

*The following is an excerpt from the book:*

## **Insight Improvisation**

### **Melding Meditation, Theater, and Therapy for Self-Exploration, Healing, and Empowerment**

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*To learn more, please visit <http://www.insightimprov.org>.*

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## Further Exploration with Psolodrama

*The creative is the place where no one else has ever been....You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition....What you'll discover will be wonderful. What you'll discover will be yourself.*

— Alan Alda (1980)

The focus of Part III of this book has been on psolodrama as a peer practice. Part IV will explore the application of Insight Improv—including psolodrama—in other contexts, such as how it can be used by therapists working with clients, and how it can be taught in workshop settings. This final chapter of Part III describes other aspects of psolodrama: how it compares with other practices, how it can be made even more powerful through singing, and how it can be captured and reflected on through journaling. At the end I add a few additional thoughts about its use as a peer practice.

## Further Exploration with Psolodrama

### *Compare and Contrast: Psolodrama and...*

*Meditation • Authentic Movement • Psychodrama*

*Other Forms of Drama Therapy:*

*Self-Rev • Five Phases • Role Theory/Technique • DvT*

*Other Forms of Therapy:*

*Analysis/Dream Interpretation • Focusing • Co-counseling • IFS • DBT*

### *Additional Techniques*

*Sung Psolodrama • Journaling*

### *Final Thoughts*

## Compare and Contrast: Psolodrama and...

*“Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.”*

*— Bertrand Russell (1951)*

There is no doubt that psolodrama is a strange practice, when seen from the point of view of what already exists. It's an odd form: the practitioner is encouraged to be his own therapist, to talk to himself, to play a variety of roles that are often arguing and even fighting with one another, all while keeping his eyes closed and moving about blindly.

Entering a roomful of people doing psolodrama—as one workshop participant observed—is like visiting a clinic for the mentally ill.

And yet, as hundreds of workshop participants and therapy clients have experienced, psolodrama works: it is a uniquely creative and empowering approach for exploring and expressing in a fully embodied and voiced way life challenges and themes that lie hidden beneath the surface of daily life.

Originally developed in 2003, psolodrama is a relatively new practice. Comparisons with more established personal growth and therapeutic practices provide some insight into how and why it works the way it does.

### **Meditation**

As with all practices in Insight Improvisation, psolodrama can be seen as a kind of meditation. It is an embodied form of meditation, a journey into the depth of oneself that simultaneously engages all the parts of the self. There are several parallels between psolodrama and classic sitting meditation.

As in meditation, not only is there is an initial understanding required to do psolodrama, a grasp of the technique and underlying principles, but also a commitment to practice. Psolodrama is interesting to try once, but as in a meditation practice, one's experience deepens over time. With practice, the psoloist learns to let go, to follow bodily impulse, and to tap into deeper veins of unexplored truth. Ultimately the psoloist can let go of structure entirely, entering an open field of improvisation and self-discovery, without rules or constraints. Witnessing can also improve with practice, as the witness learns to be a stronger and more compassionate container for the psoloist's process.

Like meditation, the ultimate goal of psolodrama is greater freedom. By identifying buried issues and habitual patterns, embodying them and allowing them to speak, the psoloist can experience both intellectual insight and emotional understanding that can help free him of everyday stressors, break dysfunctional habits of thought and action, and achieve greater inner peace.

One example: in a psolodrama a few years ago, I enacted a scene in which I was carrying all the burdens in my life on my back—family, work, etc.—while singing in an operatic fashion about my suffering (this was a *sung psolodrama*—more on this below), and sinking to the ground. I was able to identify and express to my witness afterward a pattern about myself I noticed: a tendency to overdramatize issues and see myself as a victim of them. After that psolodrama, I began to notice those moments in my life, and say to myself, “no drama.” In those moments I had a greater ability to release anger, sadness, or jealousy and immediately return to the present moment. I had seen this pattern many times before in sitting meditation, but it was through psolodrama and sharing with the witness that the pattern became concrete and undeniable, something I knew I could change and needed to change.

Just as in sitting meditation, it takes courage in psolodrama to look deeply into oneself, to confront one’s own truth, to face inner demons and powerful habits, and to become aware of one’s attachment or identification with them or one’s aversion to or hatred of them. As in meditation, by confronting the truth, one can learn to relate to it differently, with acceptance and wisdom, rather than reactivity.

