Instructor’s Manual
for
HEALING CHILDHOOD ABUSE THROUGH PSYCHODRAMA

with
TIAN DAYTON, PHD, TEP

Manual by
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psychotherapy.net
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Instructor’s Manual for Healing Childhood Abuse through Psychodrama

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Instructor’s Manual for

HEALING CHILDHOOD ABUSE THROUGH PSYCHODRAMA

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

1. USE THE TRANSCRIPTS
Make notes in the video Transcript for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during the video and post-viewing.

2. FACILITATE DISCUSSION
Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The Discussion Questions provide ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. LET IT FLOW
Allow the session to play out some so viewers can appreciate the work over time instead of stopping the video too often. It is best to watch the video in its entirety since issues untouched in earlier parts often play out later. Encourage viewers to voice their opinions, as no therapist or therapy session is perfect. What do viewers think works and does not work in the session? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes and it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

4. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL
Assign readings from Suggestions for Further Readings and Websites prior to viewing. You can also time the video to coincide with other course or training materials on related topics.

5. REFLECT ON REFLECTIONS
Before showing the video, hand out copies of Dayton’s Reflections on the Psychodrama, giving participants an inside view of Tian Dayton’s experience and thought process. Dayton’s commentary brings the approach to life, and provides a helpful, organizing lens through which participants can enhance the learning value of watching the video.
6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER
See suggestions in Reaction Paper section.

7. PRACTICE PSYCHODRAMA
After watching the video, ask for two participants to volunteer as a protagonist and a director. Instruct the protagonist to identify an issue or concern in their life and select someone from the group to play the role of another person (co-worker, family member, friend, etc.) or part (child self, body part, etc.) involved. Following the lead of the protagonist, have the director facilitate a scene in which the participants practice the role reversal technique, giving the protagonist an opportunity to step into both roles in the psychodrama. Encourage audience members to step in as auxiliary egos to double for the protagonist. See Basics of Psychodrama and Dayton’s Reflections on the Video in this manual for a detailed description of the roles and techniques of psychodrama.

When the director ends the scene, facilitate group sharing, giving the participants on the stage the chance to de-role and for all members of the group to talk about their experience of participating in and witnessing the psychodrama.

Depending upon time constraints, repeat the process as necessary, in order to give each participant the chance to play different roles. Keep in mind that all members are active participants and can benefit from the psychodrama, regardless of the role they play. Once everyone has been on the stage, open up a general group discussion on what participants learned about Dayton’s psychodramatic approach.

8. WATCH THE SERIES
This video is one of a two-part series on psychodramatic approaches to healing trauma. Dayton explains the structure of psychodrama in Healing Childhood Abuse through Psychodrama, and then focuses on one psychodrama with a man struggling with the residual effects of being physically and emotionally abused as a child. In Trauma and the Body, Dayton works with three different individuals, using psychodrama to identify and address traumatic wounds that present themselves somatically. By showing both of the videos in the
series, you give viewers the opportunity to increase their skills and understanding of the connection between the mind and the body, how trauma manifests itself in the body, and how to use psychodrama to help clients heal from traumatic pain.

**PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST**

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists may feel on the spot to put on a good demonstration, and clients can be self-conscious in front of a camera. Therapists often move more quickly than they would in everyday practice to demonstrate a particular technique. Despite these factors, therapists and clients on video can engage in a realistic session that conveys a wealth of information not contained in books or therapy transcripts: body language, tone of voice, facial expression, rhythm of the interaction, quality of the alliance – all aspects of the therapeutic relationship that are unique to an interpersonal encounter.

Psychotherapy is an intensely private matter. Unlike the training in other professions, students and practitioners rarely have an opportunity to see their mentors at work. But watching therapy on video is the next best thing.

One more note: The personal style of therapists is often as important as their techniques and theories. Therapists are usually drawn to approaches that mesh well with their own personality. Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, students and trainees must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research that fits their own personal style and the needs of their clients.

**PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Because this video contains an actual psychodrama, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants who courageously shared their personal lives with us.
Basics of Psychodrama

Psychodrama is a role-playing method of psychotherapy developed by J.L. Moreno in Vienna at the turn of the 20th century. Often referred to as the father of group therapy, Moreno developed the first therapy designed to treat people in groups rather than exclusively in a one-to-one setting, as was the standard set by Freud during this period.

Psychodrama allows complexes and conflicts to be concretized by casting group members to play roles from the life of the protagonist. It provides the protagonist a physical encounter with the self; to see and experience what he carries within his mind and body, so that it can be made explicit, concrete and can be dealt with in the here-and-now.

The purpose of psychodramatic role-plays is to resolve conflicts and gain insight through action rather than talk alone. Through role-play, thinking, feeling and behavior emerge simultaneously to allow for a fuller picture of what is being carried in the psyche to come into view. The double acts as an inner voice, putting words to interior thoughts, sensations and emotions that may be less than conscious. This doubling from others helps to enhance awareness of self and provide the protagonist with a feeling of being seen, supported and understood. Role reversal allows the protagonist to stand in another person’s shoes in the role-play in order to see the self from the position of the other and to experience being in someone else’s skin.

THE BASIC ELEMENTS

*The Stage:* The designated area where the enactment occurs

*The Protagonist:* The person whose issues are being explored

*The Director:* The facilitator or therapist; the director follows the lead of the protagonist

*The Auxiliary Egos:* The role players in the protagonist’s drama, chosen by the protagonist

*The Audience:* The group who witnesses the action and from which roles are selected
THE FORMAT

Warm Up: When the group warms up to their own issues and those present within the group

Enactment: The actual role-play or action part of the psychodramatic process

Sharing: The group sharing, processing, closure and identification with elements of the role-play

DYNAMICS AND TECHNIQUES

Doubling: When the director or group members stand behind the protagonist and act as an inner voice articulating what is not said but may be experienced unconsciously

Role Reversal: Physically reversing roles and playing the part of another person, place or thing within the drama in order to gain a fuller, richer perspective on the self. Role reversal also allows the protagonist to gain insight into what might be driving the behavior of another person.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Catharsis: The expulsion of deep emotion, be it grief, anger, sadness, confusion, laughter or joy

Act Hunger: A hunger for or towards action of some kind

Act Completion: Bringing an act hunger into a state of closure, satisfaction or completion

Action Insight: Insight that occurs as a result of or during enactments

Concretization: The act of externalizing in service of healing; giving shape and form to the intrapsychic world of the protagonist

Open tensions: Areas within the psyche or self-system that feel unfinished, incomplete or left in a state of anxious, unfinished closure

Role-Playing: The acting out of an aspect of self, surplus reality or a significant person in the protagonist’s life

Surplus Reality: The intrapsychic reality and dynamics of a person, what shapes, drives and defines their inner world and their thinking,
feeling and behavior

This material is from Tian Dayton’s website, www.tiandayton.com.

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Dayton’s Reflections on the Psychodrama

Bob’s story is near and dear to my heart. As a trainee in psychodrama, Bob was filled with a kind of talent, inner beauty and humor that led me to care deeply about him, and I had a powerful wish to see him on video. Sadly, Bob died young. He never lived to see what you will see in this video.

Psychodramatically speaking, this is a story that begins with Bob sharing a problematic reenactment dynamic; he was concerned that he was reenacting something with his granddaughter that was being fueled by unresolved pain from his own childhood. We used the spectrogram as a warm up and asked criterion questions that related to processing grief issues. The criterion question on the spectrogram was “how much anger are you feeling?” and Bob responded that he was feeling a lot of it. He then shared his concern about the “old anger” that was getting triggered in him during certain interactions with his granddaughter.

Because our tendency to dissociate from painful or traumatic material is so powerful, it can be difficult both to feel the feelings that may have been shut down through fear and to find the words to describe them when asked to do so by a therapist. The beauty of psychodrama is that it allows the protagonist to talk to an issue before they are asked to talk about it. This allows them to concretize the “problem” so that they can explore both inner and outer conflicts either with another person, a part of themselves, or both, as was the case with Bob. Once the protagonist is in the role-play, buried emotions are triggered (in what Fritz Perls might have called a safe emergency). They come to the surface so that the protagonist can see themselves in action actually reliving and dealing with their past before they are asked to reflect on it or describe it.

Psychodrama allows us to experience ourselves in action and then to reflect on what emerges naturally in the psychodramatic moment. Through the double we can put words on emotions that may have remained locked within the soma or limbic world of the protagonist (more on this in my other training video, Trauma and the Body).
Exhuming painful material through *role playing* or *doubling* also has the lovely effect of naturally minimizing resistance. It feels good to say what you need to say to the actual person (or surrogate representing that person) rather than to be asked to talk about them. How many conversations ring in our heads for years on end in which we tell someone off, or break down, scream, cry and even forgive once we have rid ourselves of pent up rage? Psychodrama allows for just that cathartic release that we so often yearn for, and at no one’s expense. Even witnessing another person’s release can be instructive and cathartic if it is done in a conscious manner with healing as the goal.

Bob’s presenting issue was with his granddaughter, but in order to resolve the feelings that might be driving his behavior with her we needed to spiral back into his past and deal with what he might have experienced as a child that was getting reenacted. Through *identification flipping*, Bob was treating his granddaughter as he had been treated as a child, playing out what he’d learned about parenting through role reversal. As we move through Bob’s drama we see him process a variety of emotions that he feels he’s been, at least in part, blocking. He deals with anger toward his abusive, alcoholic stepfather. He explores his fantasy that his life might have turned out differently had his mother been encouraged to marry Ben, the man whom she was really in love with and who was kind to Bob. He processes his sadness over losing his own father and his deep hurt around his mother not being able to stick up for him or tell him that she loved him. Through the doubling of various group members, Bob clearly feels seen and understood and connects more deeply with his own inner drama. Through role reversal he is able to stand in the shoes of his mother and get a visceral sense of what it was like to be her, which increases his sense of empathy.

Later in the drama, Bob reconnects with his brother Johnny, someone from his childhood who looked out for him and thought he was special (although much of this part of the drama was cut from the video for length limitations). In this way Bob reclaimed one of the relationships that helped him to be resilient. Then an audience member, Alan, enters the drama representing a part of Bob’s inner object world, allowing him to concretize, experience and strengthen
his relationship with aspects of himself.

Bob’s rage release is full and furious and helps him to make a shift from feeling powerless to empowered, which we can see by his expression and his body posture. Releasing the anger allows him to experience the grief and yearning beneath it and to take in caring and support from his wife, Susan.

