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## **Influence of Group Therapy in Psychodrama on the Attachment Style of Children at-Risk: Educational, Emotional, Social, and Behavioral Aspects**

### KEYWORDS

children at-risk, attachment style, group therapy, psychodrama

### ABSTRACT

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Children at-risk are defined as children who may be found in physical, mental, or emotional situations of risk. Attachment theory assumes a connection between the origin family's experiences and the attachment patterns in the relations with another person, and many research studies have found that the attachment between the parent and the child has a main role in the child's normal development. The psychodrama group is one method of intervention that seeks to treat psychological and social problems through drama and provides the child with holding, security, and protection. The children act figures related to problems that trouble them and thus free themselves from distresses and drives and learn to see and understand the self and other people and to create beneficial patterns of behavior and attachment. Treatment with psychodrama has been found to be very effective in work with children who experience distress, both with themselves and with society.

### **Introduction**

The article addresses the influence of group therapy with psychodrama on the attachment style and goes into depth regarding the different characteristics and changes that occur in children and adolescents at-risk following their participation in the group.

The article consists of three main chapters, children at-risk, attachment style, and psychodrama group, and describes the influence of the group therapy on the development of a secure attachment style for children at-risk. The prevalent assumption is that understanding the initial stages that address in the development of the mother-infant relations, the parental holding, is significant in the understanding of the relations also at a later stage, primarily when there are disruptions in the relations, as in the case of children at-risk. These relations are motivated by emotional situations upon which mental representations of the self and others are built. The potential for emotional distress during adolescence is high, and adolescents at-risk feel additional difficulties to those that already exist in their lives, in all areas – biological, cognitive, emotional, social, and scholastic. Attachment theory comes to examine the development of the individual, from infancy to adulthood. Children at-risk who have experienced a deficient attachment style and were rejected have many difficulties. No human being is born with the ability of emotional control, and this control ability is related to the caregiving figure, the system of relations between the parent and the child, and the presence of an adult who is sensitive, protect, caring (Bowlby, 1973).

The participation in a dynamic group, since it is composed of a number of participants of the same age, contributes greatly to the individual in it to experience systems of relations with the rest of the group members and to be aware of his failures in his systems of relations, communication, and decision making. The group enables the individual to reach these places and to touch the inhibiting parts, to cope with failures, to look, to reconstruct, and to correct and to reach a remedial experience, to empower his sources of strength, and at the end to develop patterns of attachment correct for him and for growth in all areas of his life. Psychodrama enables the participants to open up to the 'self', to research and to examine internalized objects from the past, and to touch upon patterns of attachment that lead to destructive behavior and to build a new self. In psychodrama through role play and different fundamental techniques, the participants can non-verbally express their emotions and release tensions, drives, and desires that were not expressed anywhere else and create a secure and effective attachment style.

### **Children At-Risk in Israel**

In Israel, in recent years, there are more than two million children. Of these children, approximately 350,000 children and youths are defined as found in situa-

tions of risk and distress, when 40% of them suffered from verbal violence, 18% suffered from physical violence, and 5% suffered from sexual assault (Shmidt, 2006: 17). Children at-risk are defined by the welfare authorities as living in situations that endanger them in their family and in their environment, and as a result of these situations their ability to realize their rights is harmed in the areas of physical existence, health and development, belonging to the family, learning and acquisition of skills, welfare and emotional health, belonging and social participation, protection from others and from their own endangering behaviors (Shmidt, 2006). The concept of children at-risk ranges on a continuum when levels of risk are expressed in the composition of a number of different areas in which the problem exists, in the severity of the problem in each field, and in the duration of time that the child suffers from the problem or problems. In general, it can be said that at one end are found those defined as low risk and at the other end are those defined as high risk (Ben Rabi & Kahan-Starvinsky, 2003).

Children at-risk are defined as children who may be found in physical, mental, or emotional situations of risk. Most of them come from families that do not function, from great poverty, and/or from a delinquent social environment. The problems of these children are expressed primarily in the emotional, educational, social and behavioral realms and lead to many absences from the school, low educational achievements, behavior problems, and social difficulties. Considerable attention is dedicated in the Israeli educational system to the identification and treatment of these children.

