship for its impending world cruise; in another a millionaire chose to assign roles to two women who portrayed famous movie stars fighting over his attention.

Treasure Trunk

Directions: The director can start this activity with a story about treasure chests or trunks to provide the context for the warm-up. It is quiet, conducive to reflection. To set the scene, I like to describe two treasure chests, one in our attic, and one downstairs on our glassed-in porch. The one on the porch is very, very old. It's made from dark oak that would be splitting apart if it weren't for the iron bands that have held it together all these years. The iron work that decorates the chest tells us that it once belonged to two people, M.C. and A.H., who were about to get married in 1791. It comes from Westphalia, Germany, where my father's family lived for at least one hundred years. I've filled it with important things. It used to hold the leftovers from my parents' household: an old silver-service, some vases, picture frames, old photographs, bits of lace, a jar filled with buttons, my father's cigar box, my mother's combs and brushes. It also held documents. After these items had become absorbed into my own household, it became our Christmas box, holding the playdough ornaments the family has made since the children were small, decorations made in school, favorite ornaments and cards. This treasure chest contains family sentiment past and present together with items whose use and/or origin is lost in the mysterious past.

The treasure chest in our attic is different. It's only about seventy years old, a trunk covered in tattered linen with metal fittings, lined with chintz with a removable tray lined in the same faded print. For years now, it has been our theater trunk. It holds clothes, wigs, masks and makeup from my old theater days, from the children's school

performances and Halloween and other costume parties. There's a white beard and wig I'm particularly fond of, made of white string and a lot of fat cardboard commas, and a vest made from an old fur coat that's served as a medieval forester's costume as well as part of a gorilla. This is a treasure chest of the imagination.

Directions (after introduction): "Each of us has a collection. It could be in a cigar box, an envelope, a corner of a closet or a desk. All of them are full of treasures, some meaningful and others that puzzle us when we take them out. Why save this? Why not get rid of it?

"Here's what I want you to do. Go over one of your collections and take something out of it. Something you just don't need anymore. And throw it away. We have quite a collection of throwaways here—a huge jar of buttons attached to a clotheshorse in perpetual overdrive, obscene earrings left by an uncle, a collection of old bills, notes for a Ph.D. thesis, a rag doll. Just come over here, take it out of the trunk and dispose of it in whatever way that appeals to you. (Here the director pantomimes the action.) When you're done, someone else will follow. We won't talk until after we've finished. Go ahead."

Discussion: During the discussion, the director asks each group member to describe the item he got rid of. With a high functioning group, the members can be asked to talk as the object and describe themselves. This exercise can be followed by another exercise in which group members approach the chest to take something out that they want to keep.

Colors

Directions: "Think of a time in your life that you remember clearly and intensely. It can be any kind of event or time, happy or sad. Assign a color to that time. Then find a partner to be in that scene with you. Tell your partner something about the event and tell her what the color you have chosen means to you."

Discussion: Color often adds something intense and intuitive to the scene. Example: Marni remembers attempting to climb a glacier in the Swiss alps. The color is silver. It reflects the intense cold of

the mountains and also something about the quality of her fear. Her partner has to encourage, help, and scold her into continuing.

Life Is Easy . . . Life Is Hard

Directions: "Imagine a line down the middle of the room that represents a continuum. At one end, 'Life is easy.' At the other end, 'Life is hard.' Walk around, up and down, trying out different parts of the continuum and talking with some of the others you find there until you find the right spot for you."

Discussion: Having found his spot, each participant tells how he got there. A popular way of mapping any continuum relevant to the group, this warm-up can be used to map the members' degree of desire to be in the group, in the setting, their feeling of illness or health, etc. It permits emotional release from joy to intense complaining. Further development can pit individuals or groups from each side against each other or use members of the same side to double for one another.

Family Fantasy

Directions: "Imagine your family at any time that you recall vividly. Give yourself some time. Imagine how old you were, what you looked like, what the others looked like, what was going on, where you all were, etc. (Allow a few minutes to elapse.) Now, let's see if you can make a switch. Put that same family picture of yours into a fantasy scene, a scene, in other words that could take place anywhere, anytime."

Discussion: This warm-up gives permission to play out in surplus reality fantasies of wish fulfillment, positive or negative. It gives a heightened version of reality to fantasies of bliss as well as revenge taking place in reality, outer space, or an opium den.