Eventually we spiral forward again to the presenting reenactment issue with his granddaughter. Bob has now processed some of the feelings that were fueling his reactivity to his granddaughter, and he is able to see new choices in the way he might handle his interactions with her.

For time’s sake we have not been able to include all of the sharing that actually did occur after Bob’s drama, but the viewer should know that the sharing was deep and plentiful, giving role players the opportunity to de-role, and to talk about what it was like to play the role and what participating in the drama brought up for them from their own lives. Group members had ample time to release and process their own stirred feelings. In my experience, one of the most common mistakes that directors make is in not sharing enough. It is the sharing that allows the protagonist to be reintegrated into the group and to learn to take in caring and support from others. This component of the psychodrama process is critical in order for group members to identify and process the profound feelings that become aroused during the psychodrama.

Carl Jung said that the reason there is evil in the world is that people are not able to tell their stories. Psychodrama allows us to show and tell our stories, and to experience or reexperience the person we were, are and might wish to be through role-play. It is a relational model that allows us to rework interpersonal dynamics as well as to reflect on them. Standing in the shoes of another person can be an enlightening experience that helps us develop not only empathy, but the ability to gain some distance and perspective about another person’s issues. It allows us to stop living in someone else’s story. We come to recognize that this person had their own issues that may have had little to do with us, so we can let go of taking their behavior so personally.

We can see in Bob’s exit interview that he was able to consciously
integrate a lot of what happened in his drama to shift his perception. We also see how other group members used Bob’s drama to do their own personal work through identification and participation. As Moreno said, “by the group they were wounded, by the group they shall be healed.”
HEALING CHILDHOOD ABUSE THROUGH PSYCHODRAMA

Reaction Paper For Classes and Training

Video: Healing Childhood Abuse through Psychodrama

• **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.

• **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards, or use the questions as a way to approach the discussion. Respond to each question below.

• **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

**What to Write:** Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about psychodrama? What did you learn about the residual impact of child abuse? What stands out in how Dayton works?

2. **What I found most helpful:** What was most beneficial to you as a therapist about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?

3. **What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/strategies did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working? Explore these questions.

4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently than Dayton in the psychodrama in the video? Be specific in what different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have applied.

5. **Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy in the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?
Related Websites, Videos, and Further Readings

WEB RESOURCES
Tian Dayton’s website
www.tiandayton.com
An interview with Zerka T. Moreno on Psychotherapy.net
www.psychotherapy.net
Moreno Institute East
www.morenoinstituteeast.org
Adam Blatner’s psychodrama website
www.blatner.com/adam/
The American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama
www.asgpp.org
The American Society of Experiential Therapists
www.asetonline.com
The National Association for Drama Therapy
www.nadt.org
American Group Psychotherapy Association
www.agpa.org

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT
WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET
Trauma and the Body: A Psychodramatic Approach
Jacob Levy Moreno, His Life and His Muses
Psychodrama in Action
Psychodrama, Sociometry and Beyond
HEALING CHILDHOOD ABUSE THROUGH PSYCHODRAMA

The Moreno Movies (original footage of Jacob Moreno working)

Zerka on Psychodrama

BOOKS


Dayton, Tian (1994). The drama within: Psychodrama and experiential therapy. Deerfield Beach, FL: HCI.


Dayton, Tian (2000). Trauma and addiction: Ending the cycle of pain through emotional literacy. Deerfield Beach, FL: HCI.


Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use some or all of these discussion questions, depending on what aspects of the video are most relevant to the audience.

INTRODUCTION

1. Impact of Child Abuse: Does Dayton’s explanation of the abused child’s experience fit for you? Why or why not? How do the residual effects of child abuse show up in your clinical work with adults? In what ways have you seen psychotherapy help adults who were abused as children?

BOB’S DRAMA BEGINS

2. Empathy for the Other: What do you observe about Bob as he begins to step into the role of his mother? Dayton suggests that adults who were abused as children experience therapeutic benefit from developing empathy for the person who hurt them. Does this make sense to you? Is it challenging for you, as a therapist, to feel empathy toward parents who abuse their children? How do these issues play out in your clinical work?

CONFRONTING THE AGGRESSOR

3. Adult Resources: How was it for you to watch Bob confront his stepfather in this scene? How did you react to his expression of intense feelings, especially anger? What do you think about the idea of Bob having a corrective emotional experience by replaying a frightening and painful childhood experience with all the resources he now has as an adult? How does this approach fit with your understanding of trauma and your orientation to psychotherapy?

A CATHARSIS OF ANGER

4. Concretizing: What were your reactions when Dayton asked Bob to dialogue with his introjected aggressor? What do you think about this idea of concretizing a part of the self and dialoging with
it? In what ways was this aspect of the psychodrama therapeutic for Bob? If you had been the director, can you think of other ways you might have helped Bob concretize parts of himself?

5. **Conflicting Emotions:** What do you make of Bob’s transformation after he releases rage while hitting the pillows? When Dayton explains that Bob is beginning to integrate conflicting emotions, does that idea fit for you? If not, what do you think might be happening for Bob at this point? If you agree with Dayton, what is therapeutic about integrating these conflicting feelings toward a traumatizing abuser? How is this step part of Bob’s healing process?

**HEALING RELATIONSHIPS**

6. **Hot Coals:** *In this part of the psychodrama, Bob’s mother tells him she loves him so much she would walk over hot coals for him.* How do you make therapeutic sense of this rewriting of history? What do you see as healing for Bob in hearing his fantasy-mother speak these words out loud? What might be a downside to having clients create these fantasy dialogues?

**REVISITING THE PRESENT**

7. **China:** What seems valuable to you about this scene between China and Bob? If you were the director or an auxiliary, in what other ways might you have intervened here? What do you think about this approach of spiraling back to the present? How do you see this aspect of the process fitting into the overall psychodrama?

**GROUP SHARING**

8. **Sharing:** What stands out for you in the group sharing? What do you think is most helpful about it? If you were the director in a psychodrama, what steps would you need to take in order to make the group sharing as useful as it can be?

9. **Touching:** What do you notice about the use of physical touch in this video? What impact do you think touch has here? How do you feel about physical touch in therapy in general? If you were a participant in a psychodrama, how would you feel
about being touched, or touching others? Is there anything different for you about how touch is used in psychodrama than it would be in more traditional talk therapy?

10. **Take-Aways:** What is your overall impression of psychodrama and Dayton’s work with adults who were abused as children? Do you see yourself engaging in this kind of work, either as a client or a therapist? Can you imagine integrating some of these techniques into the therapy you conduct? Does this inspire you to get more experience in psychodrama? Why or why not?

11. **You as Protagonist:** How would you feel having Dayton as the director of your psychodrama? Do you think that you could form a working alliance and that she would be effective with you? Why or why not?
Complete Transcript of Healing Childhood Abuse through Psychodrama

INTRODUCTION

Dayton Commentary: What we do in psychodrama is offer someone the clinical stage on which they can place their own reality. We don’t tell them what their reality is—we offer them situations so that they can produce it and work on it.

Lisa Commentary: This psychodrama allows the feelings behind the words so the words may trigger the feeling and then you can go. You can follow the feelings, the feelings can really flow. And, because you are not in your head anymore, you’re in your heart, which is where it’s happened, where it has been broken.

HEALING CHILDHOOD ABUSE THROUGH PSYCHODRAMA

Dayton Commentary: Families are our first classroom on relationships. The lessons we learn in childhood get lived out throughout our lives. The family is a very sensorial experience. The child in the home smells the home, touches the home, tastes the home, feels the home. So if there is trauma in the home, the child remembers it very particularly and very deeply. If a child is being screamed at by a parent or is witnessing a lot of chaos, or has an addict parent who is, you know, wonderful one day and a monster another day, the child is left to make sense of that with their developmental equipment of the particular age, and you can just guess what kind of sense they make of it: “I’m bad. I can’t figure anything out. I can’t get anything right.”

Tian Dayton, PhD, TEP

Dayton: Because the feelings are overwhelming when we’re traumatized, we want to shut them down. That’s nature’s form of protection. Nature doesn’t want us to feel what we’re feeling when we need to get out of danger. A child being abused feels in danger,
so what they’re going to do is shut down the emotional part of their being because it’s overwhelming. The other part of them that will shut down is the thinking part of their mind, because we don’t want to be thinking our way through a painful situation; we want to get out of it. That means that we never really make sense of the situation when we’re being traumatized. We have to do that later. Which is what, where psychodrama comes in. We have to do that in safety and in adulthood. Psychodrama allows us to reinhabit the body we lived in at the time of the trauma to slow reality down through role-play and role reversal, to replay a situation that traumatized us, safely enough so that the thinking part of us that shut down at the time of the trauma can come back on board and make sense and meaning from the adult point of view.

**Dayton Commentary:** Psychodrama is a method of a role-play developed by J.L. Moreno, the Viennese psychiatrist. It allows the body as well the mind to tell its story through talking and interaction. Psychodrama mimics life; it uses the group as a representation of society in miniature, offering a safe space where both internal and interpersonal issues can emerge into the therapeutic moment, so that they can be experienced and worked through in a concrete form.

The five main elements of psychodrama are the stage, the area in which the drama is reenacted; director, therapist or psychodramatist; the protagonist, the person whose drama is being enacted; auxiliary egos, role players chosen by the protagonist to represent persons in their drama; and the audience, or group members.

**5 Main Elements of Psychodrama:**
- **Stage**
- **Director**
- **Protagonist:** Person whose drama is being enacted
- **Auxiliary Egos:** Role players chosen by protagonist to represent persons in their drama
- **Audience:** Group members

The classical format of psychodrama is in three parts: warm-up, action,
and sharing. The warm-up is getting in touch with the self and particular issues that the group member wishes to explore. Action is the actual role-play or enactment, which includes the protagonist, director and auxiliaries, and occurs in space and time. Sharing are the group members sharing their identification with the protagonist and processing feelings that have come up around witnessing or playing roles in the protagonist’s drama.

The Process of Psychodrama Includes:

- **Warm-up:** Getting in touch with the self and particular issues the group members wish to explore
- **Action:** Actual role-play which includes the protagonist, director and auxiliaries and occurs in space and time
- **Sharing:** Group members share their identification with the protagonist and process feelings that have come up around witnessing or playing a role in the protagonist’s drama

**Dayton Commentary:** The psychodramas you are about to view are spontaneous, unscripted, and unrehearsed. As a director I will assist the protagonist as they revisit meaningful scenes or psychological reconstructions from their lives that they wish to explore.