The treatment approach accepted in Israel divided the population of children at-risk into three primary groups:

- Children and youths found in direct and immediate danger – these are children who are victims of abuse and neglect, children and youths with behavior problems, delinquent youths, youths who use drugs, and victims of abuse in the family.
- Children and youths who live in an endangering environment and are found in indirect risk – these are children who witness violence between their parents, addiction, delinquency, children who live in poverty, and children who live in communities that endanger them.
- Children and youths who live under circumstances that may create risk – these are children from families that are suffering a crisis because of divorce, from single-parent families, from families that suffer from unemployment, and from immigrant families.

The results of this situation of risk may lead the children in terms of personality to have low self-esteem and behavior problems, to suffer from alienation and rebelliousness, deficient social skills, isolation, and social rejection, to have a tendency to evade dealing with situations and difficulty meeting social pressures, and sometimes even to have deviant and/or delinquent behavior.

The educational influences also are apparent. It was found that the educational achievements of these children are significantly lower than those of their classmates, and this situation frequently causes them to drop out of the studies.

### **Attachment style**

The attachment theory of Bowlby is a theory well known to developmental psychologists and in the past decade to psychoanalysts, mainly those from the relational school. Its first clinical uses developed in the field of relations of young people and parents. Today this theory is considered most rich in conceptual terms and well established in research terms. It provides a basis for the steadily expanding explanations of individual development in the social-emotional realm from infancy to adulthood. In the field of human emotional development the initial system of regulation, involved in the regulation of anxiety and distress, is the attachment system. No person is born with the ability to control his emotional responses by himself: since the human infant is so powerless he experiences situations of distress that change in their intensity and sources. The control of these situations occurs in the pair of caregiver and infant.

The theoretical and research literature proposes a number of complementary explanations of the relation between the quality of system of relationships between the parent and the infant and the development of the emotional control ability in the developing child and the adult person. The developers of attachment theory, with Bowlby (1973, 1969) at their head, assumed that when changes from moment to moment in the infant, which indicate his situation, are interpreted successfully by the caregiving figure and controlled by her, then the infant learns that in situations of distress he does not reach lack of control and that the presence of an adult helps him create again equilibrium of sense of comfort. Moreover, as the presence of a sensitive, caring, and protective adult is more felt, a safe basis for a steadily broadening investigation is created. Bowlby (1973) described the phenomenon of the safe basis, which allows the infant to take the risk in distance from the safe area and from the parental protection in favor of the drive of curiosity, daring, and

learning: the physical and psychological presence of the parent in the background allows the infant to return to him for the purpose of control of a situation of anxiety or excessive arousal. The tension between the infant's need for security and the drive to investigate, as well as the child's gradual exposure by the parent to easy and temporary situations of tension, challenge in the child the development of new abilities and strategies for control, which do not depend on the parent's physical and immediate presence. Thus, from the initial innate abilities of attachment behavior – adherence, crying, search for closeness – more advanced abilities develop, such as communication through a call from a distance, speaking abilities, courtship behaviors, provocation, and so on. The child learns to use other symbolic and imaginary 'transition objects' and other symbolic and imaginary means of self-calming.

Already at the end of the first year, a consistent and stable attachment pattern has been created in the child, based on the accumulation of real experiences. This is, in essence, an internal work model, which includes inner representation of the self, of the other, and of relations and which constitutes an internalized system of expectations or an instrument for the interpretation of the reality. This pattern is awakened and is especially prominent after infancy in situations of anxiety and distress. Children who have formed a secure attachment experience themselves as deserving of love and support and as competent and experience others as somebody who is beneficial and whom they can rely upon. These children have flexible and enjoyable interpersonal relations.