Dialogues

Directions: "I am going to divide you up in pairs and give you a dialogue. One person will say: 'I'm leaving.' The other person will say, 'Don't go.' Each couple can develop the dialogue in their own way. We'll take them one at a time."

Discussion: Any short dialogue from our larder of time-worn conflicts can be used here: "I want it."—"You can't have it." "Yes, you did."—"No, I didn't." "Come here."—"I'm staying." "It's your fault."—"I had nothing to do with it." Even a simple round of dialogues starting with the word "Yes" from one person and answered "No" by the other can be used to set up further work.

Props

The director brings a variety of objects to the group—toys, articles of clothing, pots and pans, a mirror, a cane, an umbrella—any group of objects that might evoke memories or associations.

Directions: "Pick an object that draws you in some way. It could be something you like, or an object that reminds you of the past. Pick anything you have any feeling about. If two or three of you pick the same thing, that's fine. We'll take turns."

Discussion: After the objects have been selected, ask each person to speak as the object. (If the group is less functional, each person can just talk about the choice.)

These objects can be used in many different ways. Here are two more:

Different Uses

Directions: "I'm going to pass one of these objects around and see how many ways we can use it."

Discussion: The cane, for example, can be used to walk or dig with, as a sword, as a gun, to beat rugs, to threaten. This exercise promotes flexibility and imagination.

Commercials

Directions: "This time we're going to do something completely different with these objects. We're going to pick one, and then we're

going to use it to make a commercial. Each one of you will have a chance to make a commercial for your prop. For example, you could us this little wallet to advertise your store. 'We have purses and wallets of the very finest quality. This leather came from sheep that roamed the highest mountains in China, so it's rough and tough and will last you for years. Buy a wallet like this, and you'll never choose plastic again.' " This warm-up enlivens the group and can be used to help cope with feelings of inadequacy in public situations, performance anxiety, or on the positive side, fantasies of commercial success.

Story Telling

Directions: "We're going to tell a story, one sentence at a time. We don't know where it's going. I'll start. 'Once upon a time there was a dark, dense forest . . . ' Now, Mary, it's your turn. Add a sentence. Anything you want. When we've gone all the way around the circle, we'll know whether the story's finished or whether we want to add more by another round."

Discussion: A quiet group often uses this warm-up to enter the imagination and begin to have fun together, while the director gains information about the group's tele.

Fortunately-Unfortunately

Directions: "I'll begin. Fortunately, I got here on time. Mary, you could continue with 'Unfortunately, you still had to start the group late (just an example).' Then each person starts with 'Fortunately, or unfortunately.' "

Discussion: Here is another warm-up that is an ice-breaker in a relatively high-functioning group. Teen-agers enjoy it a lot. It encourages breaking some verbal rules and teasing a bit.

I expect each member of the group to participate in the warm-up if at all possible. In very large groups, listening to each person would mean taking up so much time that the energy of the warm-up is lost. In groups of more than twelve to fifteen people, I try to structure a warm-up that can be done in small groups, or one that

demands only a one-word or short-phrase response. The psychodrama director must always try to find strategies that promote maximum participation. Some of mine follow.

I try to achieve a middle ground between utter spontaneity—which could result in one member's dominating the group and many others excluding themselves—and rigid directorial control, which can reduce spontaneity and create the feeling that group members must look to the director for every move. Thus, in relatively spontaneous groups, I often sit back and wait for individuals to respond as they feel ready. When the time-lag between participants increases, or when I see the group participation ebbing before all of the members have participated, I encourage those who haven't spoken to do so. In groups whose spontaneity is low, I ask a staff member (or anyone whom I can trust to cooperate) to begin, and then proceed around the circle. If an individual is reluctant to participate, I give support by structuring the task for her in more detail (see "Resistances and Some Ways of Dealing with Them," chapter 13) and then ask her to try it again. In case of an out-and out refusal, I ask the group member to listen to some of the other responses, telling her that I will come back to her at the end to see if she's changed her mind.