**The Work Starts with a Spectrogram and Questions on Grief, Loss and Anger.**

**Dayton:** How much anger do you feel around this loss? Very much anger? Very little anger? A medium amount of anger?

**The Group Members Respond to the Question.**

**Dayton:** Okay, so this is how much anger around the loss.

**Unidentified Woman:** I wouldn’t say I feel real anger, but maybe anger is the easiest way sometimes to feel. It’s more a feeling of being a bit dispossessed and having no tools to handle the situation.

**Dayton:** Feeling lost, disorganized, disoriented.

**Unidentified Woman:** Yes.

**Dayton:** Okay. All right. Bob.
Bob: The anger is about... I mean, the reenactment.

Dayton: So what is the seed of the reenactment?

Bob: Loss; my mother selling out for, for security.

WARMING UP TO ACTION

WARM UP

Dayton Commentary: In the warm-up phase of psychodrama, we get in touch with our own internal stories so that the movement toward action feels natural. Suddenly we are warmed up to a story we want to say the words. We want to move it into action.

Bob: I was the youngest and my brother, Mike, is two years older. But she allowed all the others to get kicked out of the house for security and she opted for the security. My stepfather didn’t want them there. He was an alcoholic. I got in touch with some issues about my granddaughter, that I am beginning to sort of—I use the word terrorized, the way I was terrorized as a kid, but if my granddaughter says I don’t like you, I come back like a four-year-old and say I don’t like you either. You know, and I just feel like I’m becoming my stepfather and I am setting up situations that are similar to, to what, to what he did to me.

Well, I want to hear my mother say to me: that if I swallowed crushed glass or if I would walk over hot coals, and I would give up John Sacker for you—that’s my stepfather—that I would protect you, I would save you, I would love you, I would care for you. You know, and this is what I am doing with my wife. I am testing, I am, I’m, I’m, I’m making demands, I’m... Even though I am working until ten o’clock at night, I say I am resentful that she is going out with her friends to go out to dinner. Why don’t you just stay at home and wait for me? And I know how up here, again, that that’s illogical, but...

Dayton: Let’s find Mom.

ACTION

Dayton Commentary: In the action phase, we actually set up a scene so that we can revisit moments in time in which we feel stuck or locked in
unresolved conflict. As we move into action, the protagonist, Bob, chooses role players to represent characters from his own life. We help Bob to create a real life encounter with the characters that live in his inner world so that he can resolve old emotional and psychological conflicts that still may affect him emotionally and drive his thinking and behavior. We begin to see the picture, so to speak.

BOB’S DRAMA BEGINS

BOB’S DRAMA

Bob: All my life I can remember saying, or I remember you saying, “Of course I love you, you are my son. Of course I love you.” It gets to be like “of course, I love you, you’re my son, you idiot!” I don’t remember asking the question, but I must have asked the question repeatedly. And you always said, “Of course I love you, you’re my son.” But you never said it in the way that I really felt that you loved me, that you really, you were so happy to have me as a son. I never, I always felt like, like, “Go over there, get out, just get out,” you know? Left-handed compliments. I went back to school, and and and, as an adult, and you said to me, I said mom, I’m going back to college, it’s been years, I’m going back to college. And you said, “Bobby, you always do things backwards.”

Dayton: So what does Bobby want to say to Mom from way down inside?

Bob: And I’m pissed at you and it’s like it screws up my relationships. And I’m looking around to get stuff from my wife that only you were able to give me and only you could have given me. And damn it, you never did. It was always like, “I love you, of course I love you, don’t be stupid,” you know. “Stop crying.”

We have a picture, a beautiful picture. Beautiful, beautiful picture of me, I don’t know how old I could have been, you were holding me and you were with your friend. The two of you were standing so proud, and you were holding me. And somehow I remember having blond hair and I don’t think I had blond hair, but it looked like I had blond hair and I looked so precious and adorable and cute. And you were holding me. Yeah, you were holding me.
**Dayton Commentary:** You can see Diane absorbing the role of mother, letting it sink in, figuring out how she can play it so that she will play the role as it happened in Bob’s life.

**Dayton:** Talk to the little boy in her arms.

**Bob:** It feels like you love me. It feels like you really love me. It feels like you really care for me. I just feel so nice up against your chest. It just feels so good, you know. And you look like you’re proud of me. So what happened? What happened? Did you love me then? It looks like you love me in that picture.

**Dayton Commentary:** Bob is asked a direct question: “What happened?” He will need to reverse roles in order to answer it.

**ROLE REVERSAL**

**Diane:** So what happened? You loved me then, it looks like you loved me in that picture.

**Dayton Commentary:** Now he takes on the role of his mother, playing her as he saw her as a child, along with the sense he’s made out of it over the years.

**Bob:** I do love you. Needy, you’re just too needy. I don’t understand that. I can’t understand the emotions. Leave me alone. I don’t know where to go with it. I don’t know what to do with it. I love you. I love you, okay. I’ll say it...

**Diane:** I don’t believe that you love me.

**Bob answers questions from the role of his mother.**

**Bob:** I love you. I don’t know what to...

**Diane:** I feel really angry when you say I’m needy.

**Bob:** Oh, not you too, Bobby. Come on.

**Diane:** What do you mean, me too?

**Bob:** Your brothers and sisters are all saying the same thing.

**Diane:** What’s wrong with having needs? I’m a little kid. Little kids have needs!
Bob: I don’t know what to do with them, so I don’t want to deal with them. Just leave me alone.

Diane: What am I supposed to do?

Bob: I’ve got too much stuff to worry about. Your father died.

Diane: I’m a kid!

Bob: I’m married again, I have too much stuff.

Diane: But who’s going to take care of me? What about me?

Bob: I’ll take care of you.

Diane: What about me? You don’t like it when I’m needy.

Bob: You have too many needs.

Diane: I…

Bob: A boy is not supposed to have all those needs.

Dayton: Again.

Bob: A boy is not supposed to have all those needs, damn it.

Diane: But I do.

Bob: No, only girls!

Diane: I do.

Bob: Only girls!

Diane: I do, I do!

Bob: No, no, no.

Diane: Yes.

Bob: No.

Diane: Yes.

Bob: Boys don’t have those needs. You’re a freak. Where did you get all those feelings, you freak? I don’t have them.

Diane: I feel like punching you.

Dayton Commentary: Standing in the shoes of another person can help us to take the abuse we received less personally. By gaining some
understanding or even empathy for the other person who has hurt us, the protagonist may be able to let go of a bit of the anger or inner conflict, or even the hope that somehow he can still change the past, and begin to accept that what happened to him was the direct result of another person’s own dysfunction— that they were passing on their pain to the next generation because they never worked it out for themselves.

Diane: You’re mean to me.

Bob: I love you. You are my son, of course I love you.

Diane: Bullshit.

Bob: Watch your language.

Diane: No, I won’t.

Bob: It’s a stupid question.

Diane: It’s not stupid, you are always saying I’m stupid. You are always insulting me, giving me backhanded compliments.

Dayton: Mom...

Dayton Commentary: Now I start to interview Bob in order to deepen his experience in the role of mother.

Bob: We never, you know, we never talked about feelings. Back home it was very hard. We worked, we went to school.

Dayton: What was back home?

Bob: Back home in Pennsylvania.

Dayton: Okay.

Bob: Okay? My parents came from Europe and we just worked hard. My father worked in the mines. My mother worked the farm.

Bob: I really, really liked Ben, but he was Jewish and we couldn’t—you’re not supposed to marry somebody Jewish.

Dayton Commentary: Bob is coming in touch with one of his mother’s losses here, when she wasn’t encouraged to marry the man she loved, Ben.

Bob: Yeah, my mother said, “Don’t do it, don’t do it. Marry John. Marry John. He’s one of us, you know. Or close to one of us. He’s
Ukrainian, marry him, you know.” And it just felt like the right thing to do, but I think I loved Ben. I think I really wanted Ben.

**Dayton:** Can you tell your son that?

**Bob:** Ben liked you very much. He did. He would have been a good father for you, Ben.

**Dayton:** He might have understood you being a boy with feelings.

**Bob:** He would have, yeah.

**Dayton Commentary:** Small memories that carry tremendous meaning surface during the course of a psychodrama.

**Bob:** Well, I thought of the two of them together and how Ben liked to take him to the pickle factory. He used to take them to the pickle factory. How stupid that I couldn’t be with him because he’s Jewish, you know. What a waste. What a shame. He would have been a good father for you, I know, not John Sacker. I’m really sorry. I’m really sorry about John Sacker.

**Dayton:** What happens when we have had a painful memory that we’ve, say, repressed, when it starts to be felt and come to the surface, as we’re feeling it, we’re thinking about it. We are seeing it now not only as it happened, when it happened, but through the eyes of an adult. So we see it differently. And as we do that, we start to reframe things. Perhaps we were a child who was powerless, who thought, “I must be bad or my parent wouldn’t yell at me like this.” As the adult within us witnesses it, we realize, “I wasn’t so bad. I was a child in a situation that was unmanageable for me. My parent yelled at me not because I was bad, but perhaps because they were drunk or they were very stressed out from living with addiction.” And so we alter that meaning that we made out of that traumatic circumstance that we now live by unconsciously. We make the memory conscious where we can see it differently, create new meaning, create a sort of new narrative, understand it differently and replace it within the context of our lives.
CONFRONTING THE AGGRESSOR

Bob: I remember when we were kids and my stepfather and I for some reason were in the City. He bought me ice skates, but they got two left feet, two left shoes, ice skates. And we were at Rockefeller ice rink and we were going home on the subway back to Queens and we ran into a neighbor, a man and his son. And they were telling us what they had done in the City and I don’t remember what it was, it was so many years ago. But I do recall that my stepfather said, “How, stupid, how... What did they go there for? Why did they do that for?” You know, it’s like, he was so negative. It was just so disgusting. And I, and I, and I think of that a lot when I do that to China.

Dayton: Let’s see if we can find John Sacker in the room.

Bob: Even the walls are coming up and there is nobody that I am attaching to. There is nobody that I like... I keep looking at Travis.

Dayton: Reverse roles and show us John Sacker. Just two seconds of showing us.

Bob: Body position. He was always about to tell a dirty joke. He was always about to say something derogatory. He was always, like, genital-oriented. He was always like, you know...

Dayton Commentary: Here we are role training the auxiliary ego by getting the protagonist to “show us” the character, in this case John Sacker. This allows the auxiliary to be able to portray the character as the protagonist experienced them, which makes the psychodrama more relevant and powerful.