Additional works of researchers of attachment theory, such as Insworth, Maine, and Saroff (in Fonagy, 1999), clarified the maladaptive patterns of emotional control that develop and form as a part of the personality of children who did not receive appropriate emotional control on the part of a sensitive caregiver. Children who experienced parental rejection during their first year of life and whose needs for security and calm were not provided by an adult (children who are classified as anxious avoidant in terms of attachment) learn to adopt on their own mechanisms of defense for emotional control. They protect themselves from dependence and expected rejection and attempt to excessively control their emotions. Through denial and avoidance of a sense of anxiety they display behaviors of extreme self-reliance, while taking risks and testing boundaries, or alternatively they limit ahead of time their area of interest and their needs, so that they will not enter situations of dependence and distress (for instance, "I'm not interested", "This is stupid", and "Who needs a hug"). These two strategies are adaptive for the

purpose of controlling anxiety in conditions where it is impossible to rely on the adult, but they are not adaptive in developmental terms, since they limit the development of flexibility and creativity and the range of significant interpersonal experiences. These solutions do not preserve the two extremes of the inner conflict but rather eliminate one (the need for relationship, warmth, and security) in favor of the other (independence), and consequently there is a loss of complexity, flexibility, and a variety of possibilities. Another group of children (who are classified as having ambivalent anxiety or opposition attachment) who experienced ineffective or inconsistent care display sub-control in emotional situations and find it difficult to control themselves even with small amounts of distress. They are found in a chronic situation of the broadcast of distress and the dependence on the adult and all their energies are invested in the monitoring of the relationship with the adult. The child is always frustrated, since the adult does not succeed in satisfying him. In these two groups, the control mechanisms the child adopts do not allow him to successfully uphold the tension between the ability to investigate and the ability to be calm, between the need of dependence and for the other and the need for independence and sense of self-confidence. This situation has a high cost in the process of development of interpersonal relations and of many different aspects of adjustment, especially in situations of coping with situations of pressure, as indicated by many longitudinal research studies (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

It is possible to see in this coping an inability to contain the conflict of dependence and independence and a surrender of the complexity in favor of the development of dependence alone. An even more serious situation in terms of the acquisition of strategies of emotional control occurs when the parent is a source of pressure and threat for the child. In this situation the child may develop disorganized attachment. This pattern is characterized by a sense of 'being stuck' that cannot be resolved of situations of extreme fear, since the figure who is supposed to help with the control of the fear is also the frightening figure. The behavior of these children shows lack of control strategies and hence dissociative characteristics and behaviors; their development is characterized by social difficulties and considerable difficulties in emotional control .

The explanations presented until now for the development of emotional control ability are incorporated in innovative tasks that engage in neuro-psychological-developmental aspects and primarily in the examination of the conditions under which the control ability develops both on the level of the brain and on the behavioral level. Siegel (2001, 2004) asserted that the brain is a social organism. in other

words, development is not only because of genetic influences but also due to interpersonal external stimuli. Research studies showed that experiences lead to nerve activity that activates genes to produce proteins enabling the creation of new synapses. It is thus possible to assume that experiences in the framework of attachment relations shape the relations in the developing brain and primarily the regional development in the peri-frontal brain, which is the region in which messages from different parts of the brain collect for integrative functioning. When there is good integration along with rich differentiation, flexible, creative, and stable functioning is enabled.

Bowlby (1988) proposed that these internal work models are the building blocks of the individual's attachment style, which are stable models of the individual's cognition, emotions, and behaviors in the systems of relations. According to Bowlby (1980), the individual organizes and assimilates the attachment behavior into his personality in such a way that this becomes the pattern of emotional context throughout his life.

The tripartite typology of attachment style in adulthood was widely supported in many research studies. In general, it is found especially relevant to the understanding of the interpersonal differences in cognition, emotions, and behaviors (Brennan & Shaver, 1993; Freeney & Noller, 1990, 1991; Mikulincer & Erev, 1990). In particular, this typology was also found to contribute to the explanation of difference of beliefs regarding control (Collins & Read, 1990), self-worth (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer, 1995), cognitive processing of the information (Mikulincer, 1995), conflict resolution (Pistole, 1989), defense mechanisms (Mikulincer & Horesh, 1999), and psychopathological responses (for instance, Brennan & Shaver, 1995).