One of the warm-up's primary functions is to create an atmosphere of spontaneity and trust in a very short time. The exercises themselves present the group with a common bond. The director has to see to it that the process of warming up actually takes place; in other words, that the group members's responses are whole-hearted instead of mechanical. It is crucial to encourage or praise any contribution. The warm-up should provide a supportive atmosphere where an individual can take her first steps toward self-disclosure; it is helpful to thank each participant by a nod, smile, a short comment about her contribution, or a literal "thank you." A warm-up functions at its optimum when it gains momentum as it proceeds—group members join in more and more rapidly, respond to each other, relaxing their defensive formality or stiffness. Group members often expect to fail. *I don't know what she wants us to do. I'm not at all sure I understand what she said. Well, I'll try, but I probably won't get it right.* If the group director validates the sense of impending doom with a judgmental response, the group's spirit immediately sags and the momentum cannot build.

In the event that a group member actually misunderstands what is required for the warm-up, the director confronts a dilemma. She thinks: *I'd like to validate this response but how can I when it's wrong? The others will now become confused about what they're supposed to do. On the other hand, correcting this fellow in front of all these people isn't easy.* The group members, many of whom have noticed the misunderstanding, think: *Well, here it is. Just what I thought would happen to me. He made a fool of himself. What if she tells him? How humiliating. What if she doesn't? That wouldn't be right either.* My strategy for solving this dilemma involves two steps. First I validate his contribution. Let's say the warm-up involves speaking a few sentences John's therapist would say about him. John, however, addresses his therapist. My first response is "Thanks. Sounds like you have some pretty strong feelings about that guy." Then, having stuck to my dictum: "Never let a response go by without validation," I go on to the second step, which involves clarifying the warm-up for John. "Could you try one other thing? Play the role of your therapist, Dr. Rosen, and tell us about John. OK?" In order to be as clear as possible I may then repeat the direction to the next person. "Let's hear your therapist talking about you." With this strategy, I may be able to avoid the bogging down of the group that results from ignoring or downgrading the mistaken response.

A different sort of dilemma comes up for the director who has chosen the wrong warm-up. She observes her group's wooden responses, their lack of enthusiasm and discovers an undeniable lack of momentum. A freeze-out has replaced the warm-up. In that case, I change the warm-up. If I have any clue in the form of a small spark that momentarily flickered somewhere and then fizzled, I use it for my next attempt. If not, I may try something nonverbal, if the first warm-up was verbal, or anything that takes us in a radically different direction. Before making the change, I check my perception with the group. "Would you rather stick with this warm-up or try something else?" This gives me a chance to check on my own paranoia (there are times when the fizzle is inside me and the group chooses to continue with the task) and enables group members to be part of a decision to change course. The director's willingness to change has an additional advantage: it models spontaneity. It conveys the message: In this group you don't have to stick to anything rigidly. You can change to something more fun when you feel bogged down.

Since nonverbal warm-ups don't require participants to talk, they work well with groups of strangers or groups reluctant to open up. They are not resistance-proof. *This is silly. Like nursery school. Is it going to be one of those touchey-feeley California type games? I don't want to touch anybody in this group! I don't want to pantomime anything. That's like charades!* The nonverbal warm-up can be shared and reworked in psychodramatic terms. Nonverbal activities get people out of their chairs, but they have the disadvantage of requiring a transitional step before actual role-playing can start. Most of these tasks need to be followed by group discussion or verbal warm-ups to provide clues for further work. The discussion will be easier if there is room for silent reflection immediately following the nonverbal work. The director can say, "Let's take a few moments to get in touch with our feelings. What's going on inside you right now? Perhaps you're feeling an emotion. Perhaps you have some awareness of a part of your face or body. Just take a few moments to become aware of how you're feeling. Once you know, go back over the exercise. Did you notice any changes? At any particular place in the exercise? Take your time. It's OK if you can't answer all these questions. Anything you discover will help us work further." It is important to leave a three to five minute period of silence. The discussion can begin with questions like "What was that like for you? What was happening in your body during (after) the exercise? What part of your body are you most aware of? Do you have anything you want to say to any other member of the group? To me? Have you felt similarly in any other life situation?"

NONVERBAL WARM-UPS

Simple Movement

Some groups—groups of aging, or handicapped people, for example—have a difficult time beginning any complex activity, verbal or nonverbal. These groups can begin with simple motions. The exercise also works well with higher functioning groups who can use it for a variety of stretches to warm up, as long as there is no danger of the group's feeling infantilized.

Directions: "I'm going to begin with a simple motion and I want you each to copy me. Pass it along." (The director can lift a finger, scratch her ear, tap her foot, etc.).

Discussion: When the movement has been done by everyone, the director can enlarge the gesture, or change it, for several rounds. This exercise can also be done in unison, and, eventually, group members can take turns as director of the movement.