Dayton: Okay. Say what you need to say to John. What did you call him?

Bob: John.

Dayton: Okay.

Bob: I tried to call you Dad and you cut me down so quick. And you said, “Don’t you ever, ever call me Dad. Don’t ever, ever call me Dad.”

Travis: Don’t you ever, ever call me Dad.

Bob: Yeah.
Travis: Get over that one.

Bob: Yeah. Believe me, I’m over it today. I’m over it today. You’re such an ugly human being.

Dayton: So if we’re spiraling back, if we started in the present with Susan and China and we’re spiraling back to those early scenes, what does little Bobby need to say to this man?

Bob: Why my mother ever married you is just beyond my understanding. Throw another knife and I’ll kick you in the balls, that’s what I’ll do.

Dayton: Don’t you threaten...

Bob: And when we get you down, when we get him down on the floor, okay, and then you say, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” you say, let him go. Let’s call the police and when the police come over, they go over to him. The police go over to him and say, “Aw, okay, sober up buddy, sober up,” while we’re cowering in the corner.

Dayton Commentary: Bob begins to reinhabit his own body. He re-experiences how he felt in the presence of his stepfather: frightened, hurt, angry. From this place he says what he never got a chance to say, feels what he never got a chance to feel, and does what he never got a chance to do. Bob was too young and too vulnerable to be able to stand up to John, and so he has carried with him all these years the trauma of that abuse including the accompanying sense of helplessness and rage. Being able to replay this interaction with all the resources he now has as an adult is a critical and powerful step towards healing from the abuse, and can be truly a corrective emotional experience.

Travis: Your father was a real man. You’re afraid to say to me what you need to say.

Bob: You’re a man?

Travis: I’m a man.

Bob: You’re a sick excuse for a man. That’s what you are. You are a sick excuse for a man. Making all the dirty jokes, huh? Going around beating up people. That’s a man. That’s a real man.

Travis: That’s a real man. That’s what a man does.
Bob: That’s a real man, yeah. And what about your daughter, right, your daughter is totally out of your life.

Dayton: Stay in, what does little Bobby need to say this man?

Bob: Stop beating up on us. Stop beating up on us. Stop beating up on my mother. Leave my mother alone.

Travis: What are you going to do?

Bob: Stop beating up on my mother.

Travis: What are you going to do about it?

Bob: Well, if I can’t do it, we’ll gang up on you. We’ll gang up on you.

Travis: It’ll take more than one of you.

Bob: That’s what we did, yeah. Well, that’s what it takes, and we’ll take—It took three of us to get you down. It took three of us to get you, and we got you down.

Dayton: And the question that started the scene is...

Bob: I don’t know.

Dayton: …was, how much anger? How much anger are you feeling? And you were feeling plenty of it.

Bob: I get to be you. I mean, I’ve become, I’ve become you and that’s sick.

Travis: You couldn’t be me in a million years.

Bob: That is sick. That is sick. That is sick, that part of me that becomes you, that’s very sick. I just want to exorcise, take that part of me and just take it out, huh.

Travis: You dream of being as much of a man as I am.

Dayton: Let’s chose someone to play the part of, the part of you that becomes him. Let’s choose that.

A CATHARSIS OF ANGER

Dayton Commentary: I ask Bob to concretize that role so that he can work through the part of him that identified with the aggressor, so that he
can deal with this introjected role through dialoging with it and standing in it through role reversal, so that he can explore it and eventually move away from it.

**Dayton:** Whatever is there. Do whatever you want to do.

**Bob:** We don’t have to. You don’t have to mimic this guy. We don’t... You don’t have to mimic him.

**Dayton:** Reverse roles.

**Alan:** You don’t have to mimic this guy. We don’t have to...

**Bob:** But I don’t have another image. I don’t have another, you know when the shit hits the fan, I go right there. When the shit hits the fan, that’s where I go. I don’t know what to do.

**Alan:** We’re scared.

**Bob:** Yeah.

**Diane:** When China warms me up to those needs and everything, I go right there.

**Dayton Commentary:** The double gives voice to the inner world of the protagonist. The double’s job is to articulate emotions that may be unavailable to the protagonist, to help to bring them to a conscious level.

**Bob:** I become him. I want to terrorize. I want to, you know...

**Alan:** We don’t have to.

**Bob:** I don’t even terrorize... I mean, I just sort of hint, you know. Like the other day I sort of said, we’re driving on this road and she said, “Where are we?” And I said, “We’re going home. We are taking another road.” And it was a country road. And I said, “Do you want to stop off and see the witch?” And I bit my tongue. I wanted to crash the car into a tree, why did I say that. That’s what he would say. That’s what he would do. You know, take me to Rockefeller Center, put on the two left ice skates, twirl me around, beat us up, terrorize us.

**I double Bob’s inner conflict**

**Dayton:** This part of me is there. It’s dormant all the time. It sits inside of me. Just add water and I am...

Dayton: I grow, I sprout. It’s a role waiting to be triggered.

Bob: How do I, how do I not do that?

Dayton: Reverse roles.

Alan: How do I not do that?

Bob: Oh, boy.

Alan: I don’t want to do that. How do I not do that?

Bob: How do I not do that? How do I not do that? How do I not do that?

Alan: And what the fuck is the matter with me that I want to become him.

Bob: Him. Right.

Alan: Of all people. How do I not do that?

Bob: If I get into my anger, my therapist said to me, we are not going to deal with the feelings any more. With this situation, you got to like, you’re going to have to think about it because when you get to anger you get over here, you are lost.

Dayton: Is there one other thing we can do here? That you can somehow...

Bob: I have a lot of anger towards him, but I mean...

Dayton: Yeah.

Bob: I mean, I do have a lot.

Dayton: So when that gets triggered thinking doesn’t help you much, right?

Bob: No, no, no. It doesn’t help.

Dayton: It’s going to need to help you, but let’s see if we can...

Bob: But right now... Yeah.

Dayton: But let’s see if we can attach some words to those feelings so that when you start to think, you’re thinking in the right language.
**Dayton Commentary:** I’m inviting Bob to explore and experience the powerful emotions that he may have shut down as a child, the ones he may be afraid to even feel in the presence of his stepfather because his stepfather felt dangerous to him. We’re unpacking them here, taking them out of cold storage, so to speak, creating a safe space for Bob to feel them so that he can elevate them to a conscious level and think about them without being flooded and needing to shut down again.

**Bob:** You’re pathetic. Yeah. And I want to say one thing, I want to say one thing here. Okay?

**Travis:** Make sure you get it straight.

**Bob:** Okay, listen to me, listen to me.

**Travis:** Get it straight.

**Bob:** Listen to me. When my sister—not my half-sister as you would like to say, she is my sister, your daughter, my sister, my mother’s daughter, okay—looks like me, the spitting image of me, huh? Not like you.

**Travis:** And I’ll say it again, she’s your half-sister.

**Bob:** She is my sister. You ask her, she is my sister, you pathetic man, okay. She’s my sister and she looks just like me. Just like me.

**Travis:** Like a little girl, yeah, yeah, not a man.

**Bob:** Yeah, like a little girl. No, no, not a man, no. She looks like a little… I look like a man. You are confused. I look like a man. She looks like a girl. But we look…

**Dayton:** Say it again.

**Bob:** I, I am a man. I don’t look… I am a man. You are confused. I’m a man. She’s a girl.

**Dayton:** Again.

**Bob:** I am a man, she’s a girl. And we look like each other. We have the same lips, the same nose. We look like each other. High cheekbones, okay? We look like each other.

**Travis:** Half sister… It’s your half...
Bob: Shut up already. Shut up.
Travis: Yeah?
Bob: Shut up.
Travis: Just stop me. Just stop me. You’re so bad?
Travis: Can’t do it can you? You can’t do it. You never had the guts, you never will.

Dayton Commentary: *We’re allowing Bob to re-empower himself by giving physical vent to the rage he carries inside, that as a child he could never express directly to his stepfather.*

Bob: I don’t need you anymore, okay?
Alan: We don’t need you anymore.
Bob: No. We don’t. We don’t need you anymore.
Alan: We don’t need you anymore.

Dayton: You beat me when I was defenseless.

Bob: You bullshit excuse for a human being. Excuse for a human being. Who goes around and beats up women and kids? You, you stupid asshole! You stupid asshole! You stupid asshole! Who does that?

Bob experiences a catharsis of the anger that he has been carrying inside of him.

Bob: Then you go to your family and say oh, those kids. Man, oh, those kids. What those kids? That’s what we are, kids. You fucker, you fucker, you killed my sisters, you motherfucker. They committed suicide because of you.

I don’t want you in my body anymore. I don’t want you anywhere in here. Too late, it was too late, too late years later when you said... No, you never said “I’m sorry.” No, you never said “I’m sorry,” you know. “Am I doing the right things,” is what you said. No, you could never do the right thing. You screwed that up years ago.
**Dayton Commentary:** After Bob releases his anger we see him trying to make sense of other emotions that arise once the anger is expressed. We see the conflict between love and hate emerge—the two feelings that he has never been able to integrate towards his stepfather.

**Bob:** You know the really weird thing was I was, I was on the road. I was down south somewhere doing a show and I got word that you died, and I cried. Why did I cry? Why did I cry? Did I like you? Despite all of this crazy stuff, did I like you?

**Dayton:** Somewhere inside of me I was attached to you and it confuses me.

**Bob:** Yeah, you were never nice to me. You were never really nice, never, never, never, never nice to me. And somehow I attached to you. I guess I couldn’t believe it. I still wanted a father. I still wanted—I would accept, I would take you to be my father. That’s how desperately I wanted a father, but you shit over everything. And you wanted everybody out of the house. I was too young. Mikey was too young. Shirley committed suicide. Dorothy committed suicide.

**Dayton:** I miss them, those were my sisters.

**Bob:** They were my sisters, yeah. I miss them. And Johnny, when Johnny died. Johnny was my brother, but Johnny was my father. He was the real surrogate father. And you kicked him out, you kicked Dorothy out, you kicked Shirley out, Mikey was next. And it’s sad, you’re sad.

**Dayton:** Again.

**Bob:** You’re sad. Your daughter left, not my sister, my stepsister, you know, my stepsister, who never wanted to have anything to do with us or anything to do with you. She just left, got as far away as she could. Nobody wanted you.

**Dayton Commentary:** The pieces of John Sacker’s history begin to fall into place. Bob is beginning to put his abuser into a framework, into a context that is removed from him. This helps him to separate from the abuser, to lessen that traumatic bond.