According to Bowlby (1969), it is possible to conceptualize behaviors intended to achieve closeness as a psycho-evolutionary system for the management of distress. In his opinion, attachment figures function as a safe haven where the individual can go when he needs comfort, support, and re-approval in situation of pressure. These figures also act as 'auxiliary egos' in the management of distress and as a 'secure base' where the individual can develop his personality in a supportive and approving atmosphere. On this basis, it is possible to see the closeness to the significant others as an innate device for the regulation of emotions, which enables the individual to cope and manage his distress with the other's help (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998).

In the case of non-secure attachment, negative attachment experiences may disrupt effective implementation of the system of attachment and adoption of less effective ways of control of the emotions. The assumption is that these people experience the pressuring event as overwhelming, stifling, and awakening fear and threat of collapse. They experience themselves as having insufficient resources for coping, and therefore they find it difficult to adjust well to changes and remain behind weakened in powers and connect this attempt to the strengthening of their basic belief that the availability of others is not stable and that their ability to cope with these situations is deficient (Mikulincer, 1998).

## **The Group**

In group work there is a parallel of the system of relations between the mother and infant and the instructor and the group. The instructor must provide the members of the group with the experience of a good enough mother, concurrently with the framework of reference that will enable the participants of the group to re-experience the deficiencies in the initial system in a remedial manner (Birne, in Rosenwasser, 1997). Foulkes, S.H., and Anthony, E.J. (1965) was the first to define the phenomenon of reflection, the mirror responses that arise in the encounter among a number of people. The person sees himself or part of himself through his reflection in interactions with other people in the group :Subgroups as a promoting source, for belonging, cohesion, reciprocity, and mutual relations, and also as a disrupting source that distorts the life and development of the group.

Projective identification and interpersonal relations in the group, according to Klein (in Anderson, 1992) and Bion (1992), in which the individual is exposed to different situations in the experience in the here and now, in which images and dyads arise from the systems of relations internalized from childhood and deeper from the past, which cause the expression of emotions, memory, and self-discoveries. The exposure creates high involvement.

In these situations, the group touches the primordial layers of the mind, the first mother, the group, sibling rivalries, struggle for place and control, love and esteem, the instructor's authority and dependence on him, and the person projects bad and/or good parts from the parts of his self, and copes with emotional situation that he could not deal with in the past. A person undergoes a remedial emotional experience against the object of projection and the part met in him, good or bad, which is his part, and eventually achieves insights. In an interpersonal

process, the exposure enables aggression against the objects of projection, pain, disconnection of connections, and difficulties in separation and the desire for individuation, which the individual in the group undergoes as a whole. Alongside these, the individual has development and growth and taking back part from the projections he projected as a step for the beginning of a process of correction in interpersonal relations and acceptance of these aspects of the self that were considered originally to be bad or undesired.

## Group Work

The concept of the group can be presented on a continuum, when the power of the group is determined by the intensiveness of the relationship and the mutual dependence. This definition emphasizes primarily contacts among people (Rosenwasser, 1997). Ziv and Baharav (2001) in their book *Group Journey* and Rosenwasser (1997) quoted Levin, who contributed greatly to the study of groups and defined the group as a dynamic whole based on reciprocal dependence among the members of its parts. In addition, he maintained that the group is more than the sum of all its elements, namely that the 'we-ness' is greater than the sum of the individual elements of the group. Reciprocal dependence among the group members is an indicator of the group. This dependence exists when the action of the individual and its results are influenced by the activity of the others and when the action of the individual influences the action of others and the results of their activity.

Rioch (1970) in his article, *The Work of Bion on Groups* wrote that Bion defined a group as a dynamic realm found in a relationship with other areas. He was not interested in individuals but in the group as one functioning unit and spoke of the relationship between the need for company and belonging and the need for independent identity. The common reality, according to him, is reciprocal dependence. We want to believe that we are free from 'unconscious forces' outside or inside of us, but frequently these forces flood us and become a source of non-rational group behavior. He differentiated between two main tendencies in the life of the group: the tendency to work on the main task and the work group mentality, which frequently is unconscious, and the tendency to avoid work on the main task. Bion called this the basic assumption mentality. These contradictory tendencies can be thought of as a wish to cope with the reality and the wish to avoid it when it is painful or causes a psychological conflict in the group or among its members.