Rearranging the Room

(This applies especially where the room has been set up in a formal way-rows of chairs, chairs around tables, etc.)

Directions: "I would like to begin by changing the room around. We need space for a stage. And I want you to be comfortable. So make some decisions about how and where you want to sit—chairs, floor, table, next to whom—and where the stage could be. I would like you to work silently. If you need to communicate with someone, do it in pantomime." (Take five to ten minutes.)

Discussion: Recalling a child's setting up her play room, this warm-up usually creates an atmosphere of spontaneity. It can be used with groups of over twenty people, as choice increases with the size of the group. One caution: if the group members appear as stiff as the furnishings of the room, do not use this warm-up. It needs to be welcomed at least by a few of the group members. I usually follow up with one of the verbal childhood-memory exercises.

Walking

(This task is possible only in a room large enough to permit freedom of movement.) Both this technique and "stomping" come from movement therapy.

Directions: "I would like to start by moving around a little. So, I'd like you first of all to get out of your chairs." (It is always important to get the group to its feet as soon as possible—otherwise they will sit and listen.) "Get in touch with the space around you. Don't talk. Take a look at where you're standing, who's standing near you, who's far away." (Allow about two minutes.) "Now start to walk slowly around the room taking in everything and everyone with your eyes.

Don't talk and don't touch anyone if you can help it." (Allow two to five minutes.) "Now increase your speed and avoid eye contact. Walk faster." (Allow two to three minutes.) "If you are about to bump into someone, don't stop yourself—unless you really don't want to. Let yourself be jostled. Avoid eye contact." (Allow two minutes.) "Stop. Tune in to yourself for a minute to get in touch with your feelings. Notice any body sensations." (Allow 1 minute.) "Now walk slowly again, making eye contact, and let yourself make physical contact if you want to." (Allow two to five minutes.) "Good. Let's stop now and come back to the circle." This exercise can also be ended by saying, "I would now like you to find a partner (form groups of three, five, etc.)—still without talking—and stop when you've done so." At the end of a few minutes, check to see whether anyone is without a partner and help him find one. In groups where members do not know one another, this is an easy way to choose partners for further work.

Walking with different emotions and experiences: This warm-up can be extended by asking group members to walk according to different emotions.

Directions: "Now walk happily—sadly—You're angry. Surprised." Or try different experiences.

Directions: "Now walk toward someone and shake hands, like you've met an old friend. . . . Now walk home from a bad experience. . . . " The walk can be varied in speed, take up a lot of space, as little as possible, etc.

Discussion: I've often used this warm-up for day-long workshops. It is a good wake-up as well as warm-up exercise. It can be performed even by inhibited groups and has the advantage of being easy to do and yielding a lot of group contact and active movement.

The discussion afterward often centers around the experience of making eye contact, as well as other experiences about being touched or not touched by relative strangers, feelings about trust, intimacy, shyness and privacy and provides a natural bridge to further work.

Writing with the Unaccustomed Hand, a Movement-Therapy Technique

Some materials are necessary: paper, preferably large pieces which can be torn off a roll of butcher paper or from a large sketch pad, and crayons, charcoal, or pencils.

Directions: "Today I'd like to try something which most of you probably haven't tried before: Writing with your unaccustomed hand. If you're right-handed, that means your left—otherwise vice versa. Writing this way often helps you say something you feel and remember things you've forgotten. In order to get into it, I'd like you to imagine yourself when you were first learning to write. Where were you—at home, school, nursery school? Picture the details of your environment. If you learned at school, picture for yourself how you got there. Did you walk? What did the pavement look like? Did you drive? With whom? What was the building like? Did it have a particular smell? Picture yourself as you were then. How old were you? What did it feel like to be you then? You can close your eyes if you wish." I give these directions in a soft, unobtrusive voice so that I don't interfere with the group's concentration. Then I wait about five minutes, encouraging group members to stay with their fantasy and discouraging any talk. "When you feel ready, I'd like you to pick up a crayon and tear off a piece of paper to write on. Stay with your young self. You're probably five or six years old. Find a place to write—the floor, your chair, the table over there. Now, I'd like you to practice writing your name. If you had a nickname, maybe you could practice writing that."

