

*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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## The Psolodrama Sharing Process

*“It strikes me that Moreno found a key to the group when he asked for sharing from the heart.”*

— Zerka Moreno (personal communication, February 21, 2008)

The purpose of the sharing process in psolodrama is to allow the psoloist to reflect on and explore her psolodrama more deeply, in dialogue with a supportive witness.

The sharing is, ideally, a spontaneous, warm, and rich conversation, in which each person can share his or her take on the psolodrama, the psoloist speaking from inside the experience, and the witness providing a valuable, outside point of view, reflecting back what he saw and heard with accuracy, empathy, and wisdom.

Oftentimes this conversation is so good, so valuable, that it may last as long or longer than the psolodrama. The psoloist can leave the entire interaction feeling fully self-expressed: her psolodrama and the sharing process have let her say everything she needs to say, and she feels deeply seen and heard by the witness. The witness can leave

with a feeling of peaceful satisfaction, having served the psoloist with presence, awareness, and lovingkindness, and having been witness to authentic, heart-opening work.

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## The Purpose of Sharing

Sharing provides an opportunity to integrate the experience of the psolodrama, an experience that is often clear, meaningful, and moving, but can at other times feel mysterious, confusing, or overwhelming.

### Is Sharing Necessary?

Sharing is optional: if the psoloist prefers *not* to share, that's fine. She may wish to take a few moments to journal, or just take a short break before whatever is next. For some, being verbal (or even listening to another) immediately after having a major cathartic release or profound insight may not work well. Psolodrama often feels like living in a dream or another reality—and it can take time to transition back to this reality. The psoloist needs to trust her instinct about what she really needs.

That said, for safety's sake it is *not* recommended to end a psolodrama session without some kind of sharing, final debrief, or “check-out.” Psolodrama can stir up strong emotions and potentially leave the psoloist in a fragile state. Do not let your peer-work partner or therapy client walk out the door without checking in with her first.

### Who Shares First?

When the psolodrama ends, and psoloist and witness come together and sit facing one another, the witness begins by asking:

**“Would you like to speak first, or shall I?”**

This differs from the standard approach in authentic movement, in which the mover typically shares first, followed by the witness. That order makes sense for authentic movement, mainly because it can be difficult for the witness to understand what has happened by watching movement only. So, by hearing the mover's sharing first, the witness can better understand what the mover's movement was about for him and can therefore provide supportive—rather than surprising or jarring—reflection.

Psolodrama, in contrast, is usually verbal as well as physical, and the psoloist may enter the sharing phase feeling a strong need to stop talking and let the witness speak. In addition, it is often the case that some (sometimes most) of the content of the psolodrama is evident from the enactment of the psoloist, giving the witness greater ability to describe what she saw and heard without the psoloist first having to explain it.

Ideally, when the witness asks the question, “would you like to speak first or shall I?” the psoloist sits quietly for a moment to check in with himself: Would I like to share first? What would feel best? Sometimes the answer is that the psoloist may wish to say one or two things up front, then let the witness share, and then afterwards say more, spurred on by the witness’s reflection.

### **The Psoloist Shares**

There are no rules for the psoloist’s sharing. The entire arc of psolodrama—including the sharing afterward—is designed to support the psoloist, to facilitate his self-discovery. When it comes time for him to share, anything he would like to say is encouraged.

The witness, meanwhile, listens intently, resisting any urge to interrupt.

Typically, the psoloist shares moments that stood out most for him and why they stood out, including the impact of particular images, roles, or scenes and why they resonated so strongly. His sharing may also focus on the emotions he experienced and what may have caused them. If the psoloist had an experience of catharsis, he may discuss why it happened and its effect on him.

The psoloist may also discuss how the psolodrama depicts individuals in his life, past or current events, or scenes illustrating potential futures. He may relate the psolodrama to dreams, fantasies, nightmares, worries, or desires he has had.

The psoloist may interpret the meaning of the psolodrama, the relevance or parallels between certain images, roles, or scenes—or the entire psolodrama—and the issues and challenges he is facing in his life. And finally, he may share messages, learnings, insights, or surprises he is taking from the psolodrama, new ways of seeing his challenges, and/or new actions he would like to take or habits or behaviors he would like to change.

### **The Witness Shares: Three Kinds of Sharing**

Psolodrama, in combining authentic movement and psychodrama, invites the witness to respond in ways appropriate to each method: to reflect as the witness does after authentic movement, and to share as a group member does following a psychodrama.

There is a third type of response, interpretation, which can also be used—with care—depending on the situation. All three kinds of sharing are offered in a caring, non-judgmental way, with support of the psoloist being the primary intention.

#### **I. Authentic Movement Reflection**

This type of sharing is based on the lenses of awareness mentioned earlier (in the chapters on “Authentic Movement” and “Witnessing Psolodrama”). The witness reflects back as accurately as possible what she saw and heard: physical positions, movements, sounds, words. She can also share, acknowledging the subjective nature of her outside

perspective, the images and roles she was able to identify, the emotions she perceived in the psoloist, the plot of the “story” if there was one, etc.

(It is important to note that calling this type of sharing “Authentic Movement Reflection” is shorthand and not meant to represent what happens in authentic movement. In classic authentic movement practice, the witness may share all kinds of observations and feelings that go beyond merely mirroring what she saw and heard. We are using this term to succinctly distinguish this type of sharing from the other two kinds, described below.)