**Bob:** I bet you used to go bawl your eyes out to your sisters and your
brother. Your brother was a mean man, too. Your brother beat his son with a bat over the head. God. That’s what you guys knew what to do. You just hit, you hit.

**Dayton:** You guys came from a bad place.

**Bob:** You came from a real bad place. You came from a real bad place.

**Dayton:** And you brought that place with you into our home.

**Bob:** Yeah.

**Dayton:** My home.

**Bob:** You gave me your stuff. You gave us your poison. And if I’m a sissy because I cry, so I’m a sissy, okay? I don’t really believe that. Men cry.

**Dayton:** Again.

**Bob:** Men have feelings.

**Dayton:** Again.

**Bob:** Men cry. Mom, men cry, mom.

**Dayton:** Again.

**Bob:** Men have feelings, mom, okay?

**HEALING RELATIONSHIPS**

**Dayton Commentary:** As we move along Bob recalls his relationship with his brother, Johnny, who loved him so. He is reclaiming that sustaining and nurturing love. We need to elevate our abuse and pain into a conscious context in order to heal it. But we also need to bring our love, our sustaining relationships, into consciousness as well, so that we can martial the inner strength, hope, and resilience to move on, and continue to grow and try new things.

**Bob:** There’s something special about Bobby. There’s something, so you didn’t know how to handle it. You told me that. Johnny said there’s something special about Bobby. And he was proud of me. He was very proud of me.

**Diane:** He was proud of you.
Bob: Yeah, and my heart ripped out of my chest when he died. He was very, very proud of me.

Diane: He was proud of you.

Bob: Yeah. He said there’s something special about Bobby. I hope you heard that.

Dayton: Reverse roles.

Dayton Commentary: Bob speaks from the role of his mother here. He is describing their last conversation from her point of view before she died.

Bob: You said, “Mom, I love you and I’m very, very sorry for the hurt that I’ve caused, of anything that I’ve done. I’m really very, very sorry for it.” And I said, “Bobby, I love you too. I love you.” I said that, I didn’t say, “Of course I love you, you’re my son.” I said, “I love you.” And I said, I’m sorry too. And I’m really sorry for the abuse. I’m sorry for marrying John Sacker. If I’d known that that’s the way it was going to be, I wouldn’t have done it.” And I do love you. Would you be willing to put the ugly picture behind and hold in your heart the picture of me—two pictures, two pictures—one of me holding you and the other one of the love that we had together when I was dying? Because I really did love you and I was saying goodbye. Would you do that? Hold the two pictures.

Dayton: Reverse roles.

Diane: Would you do something for me? Would you be willing to hold the two pictures? The one of me holding you when you were a baby in my arms, remember that? And the other one of you holding me when I was dying? Because I love you. I really, I really love you.

Bob: Say it again.

Diane: I really love you. I really love you. I love you.

Bob: Yeah.


Bob: Would you walk over hot coals for me?

Diane: I’d walk over hot coals for you. I’d eat jagged glass for you. I’d give up John for you. That’s how much I love you. That’s how much.
And you’re a man.

**Bob:** Yeah.

**Diane:** With feeling.

**Bob:** I am.

**Diane:** It’s hard for me to understand that. You know. I’m not as educated and sophisticated as you, you know.

**Bob:** But I know you had feelings, but every time you had a feeling… You know, like the time I asked you if you really loved dad. And I remember you were grating potatoes. I’ll never forget.

**Diane:** I was grating potatoes, right. I remember.

**Bob:** You were grating potatoes and I said, “Tell me, did you really love dad?” and you went into a trance and you were telling me about it. And the potato was grated and you started to grate your knuckles. I remember that, it was like a little blood. And that was the first time, the only time, that you really expressed feelings. And before that you always clenched it and swallowed it. And I couldn’t swallow mine. I couldn’t swallow mine, it had to come out.

**Diane:** It was scary for me. Feelings were scary.

**Dayton:** End the scene with mom any way you want to for now.

**Dayton Commentary:** I’m ending the scene at what feels like an integrated point of the drama. I don’t want to flood the protagonist, Bob. I want to help him to consolidate his gains and come to closure. He understands that his feelings, as he said, had to come out; that his mother was from another generation, another mentality, and so was unable to protect him as he wished she could. He has said what he needed to say to John Sacker. His body has relieved its repressed urge to get angry, to defend himself. He has reclaimed love and forgiveness with his mother and his nurturing relationship with his brother Johnny. His face looks relieved and lighter. It feels like an integrated piece of work.

**REVISITING THE PRESENT**

**Dayton:** We spiraled back from the present, from Susan and China into the origin. Can we just find China now?
Dayton Commentary: Now we’re spiraling back up into the presenting problem that Bob walked in with. Bob has been acting out his own pain from the past with his granddaughter in the present. Here we’re revisiting the presenting problem with the granddaughter with new awareness and insight gained from our psychodramatic work. We can see how powerfully and effectively working through the past trauma has immediate benefits for helping him in his current relationships.

Bob: You look so scared.

Unidentified Woman: Sometimes I don’t know what to expect from you.

Bob: Yeah, I know. I’m very sorry. I’ve told you so many times, I’m sorry, you know. And I made a promise that I’m not going to tease you in the wicked ways that I tease you. And I’ve kept my promise. I mean, I haven’t done it.

Dayton: I’m so afraid that I scare you, China. I don’t want you to be scared the way I was scared. Sometimes...

Bob: I feel like I terrorize you. I feel like, like you’re going through the same feelings that I went through when I was a kid. And I don’t want to do that to you. I don’t want to do that to you. I want you to feel safe in the house.

Dayton: And China is not you. China is China.

Bob: China is China.

Dayton: China is not you.

Bob: She’s not me.

Dayton: No. She could never be. She didn’t have a stepfather. She didn’t have any of the stuff you had. China is China.

Unidentified Woman: You are my grandfather. I love you, I need you.

Bob: Yeah.

Unidentified Woman: I need your love.

Bob: Yeah. I have a lot of love to give you, have a lot of love.

Unidentified Woman: I know you can be good with me.
Bob: Uh-huh.

**Unidentified Woman:** I am a child.

Bob: Yeah.

**Unidentified Woman:** Yes.

Bob: Yeah and I love that you sing all day and that you walk around dressed up. You are going to be an actress, I’ve said that. Walk around, dress up. And I do love you.

**Unidentified Woman:** I love you too, Grandfather.

Bob: You say that I scare you. And you scare me. But…

**Unidentified Woman:** Why do I scare you?

Dayton: Something gets triggered in me. A place in me that… How old are you China? You’re...

Bob: Four.

Dayton: You’re four. When I was four, I was going through a lot. And your four-year-old triggers my four-year-old and then my four-year-old doesn’t know what to do. Does that feel right?

Bob: Then I get into a sort of tug-of-war with you. And you say “I don’t like you” and I say, “I don’t like you either.”

Dayton: We’re both four.

Bob: We’re both four. And then Nanna says, “Pop-Pop, you’re the adult.” And I want to say, “I don’t like you either.”

Dayton: Are there other things that get triggered? What needs to happen so that your four-year-old doesn’t…

Bob: When you first said that, I, my first thought was, somehow she’s not the enemy. You are not the enemy.

**Unidentified Woman:** No.

Bob: And my fear is that, is that you are taking away something from me. The love or from Nanna, from - that I want from Nanna. But you’re not because Nanna has plenty to give.

Dayton: You are adding to my social atom.
**Dayton Commentary:** This is a psychodramatic way of saying, “You’re expanding my network of relationships.”

**Bob:** Yeah, you’re giving me a lot. Yeah, you’re adding to my life.

**Unidentified Woman:** You can give a lot also.

**Bob:** Yeah, yeah, oh yeah. We have fun times together. We have fun times. So I want to realize for myself that you’re not the enemy and that you’re not there to take anything away from me. And Nanna has a lot of love. I have a lot of love. I can give you love, Kaya love, Nanna love.

**Dayton:** And Nanna’s not my mother.

**Bob:** Nanna’s my wife.

**Dayton:** Yeah.

**Bob:** Yeah.

**Dayton:** And nobody else is her husband, just me.

**Bob:** Just me.

**Dayton:** I don’t share that role. She wants me there.

**Bob:** Yeah, Nanna’s my wife. I am her husband. She’s not my mother.

**Dayton:** She’s not my mother.

**Bob:** She’s not my mother. My mother died.

**Dayton:** My mother died.

**Bob:** Yeah. My mother’s name is Susan. Nanna’s name is Susan, but they are separate people.

**Dayton:** Yeah, two Susans.

**Bob:** Two Susans.

**Dayton:** So, end the scene with China any way you wish to for now.

**Bob:** Today is Friday. So I can’t take you to Burger King because I am here. But next week I promise to take you to Burger King. And I promise that we’ll sit in the seat that has the 1950’s car, all right? And I’ll wear the silly crown. I won’t make any... I won’t, I won’t complain about it.
Unidentified Woman: I like when you do that.

Bob Commentary: *Psychodrama is like a smorgasbord. And you could put it out there and say, okay, let’s look at this piece. Okay, well that doesn’t fit or that doesn’t work, so let’s look over here. We can look at the issues and see, you know, what gets triggered. What’s going on? What’s the pressure that’s doing it? And psychodrama is a very safe way of looking at it and doing it.*

GROUP SHARING

Unidentified Woman: Sometimes sharing is called a “love-back.” And I want to give love back to the protagonist for going where they did today and including me.

Dayton Commentary: *It is a powerful experience to let this kind of material come to the surface, both for the protagonist and the group members. I cannot emphasize the importance of sharing enough. It allows the group to heal what came up for them as a result of witnessing the drama so that they don’t carry it with them. It lets role players de-role, share about what it’s like to play the role, and what else has emerged for them participating in the enactment. It reintegrates the protagonist into the group and trains them to take in caring and support from others. We show only a portion of the sharing here, but it go on for as long as it takes to accomplish these goals. When structuring psychodramas, always allow plenty of time for sharing.*

Travis: I wanted to jump up and be the star. And I wanted to throw that little guy out of there and get in there with some real rage. Because that is what I carried around for a long time and which so disturbed Lisa for a long time, I think.

Unidentified Man: You wondered if anyone, you know, knows what you are going through. It’s like here’s a group and here you are. It takes a long time then to process all these emotions, you know. It’s like you run away from home and then here you are and they take you back home.