One difference between psolodrama and classic meditation is the presence of a supportive witness. Ideally, one would have such a supportive witness in one’s sitting

practice—someone to be there and help hold the space, as well as to discuss the meditation with afterward. (The parallel in meditation would be one’s teacher, but one cannot always be meditating with a teacher present.) A dialogue with a good witness can help the discoveries and insights from the psolodrama “stick” in a way that they do not always do in a daily sitting meditation practice. On the other hand, the presence of the witness in psolodrama can sometimes cause the psoloist to consciously or unconsciously censor his truthful exploration of vulnerable themes, such as aspects of his life he may be ashamed of or feel tender about. For experienced psoloists, practicing psolodrama without a witness can allow them to experience a fully uncensored psolodrama. (*See the chapter “Psolodrama Alone.”*)

Psolodrama is a fully embodied practice. Meditation is not—at least on the surface. One could argue that for experienced meditators, sitting meditation *is* fully embodied: the meditator is completely alive in her body, with awareness in the present, and is noticing everything—down to the slightest twitch of muscle, the tiniest sound from her intestines, the state of tension or relaxation of her jaw, the pace and depth of her breathing.

Ultimately, meditation and psolodrama are teaching two different ways of dealing with what is arising: meditation is teaching non-reactivity and acceptance; psolodrama is teaching authentic self-expression, enactment, improvisation, and play—and through these approaches to also find resolution and acceptance.

### **Authentic Movement**

Psolodrama begins with authentic movement as a foundational practice, but adds several new elements: speaking aloud, playing roles, enacting scenes, awareness of the

five psychodramatic roles, and a goal—to “cook” the emerging issue, challenge, or theme in order to explore it and ultimately achieve insight, catharsis, greater awareness, and/or resolution. With all these new elements, the experience of doing psolodrama can be quite different from classic authentic movement, which tends to be a silent exploration of sensations, feelings, images, and/or memories arising from the body as one follows inner impulses.

Because psolodrama combines authentic movement and psychodrama, psoloists with different styles can combine these two practices to varying degrees. I know one practitioner who tends to stick quite closely to authentic movement, but finds shifting roles very helpful and powerful as he finds himself in various scenes—he tends to move silently in each role while feeling his way carefully with his body. And I know another person who, within seconds of beginning her psolodrama, is already playing two roles, speaking as them, and enacting a dramatic conflict. This is not to say that the second psoloist is “inauthentic.” In fact, she, too, is listening very carefully to her body, and the roles she plays come directly from that bodily awareness, and an ability she has developed—through years of doing psolodrama—to connect with her gut impulse/feeling, almost instantaneously.

For anyone interested in learning psolodrama, I would strongly suggest getting a good grounding in authentic movement first. But it’s interesting to compare the two as practices:

Authentic movement tends to be a meditative practice, connecting one with the body, and inviting a complete sense of relaxation and letting go. There is no goal in authentic movement, except to exercise one’s inner listening while learning to be a

supportive and nonjudgmental witness for oneself. There can be a beautiful sense of spaciousness when practicing authentic movement. The practice allows the mover to tune in with her body, to experience an intelligence that resides throughout the body and not just in the head, and now and again to pass from moving to being moved. At the end of an authentic movement session, the mover often feels connected to something meaningful and/or emotional, and there is a feeling of mystery to it, as if one were moved by forces beyond language.

Psolodrama, in contrast, is a drama. There is a bit of an expectation, probably on the part of the psoloist and the witness, that something is going to *happen*. There is going to be an exploration; a story of some kind will emerge. In the background behind every psolodrama is a question: “What is this psolodrama about?” The result is that the psoloist tends not to feel the same sense of spaciousness and letting go found in authentic movement throughout his psolodrama. Those feelings are there—particularly at the outset as a launching pad for the later action—but are usually later overtaken by the qualities one finds in a good drama: a heightened sense of energy, stakes, potential, and passion.

### Psychodrama

Psolodrama is a kind of one-person psychodrama—but an unusual kind.

In classic psychodrama, the protagonist states at the outset what she would like to work on, what her issue is. The director then acts as a facilitator of the protagonist’s drama, employing the group to play auxiliary egos, doubles, etc., and “cooking” the action, discovering where there is some emotional heat for the protagonist, helping guide the action toward a fulfilling transformation or resolution.