According to Bion, there are three basic assumptions: dependency, fight-flight, and pairing.

Much of the supposed non-rational and chaotic behavior that we see in the group can be seen as deriving from basic assumptions shared by all the group members. Every assumption raises another complex system of emotions, thoughts, and behavior. Bion (1967) also called the assumption of the group that it is meeting to be helped by its instructor the dependence assumption, according to which the group members assume that they have gathered to receive treatment and protection from the instructor. The group members will act like a wandering flock and will attribute to the instructor traits of omnipotence and omniscience. The basic assumption is found at the basis of the behavior and is unconscious, and although this fantasy cannot be actualized in reality, the group members act as if they really can create a situation that fits their desires. Bion thought that people can learn about their earlier problems with authority and thus will understand their natural adjustment ability and basic assumptions and thus can build more equal and satisfactory relations. This theoretical orientation led to a unique style of intervention, in which the instructor tends not to intervene, although infrequently he will offer interpretations that will help the group members examine the ways of expression of the basic assumption according to which they function.

Birne (in Rosenwasser, 1997) described the development of the group in relation to the phases described by Klein in object relations theory. Birne cited Kernberg (1980), who defined the object relations theory as an analytical approach to internalized interpersonal relations that studies how interpersonal relations determine intra-psychoic constructs, how these intra-psychoic constructs are retained or changed, and how they cause re-awakening of the internalized relations from the past, in the context of current personal relations. Object relations theory addresses the interactions between the subjects' internal world and the current interpersonal relations. Thus it will be possible to explain a person's behavior in his relations with others in the present as an externalized expression of his relations with significant figures in his past in his first years of life. Birne looked at the group through the theory of Klein; the relations between the infant, the group, or the patient (the subject) and the mother, the instructor, or therapist (object) are the relations that the subject experiences and connects through them with his social world. The person brings a pattern, introjection, something emotional from childhood and projects them onto other people with whom he forges relations. In the group, which is like a family, a person can make a change in his object relations

and be reborn. Object relations are the psychology of two, since there is no infant without a mother. The conceptualization of Birne describes parallelism in the relations between the instructor and the group and the mother and the infant. The group's normal development is related to the instructor's ability to be good enough. This is the challenge that the instructor faces. Just like the mother needs to function to the best of her ability and not be perfect, the instructor too needs to provide experiences of the non-perfect mother along with providing space for the participants to return to their initial patterns, to where things went wrong, and to enable the group to use them as an object of projection throughout the sessions.

### **Importance of the Group and Its Healing Factors**

Foulkes (in Pines, 1985: 211-231), like Bion, addressed the group as a whole but in a different manner. He asserted that through the experience in group work we can evaluate the extent of our shared situation caused through unconscious forces. He said that the fact that we can easily understand one another and that this understanding extends to such a depth is a symbol of our membership in a shared culture. He called this shared culture the foundation matrix (Foulkes, 1964). The matrix is a concept based on the communication network fashioned by its participants over time. On the basis of this communication network a form of psychological organization develops in the group, based on shared experiences, system of relations, and understandings. The shared history of interpersonal systems of relations in the group and the shared work lead to meaning and form the matrix of this dynamic group. The members of the group for the most part enter the group hoping to find ease from some suffering without a radical change. The search for self-understanding gradually becomes the main motive, when people discover that this is the main point that the situation has to offer: help in self-understanding through work with others who also engage in this. Self-understanding is the search for what unifies the diverse experiences with our illusions, our relations with others.

The group has power, and belonging to it is the connection to the peer group, which is most important for children and especially for children at-risk. Children at-risk frequently have social problems, and therefore they are alone and rejected by their peers. In the group there is universal space to share the difficulties with others and to know that the others also have similar difficulties. This knowledge is calming, provides correct proportion on the personal situation, and increases the sense of normativity. In the group there is the opportunity to realize that every-

body has conflicts and everybody experiences both difficult emotions and emotions considered undesirable (anger, anxiety). Thus, the group members are freed from feelings of fear, frustration, and guilt, and the self-acceptance increases. In addition, the encounter grants the children who participate in them tools for the development of their personal and social abilities, which lead them to build relations with children their age and to assess the true powers innate in them.