At this point, I usually begin to take on a shade of the first grade teacher, supporting the group in their focus on an earlier time in their lives. After about five minutes, I continue: "Now, still with your unaccustomed hand, I'd like you to try writing a little story about yourself still as you are first learning to write. Tell us your name, how old you are, and anything else you want us to know. Don't think it out. Let it come through you. See if you can just let your hand do the writing, write what it tells you, try not to think it out." After people start to write, I notice the ones who are finished and discourage their comparing notes. "Let me know when you're finished by looking up at me, don't talk about what you wrote for now." When all but a few group members have finished, I say, "Those of you who aren't finished, why don't you just finish the sentence you're writing and then come back to the group?" Back in the group, I ask each person to read his story aloud, still in role.

Discussion: Like the verbal childhood memory exercise discussed earlier, this warm-up facilitates the recall of childhood experiences with surprising clarity. The work that follows can elaborate these

memories by enacting specific situations suggested by the stories or by continuing with further childhood group activities. Once the task has been learned, it can be used for further warm-ups or continued group work. For example, group members can be encouraged to write letters to one another, to write about their families, to finish sentences in writing, always with the comment: "Try to let your hand do the writing for you."

Psychodrama is a way of playing. Writing with the unaccustomed hand is a direct route to the child in each of us. It never ceases to amaze me that a room full of worried-looking, self-conscious, wary "grown-ups" can so readily be transformed. Body postures and facial expressions change as memories bring back a part of childhood and then as group members warm to the difficult challenge of writing in this new-old way. People sit on the floor, sprawl, looking comfortable and absorbed. The stories are usually simple in language, very different from the way we usually talk. "I'm Cathy. I am five. I have a big brother and a big dog. I want to go to school but they won't let me." "My name is Bob. I like to run fast. School is lousy." "Dear Mary: I'm mad at you. You hurt my feelings. Goodbye forever. Love, Tom." In psychiatric wards, where the isolation of each client is almost palpable at times, writing with the unaccustomed hand often serves as a bridge between people. Our adult selves are experts at distancing others; as children we can reach out.

The Blind Walk, an Encounter Technique

Directions: After having people choose partners and pick the number 1 or 2, I say, "I would now like all the ones to close their eyes and the twos to lead them around this room. See how much rapport you can establish with your partner. Those of you who are leading can concentrate on giving your partner as full an experience of this environment as you can. You can touch, but don't talk at all." After five minutes, the procedure is repeated with partners reversing roles.

Discussion: The warm-up can end here with everyone coming back to the circle and, one pair at a time, talking with his partner about the experience. Because the activity requires a certain amount of trust, the verbal exchanges will reveal obstacles to intimate relationships. Further work can involve doubling and role-reversing and can

then be expanded. For example, suppose Bob says to Tom, "I liked leading you but when you were leading me I tightened up, I just couldn't get myself to trust you."

Eva: Who else could you say that sentence to?
Bob: "When you were leading me I couldn't get myself to trust you?" . . . My wife, I guess. We're always arguing about how I have to be boss all the time.
Eva: Can you choose someone in the group to take the role of your wife? O.K. Start by saying the sentence to her, and Joan, just respond by fitting yourself into this situation.

The blind walk has many variations, some or all of which can be used in warm-ups. All should take five to ten minutes and be done by both partners in both roles. (1) "This time you can talk but not touch. Stay close to your partner and give him a verbal picture of what he is about to encounter, for example, 'You can take three steps forward, then you'll be close to a chair. Walk around the chair.' Adam, give your partner as full an experience as possible of this environment. I will be making some changes in the way the room is set up so that there will be some unfamiliarity for all of you." I then set up various obstacles: two rows of chairs back to back to make a narrow path, a stack of chairs as a tower, some overturned chairs, etc., changing these again as the partners change roles. (2) "Now I'd like you to try something very difficult. Talk but don't touch. I'd like you to keep a distance of at least three feet from your partner and I'd like the directors to encourage the followers to take risks. There's running, jumping, exploring new aspects of the room, skipping, etc. Keep your distance from your partner. I will be making some changes in the way the room is set up so that it will be unfamiliar in places." (3) "Both partners close their eyes. Touch but don't talk." (4) "Both partners close their eyes. Talk but don't touch." (5) "Shut your eyes and explore the room by yourself."

Blind walk variations two to five should be attempted only after one of the first two versions has been done. The last two can be anxiety-provoking and should be timed accordingly; two to three minutes may be enough.