In psolodrama, however, the psoloist enters empty. She purposely puts aside the issues that are at the top of her mind, finds a comfortable starting position in the space, closes her eyes, and begins to follow her body. She trusts that something will emerge from the process, having faith that by starting with authentic movement, shared vipassana, role stream, and/or scene stream, she will happen upon roles and invite dialogues and scenes that point to a life theme, issue, challenge, conflict, or deep-seated emotion. She notices what that theme is and begins to “cook” the action, listening to the body, embodying the roles more fully, heightening the conflict, in order to more deeply explore the heart of the issue.

The content of psychodramas and psolodramas also tends to be different. Although a psychodrama can be about anything, psychodramas on the whole tend to focus on present-day relationships (e.g. relationships with spouse, other family members, one’s boss, etc.) and how those link to past relationships (e.g. family of origin, especially parents, and childhood experiences). Psolodramas can and do include all of those elements, but there is a greater tendency toward roles and stories that are fantastical, metaphorical (and symbolic), and often quite unexpected to the psoloist. Psolodrama on the whole tends to be more dreamlike than classic psychodrama; a psolodrama has its own strange logic that were one to describe it to someone later might sound quite odd.

I have found that the practice of psolodrama can make one a more intuitive and flexible psychodrama director. In practicing psolodrama over the years, I have learned to listen to gut impulse, not only my own as a psychodrama director, but also to be more sensitive to the protagonist’s impulse, and how to say “yes” to it immediately. I have also learned to be open to the unexpected, to unusual or illogical roles and scenes, and to

allow the drama to go to unconventional and sometime mysterious places. I have learned to let go of advance planning, and to trust that if I follow the protagonist's instincts—where his gut is taking him—the result is invariably better.

One technique that I have lifted directly from psolodrama and used many times in psychodrama: if I hit a point when directing a psychodrama where it is unclear how to proceed, I will often have the protagonist close his eyes for a moment, and ask him to tune in to his body and follow it. “What does your body want to do...? Now, keeping your eyes closed, begin to follow your body.” In most instances, this leads to a new role or scene, or to greater clarity about a choice the protagonist needs to make. I may facilitate a few of these “mini-psolodramas” during a single psychodrama, if needed, to help the protagonist discover what happens next. A similar technique is to ask the protagonist to close his eyes and then say to him: “Take a moment to tune in to how you are feeling right now. Take your time. When you are ready, keeping your eyes closed, speak the feeling aloud.” This moment of inner listening can help deepen the psychodrama by reconnecting the protagonist to his own intuition, informing all that happens next in the drama.

### **Other Forms of Drama Therapy**

As with psychodrama, most of the other mainstream types of drama therapy (Johnson & Emunah, 2009) differ from psolodrama in that the therapist is more directly involved, either as a director of the action, or in playing roles that interact with the client's. There are many advantages to having a more involved therapist, and when the therapist's guidance is needed in psolodrama, he or she can always provide coaching. However, one of the benefits of the “therapist-as-witness” in psolodrama is that one gets

to observe the client's body-mind at play, with minimal intervention. As one workshop participant observed, it's as if we're getting a "pure hit" of the psoloist's psyche.

Of the many drama therapy approaches, a few provide particularly insightful comparisons to psolodrama due to what they have in common with it.

**Self-revelatory Theater.** Psolodrama is a form of "self-rev," but it's a strange one. Psolodrama is a spontaneous self-revelatory performance, unwritten, unrehearsed, usually with eyes closed, and with a single audience member, the witness. But it does fulfill the central purpose of self-revelatory theater: to create a personal piece of theater that explores life themes with vulnerability, and by doing so transforms the performer's—and audience's—relationship to the those themes (Rubin, 2006).

As in classic self-rev, when doing psolodrama there can be a feeling of pride in performing a one-person autobiographical show. The psoloist can feel touched by her own artistic work and self-expression, and even more touched that it was heard and appreciated by a compassionate, understanding audience member—in psolodrama, the witness.