Diane: I’ve shared in here that I’ve tried to piece together my history,
why I’m so traumatized. My mother was, my grandfather I never knew, but he was an alcoholic, I pieced that together. And he beat the crap out of my grandmother and probably my mother. And I was thinking, you know, you were kind of... maybe that’s like my grandfather, you know. So the whole thing is… Thank you.

**Dayton:** So do you want to de-role Travis from the grandfather transference?

**Travis:** It washes off.

**Sheila:** When I looked around the room, I picked you as my mom, but I actually picked you because you look like my stepdad, who I call my stepdad, my sister’s father. And then when you did your drama, I was like, “Oh, my God, this is why.” I mean, so like there, like he told me when I was eight, he goes, he’s, he’s Irish, Polish and he’s an alcoholic and said, “You got two strikes going against you. And one, you’re black and two, you’re a woman.” He used to talk like that. So when you did your stepfather, it was like, oh my God, this is, it was so there and you are wanting something from your mom that she couldn’t give, but like you’re realizing at a certain point that she gave you what she could. And there was sometimes ways out, at least that’s what I got from the drama. So there aren’t any accidents and I, when I looked at you, I knew like I was picking you because you looked like my stepfather. But I, there’s something I want from both of them. And you know, as I talked in my drama, he was coming in it again and then I see you do your thing and I am like, wow.

**Bob:** There are no coincidences, and no accidents. You picked me because. And the stepfather reference you made was all there. And when you at one point mentioned about your mother being thirty-something and having five kids, my mother was twenty-something, having five kids when my father died, you know, and I really connected on that. But what happened while I was up there listening to you, I started to see you as my sister. My sister Shirley. The pain, the whole need to talk to Mom about whatever you needed and my sister. My sister was so alienated and so pushed out there and then became a junkie. She became a street junkie, you know, and then eventually committed suicide. I just saw her there, so you know, it just gave me
an appreciation again for my sister and for my mother and that, that, just that if we could wish, if we could have a wish granted and our mothers could come back and see us today. You know, I just have this beautiful image of my mother sitting down with all five children, you know. And just, just like having a real conversation, a real human conversation and talking back and forth and not shamed by what happened or what’s going to happen or all those kinds of things. Like a pure… you know. Maybe like a family.

**Alan:** You know I have a very similar issue with my father, with the absence of, and that was very powerful for me. That moment of being, of being lost, of saying how do we do that. And P.S., and I don’t want to become that, you know what I mean? I don’t want to become… In my entire fucking family there is not one, there is not one decent role model for what I think a parent should be. So I felt, well what do we do, you know, we find one, we create one, I don’t know. I don’t know, but that, it’s an empty, empty place for me. And watched, it, it helped me know that I am not alone.

**Bob Commentary:** The whole process has helped me heal a lot of issues, a lot of issues. From, you know, family of origin, present day stuff. Because what we want to do in a way is to revisit the past and kind of open up about it or look at those numb feelings or those frozen feelings. And maybe say the things that we need to say, didn’t have the opportunity to say as children or as adults. And I think that is so freeing, that is so freeing. Once you get it out there, once you put it out to the universe, once you put it out, out of your closed insides - healing takes place. How that works is amazing. It’s amazing. So I love, I love, I love doing it, being a participant and I love working as a therapist using psychodrama. I love doing it. In my men’s group, I have a men’s recovery group and I, I use psychodrama, and it blows them out of the water, but the healing is just so phenomenal, you know?

**Unidentified Man:** Sorting things out here and realizing how full it was and it kind of took me by surprise. I admired their courage, both of you, and Sheila jumping right in there. And Bob, so much a man by being willing to put out so much, not only deep feeling and the range of feeling, but also owning conflicting and kind of shameful feelings.
Because I remember once in a meeting just saying to some guy, you know, kind of responding to that kind of atmosphere of like that tough, shut up and get it together, you know. It’s just like I had to say out loud it’s like hey, you want it, you know, you want to square off? Let’s deal with some real deep feelings and see how much of a man you are. You want to do that and see how tough you are on that? It’s easier to shut down from them and stay away from them. Let’s get into him and see how tough you are. It’s funny kind of like calling someone out in the barroom, a different version. Let’s step outside and feel feelings, man.

Unidentified Person: And bring your tissues.

BONUS TRACK: THE SOCIAL ATOM

Dayton Commentary: The social atom is a diagram of a person’s network of relationships. It can be done for any point along the continuum of life—for past, present or future. You can do a social atom of a family of origin, of the network of present-day relationships, of what you’d like your relationships to be like a year from now, five years from now, 20 years from now. The social atom can be done entirely as a paper-and-pencil exploration, or it can be moved into sculpture on the stage. We call that an action sociogram.

Dayton: The social atom is a diagnostic technique in psychodrama. It’s one of the most useful tools. You get a sense of the family map. If all you ever did was do the social atom and share it, that’s quite sufficient, but in psychodrama we also have the option of moving it into action. So we use triangles to represent males, and circles to represent females, and a broken line—if someone is deceased, we represent them by a broken line. That’s for deceased. You can include anyone on your social atom. You can include pets on your social atom. Systems you can find a way to include in your social atom. Do we have anybody who’s, who would like to, feels warmed up to putting their social atom up on a…?

Leslie: Every time I’ve done this before, it seems… Every time I do it, it seems to be the same scenario.

Dayton: Okay. And what time period is this from, Les?
Leslie: Childhood. I don’t remember much of my childhood but this sense is my childhood.

Dayton: This sense is your childhood. And this represents the circle?

Leslie: That’s my mother.

Dayton: That’s your mother. She’s quite large.

Leslie: Yes. And this is… My father died 30 years ago.

Leslie is showing us how small her father, siblings and herself feel to her as compared to the size of her mother.

Leslie: That’s my father. I have... There’s also five in my family, and three brothers, and I have a twin sister.

Dayton: Twin sister. Okay.

Leslie: And then I’ve always... I draw me this way. And what I always do is I rip... I’m sort of over here. But the thing is, it’s funny because I’m getting this image of... I’ll just do it, going to rip this off. Can I rip...? No.

Dayton: Yeah.

Leslie: Rip it off?

Dayton: Yeah.

Leslie: And it feels as if I’m buried underneath. That’s how I see it.

Dayton: That’s how you see it.

Leslie: Yeah. That’s how I see it.

Dayton: Okay.

Dayton: What it is, essentially, is locating yourself on the piece of paper wherever it feels right to you, wherever—if that’s down here, if it’s in the center, if it’s over here. Locate yourself on the paper wherever feels right to you, and then locate your relationship in whatever size and distance feel appropriate—if somebody is larger than you and far away, or small and close... this sort of thing.

Dayton: Is this from childhood? Is it from present-day?

Betsey: Childhood.
Dayton: Okay.

Betsey is diagramming her family of origin.

Betsey: Mom. And Dad. Can I do squiggles?

Dayton: Anything you want. You don’t... You mean connecting squiggles?

Betsey: Tension.

Dayton: If you want to.

Betsey: Is that okay?

Dayton: Anything you want to do.

Betsey: Tension. This is my brother.

Betsey is using squares as well as triangles to represent males.

Betsey: There is also my sister.

Dayton: Mother Marian.

Betsey: Mother Marian.

Dayton: Okay. And you would... If you wanted... You would be farther out here.

Technically, psychodrama uses triangles for men and squares for organizations.

Betsey: I’d be out here.

Dayton: Okay, do you want to locate yourself where you think you’d be? Okay.

Betsey: Well I’d probably... all right, that’s...

Dayton: You keep moving farther out as you explore?

Betsey: That’s true. I also could be out here because I’m an observer.

Dayton: Uh-huh.

Betsey: And then there’s Richard. And he and I are pretty close, but further out here is the baby that died at three months.

Dayton: Yes.
Betsey: And he was an infant when he did, so that’s why he’s out there, but of course he was big in here.

Dayton: Let’s see that.

Betsey’s mother is large, central and encompassed by the ongoing presence of her child Howard, who died.

Betsey: So he was three months when he died.

Dayton: And his name?

Betsey: And his name was Howard.

Dayton: So there’s a lot of movement, people in different places, and you’re not sure exactly... Do you think you’re not being sure where you are here relates to this—not being sure of a sense of place or your own place?

Just because we don’t openly acknowledge or “talk about” a loss doesn’t mean it isn’t felt.

It is held in the unconscious atmosphere of the family.

Betsey: I... I’d always heard of him in just general reference. He was really never talked about. And it was only recently that I went to the cemetery and I saw all the dates, all the events that happened. My mother’s parents also died when she was nineteen. And also, I mean, there just was a lot of death taking place. This was prior to my birth, but there was something that just came across to me when I saw the gravestones and when I saw the dates of the deaths. And I just realized how much grief they carried, you know, for a very early start in their lives.

Dayton: How much grief your parents carried.

Betsey: My parents carried.

Dayton: From their own lives.

Betsey: And so the focus was always on Mom and how Mom was—if Mom was okay, or if Mom wasn’t okay. And there would be period of time when everything seemed ideal and we were the happy family, and everything was good, and there were celebrations and whatnot. But in
fact, you know, when she was not quite 60 years old, it’s like she had
gone as far as she could go in this world, and she ran out of spirit and
she committed suicide.

So it was… I see it now, in retrospect, that I was trying to affirm life
out of this. And it was a beginning of a lot of pain, working through a
lot of pain.

2 SOCIAL ATOMS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED AND THE GROUP WILL NOW MAKE A
SOCIOMETRIC CHOICE BETWEEN THE TWO DRAMAS.

Dayton: So “sociometric choice” means just walk towards the person
you feel the most warmed up to, which means it’s a choice that comes
from here—it’s where the identity is for you, where the warm-up is.
Just place your hands on the person, on the shoulder of the person.

Dayton Commentary: The sociometric choice allows group members to
choose a protagonist with whose work they are identifying. This reveals
the central concerns of the group and allows the work to be well supported
through identification and interest. The group has chosen to begin with
Betsey’s drama. We’ll move her social atom into action in what is called
an action sociogram.

Dayton: So using this as a map, just choose the players. We’ll sculpt it.

Betsey: Oh, okay.

BETSEY: MOVING THROUGH UNRESOLVED GRIEF

Betsey: Choose people to play...

Dayton: Uh-huh.

Betsey: Okay.

Dayton Commentary: Betsey is choosing auxiliary egos to represent
characters from her drama. As she does this, she gives them information
about the roles as a form of role training.

Betsey sets up the scene.

Betsey: You’d be out here. You’re a strong figure, but you’re kind of at
a distance.