If more than one version of these walks is done—as a prelude to a day-long workshop, for example—spontaneity and playfulness

increase with each task. If this doesn't happen and the group becomes more constrained, the warm-up can be discontinued and the constraint used to stimulate further role-playing.

Family Sculptures, a Technique Developed by Virginia Satir

Directions: "I would like to try something new today. We haven't done it before so no one knows how to do it. It's called family sculptures and means that I want you to give us a living picture of your family. Would you like to try it, John?" I pick John because he has indicated conflicts with his mother and father in the last session. If the group is very unspontaneous or new to me, I may ask a staff member to volunteer, or I may sculpt my own parents, using members of the group. If John agrees, I continue, "How many people are there in your family? Could you pick someone to be your father, mother, etc.? All right. Now I'd like you to sculpt these people into a picture that would tell me something about the way your family relates. If I were walking along in the park and saw your sculpture, what would it look like? What picture would you get? Family members, your only job is to be putty in John's hands. Don't talk, and let John mold you into a sculpture. John, don't tell them how you want them to look. Place them where you want them and mold their bodies into the right position; you can even mold their facial expressions. Good. Now put yourself into the sculpture." If John has difficulty understanding, some examples can be given. "You know, some people sculpt their father with his back to the family and Mom and the children huddling close together. Or you could put Dad down on the floor with Mom standing over him, ruling the roost. There are all kinds of possibilities."

After John has finished, I may ask him to give his sculpture a title, and to take one last look around it to see whether he has achieved his goal or whether he wants to add some final touches. Then I say to the group members, "Be sure you each get a look at this sculpture. If you can't see it from where you're sitting, come on over here and take a look at each family member. Family members, hold your pose for another minute or so, then you can relax."

Discussion: This warm-up opens up many possibilities. Each family member can be asked to say a sentence that would fit the way he

or she felt in the sculpture. Group members may wish to speak for John, guessing how it might feel to be part of his family. Further work on John's family could follow, or a theme can be picked up from the group and tried out on various group members. In a group where the theme was isolation, several people had lines like, "I can't seem to touch or see anyone in this family." A theme can be pursued with each, asking whether the statement would fit for his own family and setting up a scene with family member(s) to whom he would like to say it.

Another way of working, especially if the group is scheduled for more than one hour, involves encouraging the rest of the group members to sculpt their families, reserving the decision about what to work on until the group has seen all the sculptures. If people are reluctant to sculpt their families, any other theme can be used for a sculpture: "Sculpt a person that you get along with in the group in the attitude you most like to see him. Sculpt one of the staff members in a way that really bugs you. Sculpt me in the way you see me operating in the group and then yourself in relation to me."

Sculpting is very rewarding. It accomplishes several goals: getting group members off their seats, permitting a nonthreatening form of touch, giving the sculptor a feeling of having some control in a situation—the family—in which he has often felt helpless. The sculpture also presents sculptor, family, and group members with rich themes for further work.

Nonverbal Conversations

Directions: After dividing the room in half, I ask the members to have a nonverbal conversation with someone on the other side of the room, using the way the conversation is going to decide whether to move closer or remain at a distance.

Discussion: Groups new to experiential techniques may be reluctant to engage in such an unusual activity. It should not be attempted with a new, shy group. Staff members can help to model the activity as it begins. This warm-up is very helpful when an ongoing group has been excessively verbal or intellectualizing. It provides welcome relief from an excess of verbiage and leads to a discussion in which

nonverbal messages are the focus. The work that follows often has a more direct, vivid quality.

Machines

Both this and the next technique come to us from the theater.

Directions: After breaking up the group into teams of five, I ask each group to take a moment and assign the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 to each member. I then pick a team to start the activity and say, "OK, now I'd like number 1 to come to the center of the room and begin a movement that could be part of a machine. Don't talk about it, just do it. Mystify us. You don't have to know what the machine is, just a mechanical movement. Fine. Now I'd like number two to come up and move in a way that relates to number one and makes sense in terms of creating a whole machine." I repeat the instructions for 3 and 4 and then ask 5, still without talking, to make sense of the machine and come up and show us how to use it. I will then ask him to tell us in words what the machine was and what he was doing.

Discussion: This warm-up tends to be successful in a group that has been "too serious" or unrelated—it is excellent for a group that needs to have fun and experience some spontaneous play. Further work will emerge from descriptions of the experience, associations to it, or fantasies aroused by the child-like quality of the task.