Also true of both psolodrama and self-rev is the thrill—and scariness—of the empty space, the bare stage. Like a writer facing a blank page or an artist with an empty canvas, the performer or psoloist does not know what he will create at the outset; the possibilities are infinite. This can be intimidating, which is why having a strong development process is so important. In self-rev there is a process of writing or improvising, rehearsing, and forming a polished performance over time. In psolodrama, the entryway practices form an organic pathway that helps reduce performance anxiety: by beginning with authentic movement and shared vipassana, the psoloist is immediately

tasked with paying attention to the present moment, noticing all that is arising through her various sense doors, and sharing it aloud. Brought into the present moment, there is less space for fear, self-judgment, and other tensions caused by performance-mind.

Psolodrama and self-rev are highly compatible forms; psolodrama is a perfect practice for discovering material that can later be used to form the basis of a one-person show. (See “*Further Exploration with Insight Improvisation*” in Part IV.)

**Five-Phase Approach.** Renee Emunah’s delineation of five phases (1994) in working with groups and individuals—from dramatic play through scene work, role play, and enactment to dramatic ritual—is similar to psolodrama’s five-step entryway progression from authentic movement and shared vipassana, through role stream and scene stream, and into psolodrama. A psolodrama can include all five of Emunah’s phases, or just a few, depending on several factors: the soloist’s level of experience, her comfort with the witness and ability to be vulnerable, and the nature of the material arising in her psolodrama. Ultimately, the practice of psolodrama becomes a dramatic ritual in itself: the soloist takes ownership of the process, no longer dependent on the therapist for facilitating her healing, but instead discovering her own path to healing.

**Role Theory/Technique.** Landy’s technique (2009) consists of helping clients identify roles—either roles they wish to play or roles that are a challenge for them to embody in their lives—and through a variety of techniques facilitate their entering into and enacting scenes with those roles. One parallel to psolodrama in Landy’s approach is his separating the figure of the “guide” from what he terms role (protagonist) and counter-role (auxiliary ego)—the guide being very similar to the director role in psolodrama.

**Developmental Transformations.** DvT (Johnson, 2009)—a technique in which therapist and client improvise and play together, often for the entire therapy session—is, on the surface, very different from psolodrama. But there are a few points of intersection. There is a direct parallel between the use of the witnessing circle in DvT and the witness role in psolodrama. Typically, however, a DvT therapist might remain in the witness role for a minute or two, whereas in psolodrama the witness stays in their role throughout the action (unless the psoloist requests coaching). The nature of the improvisation in DvT, in which roles can fluidly shift and evolve, is similar to Insight Improv's role stream and scene stream, and resembles the fluidity of psolodrama itself. Fundamentally, however, DvT and psolodrama are quite different to experience. Comparing them to sports, DvT is a bit more like tennis, in which the ball is constantly being volleyed back and forth between therapist and client. Psolodrama could be compared to solo running or rock-climbing, contemplative activities in which the athlete draws upon her own inner resources to find her way. But once the dramatic action begins in psolodrama, the psoloist can become his own tennis partner. Those accustomed to DvT, used to having another person to bounce off of when playing scenes, can be disoriented when trying psolodrama for the first time, finding it odd to be playing all the roles themselves. Those who stick with it, however, discover that in psolodrama they are able to listen deeply to inner impulse and discover what is arising from the body and inner imagery, in a way that can be difficult to achieve when improvising with another person.

## Other Forms of Psychotherapy

**Freudian Analysis.** Psolodrama—and especially the shared vipassana phase that precedes it—could sound, to a casual observer, like the free association technique pioneered by Freud in analysis. But shared vipassana is different. Whereas in analysis one is simply asked to speak whatever one is thinking, to freely associate between thoughts, in shared vipassana the emphasis is not on thinking, but on opening to the body and the six sense doors, to notice what is coming in through those channels, as well as what emotions and inner imagery (and later, roles and scenes) those sensory objects are evoking. Shared vipassana is fully embodied—rather than lying on a sofa and thinking, the psoloist is following her body wherever it is leading her. Because of this, shared vipassana also tends to be more rooted in the present moment: the psoloist speaks aloud what is happening right now in her body and senses; in free association the patient often recounts past experiences at length. Another parallel between psolodrama and Freud’s work is the use of interpretation: the sharing process after psolodrama can feel similar to Freudian dream interpretation. Many who have tried psolodrama remark on its dream-like nature: a new role can appear out of nowhere, a new scene can seemingly have little to do with the last, and what makes logical sense during the psolodrama can upon reflection look odd. In the sharing process, in addition to the authentic-movement-style reflection and psychodramatic personal sharing, the psoloist and witness are able to examine the psolodrama as if it were a dream, using their interpretive abilities to discover meaning hidden in the psolodrama’s metaphors and symbols. Unlike Freud’s method, however, in which the point of the approach was to discover the “right” interpretation so as to unlock the solution to the patient’s issue (rather like Sherlock Holmes solving a case), in

psolodramatic sharing the witness deemphasizes interpretation in favor of authentic-movement-style reflection and psychodramatic sharing, allowing the psoloist to leave with her own experience intact, not dissected, interpreted, and “solved.”