Dayton Commentary: Betsey then sculpts her social atom by putting
her family members wherever it felt like they were in relationship to her. I ask Betsey to choose a stand-in to represent herself. If the material is traumatic, this can be a safeguard when dealing with it. The stand-in can hold the protagonist’s place, so to speak, and the protagonist can view the drama from the relative safety of the perimeter, or the periphery of the stage, alongside the director for support, if she wishes.

**Dayton:** How does it feel to look at that?

**Betsey:** It has a foreboding look. It’s a story waiting to be told.

**Dayton Commentary:** We’re letting Betsey literally revisit the family that she grew up in—her family of origin—so that she can sense and feel her way back in time; so that she can gain access to enough of the emotional and psychological climate, the reality that shaped her, and make mature sense of what happened to her when she was too young to understand.

**Betsey:** I don’t think you… I can’t talk. I don’t have a voice. I don’t think I did have a voice with you. I knew everything. I know everything that’s going on. I don’t understand, but I know.

**Dayton Commentary:** As she reenters her family system, Betsey feels as she felt then: as if she doesn’t have a voice. The emotional reality quickly emerges.

**Betsey:** I never felt as if you saw me connected with you.

**Sheila:** I don’t know what to say to you.

**Dayton:** Say that again, Mom.

**Sheila:** I don’t know what to say to you.

**Betsey:** I guess I want to hear that I’m somebody—that I have a place in this family—that I belong here.

**Sheila:** I don’t know how to say that to you.

**Dayton Commentary:** The family never talked about the loss of one of its members, so there was always a sort of emotional chasm that they had to step around.

**Betsey:** Things were not okay.

**Dayton:** Things are not okay.
Betsey: Things are not okay. There’s something going on—
Dayton: Tell her what’s not okay.
Betsey: —here that doesn’t feel right.
Dayton: Reverse roles. Give her her last line.
Sheila: Something’s going on here that’s not all right.
Betsey: I’m too busy. Just go and play. It’s just not a good time. It’s not a good time.
Sheila: It’s never a good time.
Betsey: I have to take your brothers to their game.
Dayton: Reverse roles.
Sheila: I have to take your brothers to the game.
Betsey: I need my time. When am I gonna get my time?
Dayton: Again.
Betsey: When am I gonna get my time?
Dayton: Again.
Betsey: Tell me I matter. Tell me I’m important. Tell me you care. Tell me, tell me: where do I belong?

Dayton Commentary: When a family member dies, the grief needs to be felt so that the deep emotions surrounding the loss don’t go underground and fester, so that a fear of acknowledging the loss doesn’t take over and make talking about it taboo.

Dayton: I don’t know where I belong here. I don’t know.
Betsey: I just feel like... I never did, really.
Dayton: I never did.
Betsey: I was trouble later on.
Dayton: Yeah. It all came out later. It all comes out later.
Betsey: Right.
Dayton: This is the scene, and it comes out later.
Betsey: Right.

Dayton: Anything else you want to do to... If you could... Yeah?

Betsey: I lost Howard. I was just looking for Howard. Where did he go? There he is.

Dayton Commentary: When Betsey is able to put Howard, the child who died, into place, she is also able to find her own place.

Dayton: If he’s dead but not denied...

Betsey: But not denied...

Dayton: Right.

Betsey: Then I belong where I belong. You know? I belong right here. And Marian... That would fit. And Dad, Dad would be right next to Mom. That would be a whole different picture. There’s Donny.

Dayton: Is that where Donny would still be? So how does it feel when you look at this picture?

Betsey: It feels better. It feels possible, you know? It feels real.

Dayton Commentary: As always, we have ample sharing so that the protagonist and group can meet their needs for closure.

Sheila: How it connected for me was: what would it feel like to have a child that is witnessing me, and I even know they are, and I can’t acknowledge them in that way, because then I might have to take some kind of action? I might have to change in a way that I don’t have the capacity to do. And that’s what I was feeling when I was being your mom. But you know, just being here makes me realize that I really took care of myself. And your piece where, when you spoke to yourself, that you took care of yourself, you know, in the way that you had to. And I feel like I did as a kid, and I feel like I’m doing it now. And whatever it takes, that’s what... Because I’m, you know, I’m choosing life.

BONUS TRACK: INTERVIEW WITH BOB

Bob: …about my journey? Can I talk about my journey?

Tian Dayton: Please.
Bob: Yeah. I’m in recovery—14 years. And psychodrama really... Well, I got introduced to psychodrama through my wife, and then, and then I went to a psychodrama institute that you were leading. And I was also a graduate student at the time, even though I’m much older—but I went to school, you know, later on. And when I found psychodrama and found the healing pieces in the psychodrama, I thought, “Wow, this is what I want to do.” Because I wanted to be a therapist but I didn’t know exactly how and... how I could fit in. I’d been an actor for many years and, and I’d been a teacher for a number of years, and so I figured, “How could I get my expertise, my skills?” And I found it through psychodrama. So the whole process has helped me heal a lot of issues, a lot of issues, from family of origin, present-day stuff. And I love doing psychodrama, I love doing it in my men’s group. I have a men’s recovery group and I, I use psychodrama. And it blows them out of the water, but the healing is just so phenomenal. You know?

Dayton: How do you think it helps with not relapsing, stuff like that?

Bob: Well, interesting. I have a man in my group who’s a relapser, and he, he’s very resistant, or maybe he’s not ready. Maybe resistant’s not the right word, I don’t know, but he’s just not ready on some level to do the work. He does it, but he has a really guarded, defensive thing about it. I mean, he will do it, but just so far. He’s afraid, he’s afraid to open up. And he continues to drink. But about relapsing, I think that, you know, what are the causes of relapsing? I think that’s a lot of the emotional stuff that we don’t really look at and that gets triggered again. You can put down the booze or the drugs and still have the feelings. Or that’s when the feelings come up. And if you’re not prepared to work on those issues, my guess is that you get retriggered, and where do you go? What do you do? You pick up the drink, the drug, the sex, the food, the whatever. Whatever the substance is. And so psychodrama—I loved, I love what you said once, about psychodrama is like a smorgasbord. And you could put it out there and say, “Okay, let’s look at this piece. Okay, well, that doesn’t fit or that doesn’t work, so let’s look over here.” And I think with relapses, we can look at the issues and see, you know, what gets triggered, what’s going on. What’s the, what’s the pressure that’s doing it? And psychodrama’s a very safe way of looking at it and doing it, you know.
And consequently I think, you know, it helps people to put some time together. Or at least if you look at your issues, you’ve got a shot at it. If you don’t look at your issues, I think you just… it’s just going to pop up again, and pop up again, and pop up again. And if you don’t do anything about it, you’re going to drink and drink and drink and drink.

I just think, if I could be so… if I could say… I think it’s like the perfect therapy, for me—for my skills as a therapist and as a former actor and teacher—that is just blends so beautifully. And I know that I’ve seen it work. I’ve seen it work on, for all, for all situations, you know. Because what we want to do, in a way, is to revisit the past and kind of open up about it or look at those numb feelings or those frozen feelings, and maybe say the things that we need to say, didn’t have the opportunity to say as children, or as adults. And I think that’s so freeing. That’s so freeing. Once you get it out there, once you put it out to the universe, once you put it out, out of your closed insides, healing takes place. How that works is amazing. It’s amazing, so...

**Dayton:** How did that...

**Bob:** I love, I love, I love doing it, being a participant, and I love working as a therapist using psychodrama. Yeah.

**Dayton:** And the piece you did today?

**Bob:** Yeah.

**Dayton:** How was that for you?

**Bob:** I learned a lot today, too. I learned a lot today. The piece I did today… You know, my issues are coming up about trying to get the, my emotional needs met from my wife and realizing intellectually that only my mother could give me those certain needs. And yet the fact that our granddaughter is living with us set this whole thing up for me—it’s like I felt like I was doing battle with my granddaughter. I was doing, like, you know, tug of war, to vying for my wife’s affections. And I get lost in that whole thing. And I think that I’m losing, and that my wife doesn’t have enough love to give me. And then I get… My well gets dry. I go, I get so dry and so depleted, you know, that I don’t know what to do. I don’t know what to do.
So, you know, my piece today just once again helped me realize that, that, though my mother was a girl in a woman’s body, that my mother also had a lot of love for me, and a lot of caring that was unexpressed because she didn’t know how to verbalize; she didn’t know how to put it out there. She didn’t know how to put it out there. And when I put out those feelings, it scared her. That’s what I learned today: it really scared her. And I may have been the recipient of some abuse because boys were not allowed to express feelings, at least in those days. I don’t know if it works again in the ‘90s, but when I was growing up, boys didn’t have feelings. You were suspect; there was something wrong with you. You weren’t a real boy if you had feelings. But what I learned... And I felt defective for many years. I felt like, you know, there was something wrong with me, something wrong with me for having feelings. I think I drank over those issues. Yeah.

And to realize today that really... and to help clarify for me that what I was seeing was that it was my mother and the adults in my life who didn’t understand emotional feelings, who didn’t understand that. And consequently, you know, at least I got the message, “Clam up, shut up, don’t express them, something’s wrong with you.” But today helped me to realize that I carried, I carry their stuff for many, many years. And I was able to shed... Every time I do a psychodrama, I’m able to shed some baggage. I’m able to... I feel lighter. You know. And there’s a psychodrama—I think it was the first psychodrama I did at one of your institutes in Florida about six years ago—where I asked in the psychodrama for my father to come back to life to protect me against the abuse of my stepfather. And the man who played my father in that psychodrama, Tim, is a very good friend of mine today. I mean, we bonded. And although he lives in Florida and I live in New York, we’re still friends and we call. It’s been about six years, too. So it has such a bonding. It has such a real connection, soul to soul, soul to soul, it really does. So I learned a lot. Each time I do a psychodrama, I learn a lot about myself and about, you know, getting into my mother’s shoes—I guess the introject or whatever—about finding out her perspective, when you reverse roles—

**Dayton:** Right.
Bob: —to find out from her perspective—

Dayton: How frightening feelings were for her.

Bob: How frightened... that’s what I heard today. I heard, through my voice playing my mother today in role reversal, she was frightened. My mother, my mother was just a scared girl in a woman’s body.

Dayton: And her feelings were so repressed.

Bob: Absolutely.

Dayton: And that when you had them—

Bob: Absolutely.

Dayton: —she would have had to have hers in order to be there with you.

Bob: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I think that my mother shut down when my father died.

Dayton: Yeah.