### **The Group and the Process of Individuation**

Erikson (1987) and Blos (1962) see adolescence to be another birth or the end of the psychological birth that began at age three. The departure from the symbiotic relationship at birth is parallel to the departure from the family dependence in adolescence. Only at the end of separation-individuation during childhood does the child begin to perceive himself as a separate self with borders of his own. In this stage the child is free of the internalized objects, so as to create an autonomous ego, which will enable individuation and achievement of the development tasks, which also include finding an object of love outside of the family, with the possibility of 'mergence' with another without being afraid of losing the self.

In the system of relations of object-subject, Mitchell and Black (2006) in their book *Freud and beyond* addressed one of the most important contributions of Fairbairn to psychoanalytic theory, in its presentation of an alternative viewpoint regarding the libido. In contrast to Freud, who presented the libido as guided by pleasure, Fairbairn considered the libido as object-oriented, or in other words, as oriented to create a relationship with another person. The most significant and primary relationship is the relationship created by the child and his parents, a relationship that leads to a very strong connection between them and shapes his emotional life. The initial objects of the parents constitute a prototype for future relationships, and thus the initial relationship with them largely determines the child's emotional experiences in the continuation of his life. He maintained that the objects that the child acquires in his initial stages of life constitute a model for all his future experiences that pertain to relationships with others. The inner object relations describe relationships that are held in the person's mind. Normal parents created in the child an orientation directed towards real people and the formation of real relationships. When the child's psychological needs are not satisfied by his parents, pathology of avoidance of the referral to the outside reality is created and instead of true relations with others the person develops inner, imaginary objects

and holds with them fantastical relations. According to Fairbairn, a child of parents who are emotionally unavailable will separate between the responsive aspect in his parents (the good object) and the non-responsive aspect (the unsatisfying object). The child internalizes the non-responsive aspects in his parents and perceives these characteristics as a part of him, since they are not present in reality. This defense mechanism is called 'self-split', and in it the parent's good and bad characteristics are separated and there is no room to combine between the two parts and to feel a process of separation-individuation.

Kohut (2005) noted that abnormal development is the fault of a non-empathetic parent who is not attentive to the child's needs. The infant cannot internalize the necessary objects and consequently will become a narcissistic 'vacuum' that requires another to satisfy his needs and is never satiated. Therefore, he cannot build a true and adult relationship.

## Psychodrama

Psychodrama, developed by Moreno (1921), is a method in group psychotherapy that constitutes a part of the methods of art therapy. The word psychodrama is composed of two words in Greek: *psyche* (mind, soul) and *drama* (action). In other words, it means the mind in action. The work method in psychodrama is based on dramatic action and role play through which the participant presents problems, difficulties, and personal and interpersonal difficulties as well as solutions and ways of coping, so as to reveal the individual's inner world, understand his system of relations, and clarify patterns of behavior. Through psychodrama it is possible to change inadequate and/or undesired situations and responses and to act in new and more suited ways, such as the identification and release of emotional barriers so as to achieve mental balance (Israeli Association for Psychodrama Website, <http://www.iafp.org.il>). Psychodrama enables the participant, through physical and verbal action, to reconstruct his experiences, in the framework of the group and with the help of the group members. In this way, psychodrama accompanies the participants into their inner world, which they describe and express in drama. Through the group activity in psychodrama, the participant has the possibility of experiencing a corrective experience of the original event, of changing his perspective on it, and of finding alternatives for coping with the loaded mental topics (Artzi, 1991; Blatner, 1973; Naharin, 1985).

Psychodrama enables the reconstruction of the participant's experiences in the group framework and with the help of the other group members. In psychodrama, through physical and verbal activity, the participant relives parts of his life, which he can investigate from the raising of feelings, observation, and coping. After the activity there is the possibility of changing the events, re-organizing them for clarification, and finding alternatives for dealing with the loaded topics (Artzi, 1991; Blatner, 1973; Naharin, 1985). Dayton (1994) maintained that psychodrama is a method of treatment in which emotions that have been repressed in the past are released and surface in the present, all in an atmosphere that inculcates a sense of safety and holding.