**Focusing.** One can think of psolodrama as a translation of Gendlin’s Focusing (1978) to the drama therapy world. The psoloist is invited to become aware of her “felt sense,” but in psolodrama she not only articulates it verbally, she also “resonates” with it or “queries” it through movement, role, dialogue, and story.

**Co-counseling.** Psolodrama, when practiced by two peers or friends, is an embodied form of co-counseling. As in co-counseling (Heron, 1998), the role of the partner is to help facilitate the others’ experience, to encourage their self-expression and create a safe container for the expression of emotion. Whereas in co-counseling this support is active and happens through dialogue and various forms of intervention, in psolodrama the partner is primarily a silent witness who observes the psoloist (except in those cases where outside coaching is needed), and then engages in a sharing process afterward with them.

**Dialectical Behavior Therapy.** Like DBT (Linehan, 1993), Insight Improvisation is a therapeutic system that incorporates mindfulness with an experiential approach. DBT is closely related to Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy; its approach tends to be prescriptive, helping patients—it was originally used for those suffering from borderline personality disorder—identify dysfunctional patterns of thought and behavior and suggesting alternatives. Insight Improvisation and psolodrama are aimed more at normal neurotics; and rather than looking for what’s not working in a client’s thought/behavioral patterns,

psolodrama is inviting those patterns to be expressed fully through the body and voice and then played out in roles and scenes.

**Internal Family Systems Therapy.** As in psolodrama, IFS (Schwartz, 1997) invites the client to close his eyes and explore, mindfully, inner roles—in IFS these are called “parts”—and how they interact. There are many differences, however: in IFS the therapist is actively facilitating the client’s exploration moment-by-moment; the client is usually sitting fairly still, rather than moving, and is reporting on the parts, rather than playing them out. A more significant difference is that IFS has a way of categorizing the inner roles and the function each plays in the psyche, and is aiming for a particular outcome for how the parts interact—ultimately, how exiled parts can be reintegrated. Psolodrama, in contrast, is fully embodied, typically with no intervention from the therapist or witness (unless the psoloist needs or wants coaching) and no expectation about the types of inner voices the psoloist will discover, how they will interact, or how the story will end.

## Additional Techniques

### Sung Psolodrama

Sung psolodrama is, simply put, a psolodrama in which everything is sung: including shared vipassana, role stream, scene stream, and the entire psolodrama itself. The only part that is not sung is the sharing process afterward (but who knows...that may be possible to sing, too). All of the characters sing, not only the protagonist and auxiliary egos, but also the director, the double, and the audience.



Why sung psolodrama? Something unusual happens when the psoloist is not just speaking what a character is saying, but also singing it. Singing connects the psoloist with her deepest emotions. It provides a powerful additional channel to express feelings and meaning through pitch, timbre, rhythm, poetic or rhyming lyrics, etc.

Even if the psoloist cannot sing at all, just “aiming for singing” can produce strong results: what may come out is a rap, a chant, a rhythmic delivery, something atonal, or something unexpectedly beautiful.

In the same way that a musical can express things a straight play cannot, sung psolodrama opens a new dimension for psolodrama. Sung psolodrama is a spontaneous musical, and can contain all kinds of styles: rock, rap, opera, country—any style, even new styles, are possible, whatever serves the emerging scene and its unique qualities.

Sung psolodrama is an enjoyable, moving, and at times hilarious form of improvisation. It is simultaneously deeply personal and surprisingly entertaining. Of course, the psoloist is not trying to entertain anyone—but the witness can appreciate the effect of what the psoloist is doing vocally while also taking in the deeper meaning of the psolodrama.

