

# DRAMA THERAPY

## Sets the Stage for Holistic Health

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Drama Therapy has grown significantly in popularity since the National Association for Drama Therapy was incorporated in 1979. Much more than role playing, drama therapy techniques can include storytelling, mask-making, puppetry, improvisation, theater games, theatrical performance, enactments and healing rituals, borrowing these exercises from the word of drama, theater and improvisation for the purpose of personal growth and healing.

Psychodrama is perhaps the most powerful use of drama. During psychodrama, participants enact scenes from their own past, present, imagined future or fantasies for in-depth healing and transformation. Along with other techniques, it serves people suffering from a variety of challenges including stress and anxiety, depression, addictions, family dysfunction, relationship issues and any number of other challenges physical, mental or spiritual. It is also useful for enhanced personal growth and self-expression.

Because drama allows one to work with imaginary scenarios, it opens the door to a wealth of possibilities for healing. With drama one can physically interact with one's problems and explore true feelings about them. Drama therapy allows its participant to try on new behaviors and practice being the person we want to be and how we want to feel, speak, walk and interact with others. We can dialogue with different parts of our own psyche or become a different person altogether. The creative options are limitless.

In addition, drama and other creative arts can be more effective than talk therapy alone because they tap into the right-brain world of the unconscious and of symbolism, emotions, and patterns. The arts bring forth images, feelings and beliefs to which our left-brain, conscious, analytical mind isn't privy. This hidden, repressed or denied psychic information often holds the key to our healing.

Besides being active, engaging, and fun, drama therapy is particularly effective, because it utilizes the body and its own wisdom to heal itself. By physically acting "as if" certain things are happening, the person gets a viscerally real experience. This enables people to speak their truth to an actor playing someone with whom they want resolution and have it feel like real closure. They can forgive someone in the mental realm or be forgiven themselves without needing the actual people involved to be present. They can practice new behavior, acting as if they are the person they desire to be, and the body interprets it as a genuine event. The brain does not know the difference between "reality" and imagination therefore, it benefits from the enacted, pretend experience. In addition, the body knows what it needs for healing and is constantly giving us signals by way of physical symptoms and emotions. Dr. Candace Pert went so far as to say, "The body is the unconscious mind." In drama therapy, one can get still, listen to how the body is feeling, and allow it to reveal its healing messages.

One can even role play one's higher self for wisdom and guidance and find one already has the answers within.

Drama therapy was intended primarily to assuage mental and emotional pain, but don't underestimate its effectiveness for fostering physical healing as well. There are now volumes of scientific evidence to support the mind-body connection. Drama therapy is one method by which people may retrieve and release cellular memories that are blocking the body's cell receptors and prohibiting normal functioning. As one's mental, emotional and spiritual issues heal, the body may follow suit.

Through this emerging and growing therapy, we may become less fearful, stressed and anxious. Our bodies, once fatigued, begin to heal itself and become energetic through the empowerment that drama brings. Whatever toxins lay waste to the mind and body, drama therapy can play a part in its release. We can create our own experience, find healing potential in disease and set the stage for holistic health.