### Structure of Psychodrama

There are three important stages in classic psychodrama (Naharin, 1985): warm-up, enactment, and sharing and closure.

**Warm-up.** This is the stage in which the group and instructor prepare themselves for action. This is a transition stage between the outside world and the internal world that occurs in the group, the preparation of the grounds. This is the stage in which the warm-up is sometimes the goal that achieves the entry into the group work. This stage is characterized by opening conversations between the participants, short games, movement exercises, and guided imagery. The goal of the warm-up is the creation of trust among the participants, the creation of a feeling of safety and closeness, while reducing the anxiety, before the participants exposure. During the warm-up it is possible that a participant will stand out and/or the instructor will direct the exercise to a certain participant so that in the continuation, in the stage of action, his topic will be processed in psychodrama. This participant is called the protagonist .

**Enactment.** The beginning of the presentation presented on a defined space, such as a stage. Some of the participants take part actively in the presentation and others serve as observers. First, the protagonist tells about himself and the problem that is taken from his life (in the past or in the present) or from the world of his fantasies and dreams .

**Sharing and closure.** This is the transition from the world of the group to the world of reality. In this stage the protagonist returns to the group circle and needs encouragement, protection, acceptance, and support. The group members are given the opportunity to share their emotions, ideas, and experiences with the

protagonist and to share with one another the experience they experienced with him in particular and in the group as a whole .

## **Participants**

**Protagonist.** According to the translation from the Greek, it means the ‘first to the struggle’. Following the ancient tribal drama, Greek classics defined the protagonist as the one whose story of suffering is told on the stage. The coping and the purification at the end of the drama represented a process experienced by each and every person in the tribe or community. Thus in the group it is possible to find a relation to this rationale, when the group chooses the protagonist as the representation of the group topic/voice. He goes after the maximum warm-up relative to the group, when he is ready and willing to research a problem, topic, or conflict. During the event he lives in his world, a world that he raised and revealed with great power through the different psychodrama techniques. He raises the true figures and experiences (even if he imagined them, their core is true), he acts his life. With the instructor’s help, he guides the auxiliary ego and the action. Thus, through the activity of psychodrama the protagonist meets with the figures involved in his mental conflicts (Artzi, 1991).

**Instructor.** According to Moreno (1921), the instructor has different roles: he is a director, a therapist, and an analyst. Kellerman (2007) added a fourth role, the instructor of the group. He chooses the protagonist or helps him be chosen, and encourages him to expose himself, to overcome his objections, and to be at the center of the activity. He is attentive to absorb every hint that arises from the protagonist, verbal or nonverbal, and to convert it to a dramatic activity, through warm-up, presentation of the problem, experience of a variety of roles, and involvement of members in the group. The instructor leads the participants in the group to high reciprocal identification, and at the end the participants return to sit in a circle and share the feelings they experienced during the action and at its end (sharing closure).

**Auxiliary Ego.** This is any member of the group participating in psychodrama (aside from the instructor), who can help the protagonist work through his issue. The auxiliary ego is a member of the group who mustered to represent the protagonist’s feelings and emotions as they arose in the session. Psychodrama enables this entire cosmos to be brought into the acting. The auxiliary ego can act close figures, such as husband, wife, son, or daughter, parents, and siblings, or distant

figures. The auxiliary ego can also represent figures who are absent or abstract, such as an absent father or mother, ideals, God or the devil, life or death. For the most part the protagonist chooses the auxiliary ego, the member who in his opinion can contribute to him in acting confidently one of the figures (Moreno, 1921).

**Group.** There are two references to it; the first when the group is at the center, in the group process, and the second when the protagonist stands at the center and the group members function as an auxiliary ego. In addition, it is possible to combine between the two. Since the protagonist is a person who acts his true life (unlike an actor), the scenes that are acted by the group members create the life story that constitutes together the story of the group as a whole.

## Psychodrama Techniques

There are many psychodrama techniques, including the use of the following.