**How to do it.** For those new to sung psolodrama, it is best to start with a series of improvisational singing warm-ups. The ones described in the earlier chapter entitled “Singing” (Part II) are perfect for this, including Chords, Jams, and One-liners. Otherwise, preparation for the psolodrama is the same as usual. The psoloist enters the space, closes his eyes, and begins to follow his body, moving authentically. When he shifts into shared vipassana, he sings, rather than speaks, what he is noticing, e.g.

*♫ Cooooolnesssss of the aaaiirrrrrr... ♪*

As he continues, he finds he can use the quality of his voice, the melody, and the rhythm, to help express how he is feeling and the nature of the inner imagery arising:

*♪ Out on the tundra. Blowing wind. Ice blue sky. I feel excited.  
Energy! ♪*

Shifting to role stream, he notices what role or character this body position, movement, vocal quality, or image reminds him of, and enters that role, moving, sounding, and *singing* as that role:

*♪ I am an arctic weasel...white fur...active paws...darting  
eyes...looking for prey. ♪*

In scene stream, the psoloist continues by discovering other roles, moving, sounding, and singing as them. As he creates dialogues, they are duets, with each role singing with its unique vocal quality, rhythm, etc.:

**Bear:** *♪ I'm a polar bear, lazing in the sun.*

**Weasel:** *♪ Heyyy buster! Are you trying to muscle onto my turf?*

**Bear:** *♪ I'm sleeeeeepy. Is someone squeaking at me?*

**Weasel:** *♪ I KNOW that you can hear me!*

**Bear:** *♪ Oh, it's you. You'd better run off now, or I may snack on your head...*

**Weasel:** *♪ You think you're so tough!*

In his psolodrama, the psoloist can call upon all of the psychodramatic roles—protagonist, director, double, and audience—but sings them rather than speaks them. At times this may resemble operatic recitative, the sung through portions of a musical, a rap freestyle battle, a country blues duet, etc.:

**Protagonist (p1):**     *♪ Enough with the fighting! I can't hear myself think. It reminds me of my chiiiiildren.*

**Child 1 (aux):**       *♪ Nah-nahhhh boo-boooo!!*

**Child 2 (aux):**       *♪ Elijaahhhh!!!!!!*

*(The psoloist curls into a ball.)*

**Double:**               *♪ I want to crawl awayyy.  
Or run and hiiiiide.  
I'm inadequate as a parent.  
I have no priiiiiide!*

**Director:**            *♪ What do you neeed right now?*

**Protagonist:**        *♪ I neeedeed...*

*(etc.)*

### Journaling

After the psolodrama—but before sharing—psoloist and witness can agree to take a few minutes to jot notes or journal about their experience, which can also include drawing, poetry, or any form of on-paper expression. Sharing the writing/drawing with

one another is then a natural first step to the psoloist-witness sharing dialogue, and adds a new channel for reflecting on what happened and its meaning.

The decision whether to journal depends on the time available and on the personal preferences of the participants. If there is a difference of opinion about whether to journal, the psoloist should have the final say. If the psoloist is journaling, it is suggested that the witness also journal—not only does this support the psoloist, but it also offers the witness a chance to capture memories of what she just saw and heard.

Ideally, whether to journal should be decided, along with timing, before the psolodrama begins. A range of five to ten minutes seems a comfortable length to set aside for journaling—experiment with what works best for you. Another approach is to set aside a certain amount of time for journaling plus sharing, and let the psoloist determine when to stop journaling. I have sometimes taken this approach when leading workshops in which pairs of participants are doing psolodrama together simultaneously—some protagonists really love to have the chance to journal immediately after their psolodrama, others want to share verbally with their partner right away. For those who like drawing, offering a variety of colorful pastels, markers, etc., adds to the expressive possibilities.

When journaling, some may wish to document what happened in the psolodrama. This can be a summary of the whole, a list of highlights or key insights, or an exploration of a particular theme, moment, conflict, or feeling, capturing its essence and then expanding on it through the writing. Another approach is to offer a creative response to the psolodrama—this can take the form of a poem or other spontaneous writing that springboards off elements of the psolodrama, creating something new in reaction to or in dialogue with the psolodrama's spirit and energy, perhaps incorporating specific images,

lines, roles, feelings, etc., from the psolodrama. Similarly, a drawing can be descriptive—documenting a particular physical position, role, image, scene, or emotion that arose during the psolodrama—or a creative response, such as a spontaneous drawing capturing one’s feelings, or reflecting on the meaning of the psolodrama.