Bob: I think that she just... probably the grief was so overwhelming that she didn’t know how to deal with it. And I think the only way that she knew was to just shut down and get through life, get through life—you know, live your 60, 70, you know, years. She was a very old 74 when she died, a very old 74 when she died. She carried a lot of stuff. A lot of old stuff. Yeah. Superstitions, she carried, you know. She loved John Wayne. She loved... She said, “John Wayne movies: no mush.” That was her expression. “No mush.” And he was a real man. You know, John Wayne. So. Yeah. Anyway.

Dayton: Any message to the world?

Bob: My... Do I have a message to the world?

Dayton: Yeah.

Bob: Wow. What a question. Message to the world... I don’t know. I don’t know.

Dayton: What is a real man today?

Bob: What is a real man today?
Dayton: Yeah. What’s the real man of the new millennium?

Bob: We’re not going to that question... You know, I was so moved—was it back in the ‘80s—when men were pushing the baby carriage. I just loved to see guys pushing the baby carriage, and to watch guys carry their babies on their chest or their back—over here, the chest, though, you know. It was such a great... say, vindication? Is that the word? There was something that was like, “I knew it along.” That was okay. I mean, that’s part of being a parent, that part of being a dad, but somehow you weren’t supposed to in certain eras in history. You just weren’t, you know. So, so, what is a man today? A man is a human being with both masculine and feminine—if you have to label them—both masculine and feminine feelings. I think, I think when we touch the feminine side of ourselves, that really enhances the masculine side, I mean, you know. I mean, I’ve never been a hunter—I mean, like in the old myths about going out and hunt, you know. But there’s a part of me, there’s that solid, anchored part of me that we can say, “This is the masculine.” And the access of my feelings, we can call that the feminine side. I still, you know, I’m glad that I’m able to connect and to feel comfortable, to feel comfortable. I know a lot of men today who don’t feel comfortable with it, with the feeling side. They still... There’s still a stigma attached. I don’t think the young men coming up, but you know.

Dayton: What’s keeping us from being more evolved? What’s keeping men in that place?

Bob: What’s keeping us?

Dayton: Yeah. What’s keeping men from being able to be comfortable with their feeling sides?

Bob: Well I don’t know about... I think men of maybe my generation, maybe, you know, maybe men who, like, are in their, like, you know, mid-50’s to 60’s that probably still have that stigma attached. But I see a lot of younger men today who are more available to feelings, who are more open, you know. Maybe through therapy, maybe through, I don’t know, recovery. Maybe realizing that, that we don’t have to objectify, that we don’t have to label, that we don’t have to make fun of, that we’re all human beings, we’re all in this world together, we’re all in
this universe together. And that, whether we’re men, whether we’re women, we share so much, you know. But we’re always trying to label. We’re always trying to say, “Because you do that, therefore you must be...” And then that squashes creativity, spontaneity. It just keeps you down. And what do you want to do after that? Hang yourself.

**Dayton:** That’s great, Bob. That’s just great.

**BONUS TRACK: INTERVIEW WITH BETSEY**

**Dayton:** How is that working for you?

**Betsey:** I could think of all the right words. Deeply meaningful. I was thinking, I remember—in ‘83 I think it was—Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse was part of a Children of Alcoholics presentation by Rokelle Lerner and her associate, I can’t remember her name. And I volunteered, which was totally unlike me, to demonstrate a family sculpture. And it was the beginning of my work, literally.

**Dayton:** Wow.

**Betsey:** It just opened up for me that there was something I need to do with my life, you know—even though, outside, things seem to have moved and progressed and whatnot. So then, in this group, as you know, I’ve been in it I think at least six years, and I’ve had some meaningful experiences of my own, in my own work and certainly working right along with others. And I have felt that incompleteness, you know, that unfinished kind of thing—nothing that I could really say is happening in my life that signifies I have to do work. And so recently, as you know, I did some work after having not really volunteered to do work for a long time. I was feeling very resistant to going on the stage and doing the simplest things, and yet I do the work all the time with my own clients. So what today... I think today was a culmination. And I had no idea of it even as I, I... you know, it was really going with my gut, you know. So I think I’ve been in a process, and I think that I had no idea of what I had to do, and I just trusted you to be there with me and for something to happen. And I approached it as a novice, you know.

**Dayton:** Yeah
Betsey: So that I wouldn’t objectify any—

Dayton: Like a professional.

Betsey: —any part of it. Get the professional out of it. And I was looking back on the poster board, and I saw where I put squares instead of triangles, and I… you know, the critic voice came up in me. And yet that was so… I was so into the process that that was natural for me to do. And so thank you. Thank you, many times over.

Dayton: Thank you. How do you think, how do you think this process, or… you know a lot about Karen and you see a lot of people go through that process through this. But you do this work with people. How do you think it helps people?

Betsey: You mean a presentation such as this for them, or see evidence of the work, or...

Dayton: Like psychodrama. Like...

Betsey: Psychodrama itself.

Dayton: A week at Caron. This particular type of work—psychodrama.

Betsey: Well, as far as the Caron work is concerned, referring clients there and having them come out and working with them in group as a follow-up, it’s, it’s essential, really, to their continuing growth. There’s nothing that I can do that will approach what Caron does, and yet Caron also can’t do what happens in my groups, you know? They do work together. And it keeps people more… it like, reinforces, their motivation. I don’t want to say they’ve dedication, because I don’t think they think of it that way. But it really supports their ability to continue. And they go through the stage after the work, after they return, of, you know, being on a high and feeling like they’ve got it all together and they know it all. And so they don’t lose it, because it has been that deep, but they need to revisit it, and psychodrama is the only way, the only way. It has to happen, I call it “in 3-D.” You know? It really does. Every so often I’ll be kind of bogged down with a client in talking, you know. And then I know it’s just, there has to be movement. And psychodrama is the format. It gives so many different ways to do that, you know.
**Dayton:** Is there any kind of wisdom you want to add that I don’t, I’m not thinking of?

**Betsey:** About the importance of the process? About the unifying part of it, the normalizing of pain... The permission—I mean, this is all something that you would say. But it does permit people to go deeper, and it continues to surprise them. The meaningfulness of the work, how helpful it is. The contagion of it in group, you know, one person to another.

**Dayton:** One thing I always think is that people think you have to be sick in order to go into therapy. But we all have sick parts. What do you... you know. Psychodrama seems to me to be for everybody; it cares for everybody.

**Betsey:** Yes. Yeah, yes, yeah.

**Dayton:** You know.

**Betsey:** I was just speaking to one of the group members that I had not met tonight. And she was talking about her personal situation and having a young child and a partner, and not being married. And she said something about, I guess they had just seen you. And I read Heart Wounds on my way in, you know. And I wasn’t ready to quote it, by any means, but it stirred in my own mind how important it is to do this work in the formation of a relationship, because we do bring it all into that relationship, you know. And I do couples work all the time and, you know, I can’t always have that coupling group, but, you know, coming from that framework, I am able to help them think of it that way, so that all the focus isn’t on the relationship.

**Dayton:** Right.

**Betsey:** You know, they talk about it as an abstract, you know, and, or as women are, or men are, and, you know, that kind of thing. So, you know, the psychodramatic approach is the only honest way to approach it, you know? Where each person is understanding something about how reenactments occur in the context of their relationship. That’s where I think the work perhaps doesn’t get acknowledged—that there’s a lot in the Hendrix work about the impact of each person’s, you know, experiences that they bring
into the relationship. But I find what doesn’t get spoken to is the importance of working with that, you know, putting it out in role-play, through experiential exercises, rather than in just the two-person dialogue, the mirroring exercise, because it can be very limited. It doesn’t take people to a deeper level, you know. It can, but so often it doesn’t. And I think that’s really important in couples work, or individual work that’s going to play back in a couple relationship. It’s nothing new that you haven’t said in some way. You know, I find so much help from you work.

Dayton: I find so much help from yours, too.


Dayton: That’s what keeps it fresh.

Betsey: So... Caron is big and anything you can do with Caron. It’s, you know, and it helps us. We’re in Connecticut and Caron is accessible and it’s, I’ve had people go by bus, you know. It’s just great. So it’s not a big deal.

Dayton: OK. We’ll get it moving.

Betsey: And anything in the New York area is helpful too. So many of my clients do the Friday night follow-up after their treatment, and I encourage that because it all helps. Is that it?

Dayton: Thank you.

Betsey: Thanks. Thank you.

Dayton: Thanks, Betsy. Ok. Thank you very much.

Betsey: I’m done? I’m done.

Dayton: Yeah. Thanks.

—

Dayton: How do you see these programs at Caron helping with relapse, helping with people who have problems with addiction?

Betsey: That’s... I can respond to that. That’s where Caron has been so important in my mind, because they do incorporate family into the treatment for CD. I’ve actually had clients who’ve been through the
relapse recovery program. And it depends on the family, if you can get people to come to the family treatment, but in a recent example I had a couple, and she, they were not able to incorporate the weekend into, as part of his treatment—it was very abbreviated because of his insurance. But they both went back for the three days, I think, for the family treatment. And he certainly would have been susceptible to relapse. I think it’s made a world of difference in his return and their ability to work together. So I can just see that spread across a lot of different people.

Dayton: So you’re saying that addictions treatment isn’t enough. You need to go...

Betsey: Oh, it’s hardly scratch of the surface, you know. It’s the opening up of the person to community if they will at least go to AA on a regular basis, but it doesn’t give them any idea of what recovery really is all about.

Dayton: What’s recovery really all about?

Betsey: Oh, you know the AA saying; it’s 5 percent drinking and 95 percent thinking, you know. And just think of that with two people on it, trying to work out a relationship, where there hasn’t been a relationship, you know? All the thinking has been around the drinking.

Dayton: Yeah.

Betsey: Or around accommodating the using.

Dayton: Yeah.

Betsey: So they’re lost, you know, where their relationship is concerned. So for them both to see and experience a treatment facility in and of itself, just to see Caron, makes a big difference. You know, it’s like, you know, in therapy, seeing one person in a family and never seeing the partner. And then one day maybe you see the partner, and it just, as a therapist, it’s, the whole picture opens up.

Dayton: Yeah.

Betsey: And that’s what needs....
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Dr. Dayton is a major writer in the field of psychodrama. She is the author of The Living Stage: A Step by Step Guide to Psychodrama, Sociometry and Experiential Group Therapy, Emotional Sobriety: From Relationship Trauma to Resilience and Balance and numerous other books and articles. She has been a national speaker on a variety of subjects related to addiction, psychology and psychodrama and is a regular guest expert on TV and radio. For more info log onto tiandayton.com.

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