**Double.** The double is another ego auxiliary, which helps the protagonist express his inner voices and thus promotes him for the encounter with repressed conflicts. The double speaks only in the first person: "I want ... I am angry". The goal of the role is to express parts that the protagonist did not dare say aloud or is not aware of them. The double awakens the protagonist to be emotionally involved in his experience (Naharin, 1985).

**Role reversal.** In role reversal one of the members acts the figure of the protagonist as it is expressed. He switches chairs with the protagonist, sits in his place, and continues from where he stopped. The member can continue to directions different from that of the protagonist. However, the ability to perform role reversal indicates trust and confidence in the boundaries and integrity of the self. (Artzi, 1991).

**Empty chair.** The instructor places an empty chair and invites the participants openly to sit in it and reveal at the center of the circle a person with whom he has to continue clarification, with whom he has unfinished business, etc. The chair can also symbolize an absent significant figure and it is then possible to turn to him with a request, with a plea, in anger. The participant can sit on two chairs that can serve as different parts of the self. One chair will be for the part that is submissive, scared, small, and powerless, while the other chair will be for the part that is angry, exploding, recognizing the value of the self, and returning war.

## Advantages of Psychodrama Work with Children At-Risk

According to Tomison (1996), emotional and physical neglect prevents the essential conditions for the child's healthy emotional and physical development. Therefore, when the child is found at-risk, he will apparently search for his way to survive in his environment. This child will do everything possible to survive: he will fight, he will close up in himself and will attack to protect himself, and he will feel lack of trust and inability to create interpersonal relations. According to Kohut (in Miller, 1992), since these children lack normal emotional structures that include essential patterns and skills through which they can connect with significant figures, the group provides a mirror through which the child's image, feelings, and emotions are reflected. This mirror, this reflection, of what is good and what is bad, is important for these children, because they do not receive direction for life and alternatives from the significant figures in their lives, as other children do. They need a mirror to create a separate and distinct identity. There is a tremendous advantage to work with children with psychodrama because of the fact that the acting is at the center of the psychodrama occurrence. Through shared acting with the instructor and the rest of the children, the child externalizes the inner drama occurring in him. This externalization enables awareness, process, and change desired for the child who reveals his innerness through psychodrama.

Therefore, the treatment with psychodrama is very effective in work with children who experience distress, both with themselves and with society. It enables these distresses to be presented openly and to be examined together in an experiential manner and allows the insights that arise from psychodrama for everyday life to be achieved.

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## Wpływ grupowej terapii w psychodramie na styl przywiązania u dzieci w grupie ryzyka: aspekt edukacyjny, emocjonalny, społeczny oraz behawioralny

### Streszczenie

Dzieci ze środowisk defaworyzowanych to osoby, które często znajdują się w sytuacjach ryzyka fizycznego i psychicznego, doświadczają bowiem wielu problemów emocjonalnych i społecznych będących efektem braku poczucia bezpieczeństwa psychicznego, kompetencji i sprawstwa. Trudności w relacjach interpersonalnych oraz pojawiające się niepowodzenia szkolne mają swoje korzenie w dzieciństwie. To, jak funkcjonuje człowiek, w znacznej mierze zależy jest bowiem od stylu przywiązania przyjętego przez podstawowych opiekunów dziecka oraz innych doświadczeń związanych z systemem rodzinnym, które mogły znacząco zakłócić rozwój i nie pozwolić dziecku na zbudowanie wysokiego, realnego poczucia własnej wartości.

I choć negatywne przekonania o sobie samym trudno zniwelować w kolejnych latach – uczenie się nie jest bowiem neutralnym procesem istniejącym poza indywidualnym potencjałem jednostki oraz jego społeczno-kulturowymi stymulatorami i inhibitorami – skuteczną metodą pracy z dziećmi może okazać się psychodrama. Pozwala ona zahamować tendencję do tworzenia się, czy nasilania już istniejącej, negatywnej samooceny, uwalnia od niepokojów i zachowań agresywnych, sprzyja stopniowemu rozwojowi samoświadomości, akceptacji siebie, odpowiedzialności za podejmowane wybory, asertywności, umiejętności wyznaczania sobie celów, a przede wszystkim osobowej integralności.