As psoloist and witness move from journaling to sharing, the psoloist may wish to keep his journal open, to add thoughts from the witness that he finds particularly useful or inspiring. Journaling provides something tangible to take away after the psolodrama experience—a reminder of the process, including significant roles and metaphors, feelings, and important insights. The witness may also choose to give his notes, poem, or drawing to the psoloist as a gift at the conclusion of the process, which the psoloist can tape into his journal so that both witness’s and psoloist’s points of view are preserved.

### **A Few Final Thoughts on Psolodrama**

Psolodrama with a friend or peer is a connective practice: the post-psolodrama sharing conversation with one’s partner can be quite vulnerable and touch honest feelings about one’s life. This tends to build relationship and trust, enriching the peer practice even more over time.

Another benefit of peer practice is that there is no identified patient: by witnessing one another doing psolodrama, peers remain on equal footing, each vulnerable to the other, human, and flawed, while also having the opportunity to serve one another in the role of witness. The witness/psoloist arrangement helps provide a safe container within which each person can do good, deep, and vulnerable work.

Psolodrama invites a pure expression of what Moreno called “act hunger,” the desire to play out a particular role, scene, or story. There is often a feeling and realization after doing psolodrama, something like “wow—that felt really good—and I had no idea I had that in me—but it points to a powerful theme in my life.” Psolodrama performs an end-run around the cognitive, planning mind by accessing the deeper wisdom of the body, of “gut-feel,” and the mysteries of inner imagery and role, to discover the deeper desires and needs longing to be expressed.

Psolodrama fosters autonomy: the psoloist is, in a sense, training to be an effective therapist for herself through the process of learning to be present, to practice inner listening, to discover what is needed, and to work with it dynamically. The psoloist learns to tap into what is true about herself, calling herself on her own habits and patterns in a way a traditional therapist may sometimes feel hesitant to do.

One population that seems to especially enjoy and benefit from psolodrama is therapists. When a therapist practices psolodrama, she brings her own wisdom to bear on her personal issues, while also having the reflection and input of a wise friend, her peer witness. The sharing conversation becomes a little like supervision, but with the psoloist in the role of therapist *and* client. Drama therapists and psychodramatists tend to have a natural affinity for psolodrama as it lets them practice drama therapy on themselves. Talk therapists and counselors who have experienced psolodrama in workshops and one-to-one have expressed their joy to learn a form that lets them get in touch with their body and enact their feelings and issues—not just talk about those issues.

Psolodrama also works well in other countries. As a foreigner coming in and not knowing the culture, teaching psolodrama allows me to provide a container in which each

person can do work that is culturally appropriate and comfortable to them—it is a gentle method that allows people to reveal themselves at their own pace. I particularly enjoy offering psolodrama after teaching introductory drama therapy and psychodrama, as it gives participants the tools to go off and try drama therapy with a friend, peer, or someone they met in the workshop. For the same reason, it's a great form to offer in countries where "seeing a therapist" is stigmatized. And it's a natural fit for cultures where meditation is honored, as psolodrama has mindful awareness at its core. *(More on working with groups internationally appears in the chapter "Facilitating Workshops" in Part IV.)*

Psolodrama is a holistic practice in that it addresses and satisfies so many parts of the self: the performer/actor; the therapist/healer; the part that wants to "create" something; the part that wants to move and express with the voice; the escapist part that sometimes wants to be other people or beings; the part that wants to share and confide in someone else, longing to have a meaningful conversation about one's inner life, inner feelings.

My intention in sharing psolodrama is to make this experience available to everyone: the opportunity to listen deeply to the body; to express oneself fully, without inhibition; to discover the hidden images, roles, and stories buried in the psyche and bring them to life, in a fully embodied way; to explore a central theme or challenge in one's life; to have new insights into that issue and feel it, fully, to the point of emotional release; and finally, to share with a committed listener and friend, and to learn from their observations and their own related life experiences.



If you have read this far, it may be time to try it out. Get in the studio with a friend—all you really need is a living room with a little floor space to move—and give it a go. Have your friend guide you through the entryway practices, providing a brief reminder of each phase. As you enter and close your eyes, fully relax and abandon yourself to physical impulse, to what the body wants to do. If you approach the practice with that spirit—to relax, to open your awareness, to explore—you will be pleasantly surprised at what you find.

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