Nonverbal Gift-Giving

Directions: The group stands in a circle. "I'm going to give the person next to me a gift. I'm not going to talk and there aren't any real presents. I am going to show something about the quality of the gift by my gesture and how I hand it to him. He will then receive my gift and give a gift of his own to the next person." If further instruction is needed, I say, "Use your imagination. You can pick a rose from a rose bush and hand it to your partner, or take some sticky gum off your shoe—anything goes. You can put the rose behind your ear when you receive it, between your teeth or wear it as a corsage, you

can grind the gum into the floor, throw it away, or stick it on your own sole."

Discussion: This warm-up is seldom appropriate for a new group. Nor would it work in a group where conflicts have arisen. But for a group already acquainted with each other and with nonverbal communication, it has all the delights that make gift-giving a natural occurrence.

The follow-up discussion usually produces poignant memories, which are easily used for further work, of other dreaded or welcomed gifts.

Stomping

Directions: The group stands in a circle. "We're going to try something really crazy today. First of all, I want you to stop talking and really get in touch with where and how you're standing. Get a little space around you. Get a good grip on the floor with your feet. Loosen your knees so you're free to move if you want to. Now, try stomping your feet. Stomp as hard as you can. Harder. If you want to make noise with it, go ahead. Are you worrying about the other people watching you? They aren't. They're either stomping or worrying themselves. See if you can forget everything but the stomping. Good."

Discussion: This exercise can only be performed if the people downstairs will put up with it. (We were once caught by an angry druggist whose pharmacy was right below us; he insisted that we had made several bottles jump from the shelves.) It cannot be used with individuals who might become overstimulated and lose control. It is valuable in bringing life back into a dead, tired group and encourages talk about the expression of aggressive, hostile behavior useful for further work.

Passing an Imaginary Object

Directions: "I have a ball in my hand. (Director mimes ball) and I'm going to throw it to someone in the circle. (Mimes throwing the ball.) Then that person will catch it and throw it to someone else." After the imaginary ball has been thrown to several group members,

I may add "Now the ball is going to change size. For one person it may be really really heavy, (demonstrates) for another, light as a feather." After the group has learned that they can transform the ball's size, they can transform the ball itself. "Now the person who receives the ball, can receive it as anything you can imagine—it could be a large gooey substance, or you might be catching a puppy—use your imagination."

Discussion: This is an activity for a relatively high-functioning group. It stimulates the imagination and usually works to infuse the group with playful energy.

Sound-Ball

Directions: "I'm going to make a sound and direct it to someone in the circle. That person will imitate my sound and then make a different sound of their own and direct that to someone else."

Discussion: Like the imaginary ball toss, this warm-up needs a flexible, spontaneous group. It can build energy and group cohesion and reveal a lot about group tele.

Rhythms

Directions: "I'm going to start with a simple beat (director claps a simple 1-2 beat) and I'm going to ask the person standing next to me to repeat it and add something. We'll go around the room until the last—poor person—is challenged to repeat the whole sequence."

Discussion: Here is another warm-up for a high-functioning or a musical group. It is energizing, helps to focus concentration, and can challenge a group to learn to listen and work together.

Handsqueeze

Groups are often difficult to close. An easy ritual that promotes group cohesiveness is the handsqueeze.

Directions: "Let's stand in a circle. Now take the hand of the person next to you. When we're ready, I'm going to squeeze the hand of

one of the people next to me, I'm not going to tell you which, and that person will squeeze the person next to her and so on. When I get the squeeze back on my other hand, group will be over."

Discussion: If the squeeze doesn't come back in a reasonable amount of time, I find out where it got stuck and begin again. The activity can be extended by having others start the squeeze, by letting it travel quickly, by starting squeezes in both directions. It helps the group to leave with positive feelings.

Psychodrama demands that we play with children heavily burdened by their grown-up disguises. The atmosphere in our groups is usually rational, often serious, abstract, and wary. Self-conscious grown-ups fear the failures they were warned against by their parent grown-ups. The program calls for them to keep cool, calm, and collected; to know better; to think before they talk; to be mature; to do things right—stifling thoughts; thoughts which throttle spontaneity. The director, a clown in the circus of psychotherapy, uses the warm-up as a way of giving permission to be spontaneous. To flop, to be silly, to shout, to cry. To move around the room. To make noises. To remind the grown-ups that a child exists inside each of them.