A detailed reflection can help the psoloist in many ways. It not only validates what he has done—he feels “seen”—but also can help him recover parts of the psolodramatic progression he may have forgotten, such as the initial roles that emerged in the role stream not incorporated into the psolodrama, and can prompt him to share more about those aspects of the experience.

**Physical reflection.** The witness is not limited to words when reflecting back the psolodrama—she can recall and try to recreate physical positions, movements, facial expressions, the voice and physicality of key roles, etc. It is both useful and affirming to the psoloist to receive a concrete and thorough reflection of what he did—the more detailed, the better—and physical/vocal demonstrations capture much more than words alone.

The witness can also, optionally, use present tense when speaking to bring the witnessing right into the moment being described.

## II. Psychodramatic Sharing

Jacob Moreno once gave a demonstration of psychodrama before a group that included psychoanalysts and psychiatrists. Afterward, he opened the floor to questions and comments, and was horrified as the professionals began to analyze and dissect the protagonist psychologically. Moreno saw the young female patient become confused by the interpretations. He himself became upset and asked one of the psychiatrists, “Do you have children? What is your relationship to your daughter? Here we share our hearts, not our brains!” (Zerka Moreno as quoted in Horvatin & Schreiber, 2006, p. 22.)

Learning from this kind of experience, Moreno created a different approach to post-psychodrama processing. In the sharing circle, members of the group speak personally, sharing their own feelings, stories, and life experiences that relate to the journey of the protagonist. In this way, the protagonist does not feel alone in having shared personally; all members of the group are equally vulnerable.

In psolodrama, personal psychodramatic sharing is equally as important as reflecting back the form and content of the psolodrama. The witness can share from her own experience and feelings, acknowledging the subjective nature of this sharing (e.g., beginning a sentence with “For me...” or “What I felt while watching that scene was...”). If there is something in the psolodrama—an image, role, scene, even a movement or gesture—that parallels a moment from her life, she can share it (“That reminded me of something that happened to me when I was a child...”), making sure to keep it brief and relevant. She can also share what she is *feeling* in her life now (or at an earlier time), reflecting emotions she sensed in the psolodrama (e.g., “I could really relate to the anger I sensed in that role...”).



Psychodramatic sharing requires not only sensitivity and empathy, but also a commitment to being in service to the psoloist. There is a difference between sharing personal feelings or material from one’s own life to support and benefit the psoloist, versus sharing for the sake of sharing or to serve oneself in some way. Two negative examples:

What Happened	Commentary
<p>The psoloist has just ended a psolodrama she clearly felt was beautiful and touching. The witness shares: “During your psolodrama, for some reason I began to feel ill—a little nauseated.”</p>	<p><i>This is the witness’s truth, but would probably seem to be a put-down to the psoloist and thus would not be serving her in this moment.</i></p>
<p>The psoloist, sharing first, talks about how a scene he enacted involving his girlfriend helped him empathize with her and love her more. The witness shares: “I kept thinking about my boyfriend during that scene, and how inauthentic he is sometimes.”</p>	<p><i>Again, this is more about the witness than the psoloist—expressing a very different feeling—and is not being supportive of the psoloist or his experience.</i></p>

Here is a three-step process, originally suggested by Christopher Ellinger (Playback Theater director, psolodrama practitioner, and good friend), as a way to focus the witness’s psychodramatic sharing on serving the psoloist:

1. **Share what moved you.** The witness begins by sharing what she appreciated and was touched by—expressing it in a specific and emotionally congruent way (using face, voice, and body language), rather than an abstract way. E.g., “I was so moved by your psolodrama.

The scenes where you confronted your various family members, and particularly their cutting off of communication, was heartbreaking.”

2. *Explore other feelings you had by asking the psoloist about his experience.* If the witness wishes to comment about other kinds of feelings she had, she can ask the psoloist how he felt, e.g., “I was feeling scared when you beat on your chest and screamed and I’m wondering what was going on for you...?” Her focus is more on the psoloist rather than on her own inner experience.
3. *Hold off on additional sharing unless the psoloist asks.* If the psoloist would like to hear more about the inner experience of the witness he can ask her.

However, there are those instances when the witness has had a personal life experience that strongly resonates with the psolodrama. If the witness feels it is appropriate and would be supportive to the psoloist to share her own experience—succinctly—and the psoloist agrees, doing so may add value to the psoloist’s reflection (even when noting how the experience may be different from the psoloist’s own experience) and increase the bond between psoloist and witness.

### III. Interpretation

Interpretation is an explanation of the meaning of the psolodrama, how the elements in the drama may relate to one another (“general interpretation”), and how they might relate to the psoloist’s life and the challenges he is facing (“personal interpretation”).

Interpretation by its very nature is subjective and potentially a projection—the meaning the witness gleans from the psolodrama may be entirely different from another witness’s, or the psoloist’s.

Despite this, the witness’s interpretation can be very valuable to the psoloist. The witness might offer a parallel she is noticing between the psolodrama and a classic archetype, myth, or story. She might observe a recurring pattern within the psolodrama, or among a series of psolodramas she has witnessed with this psoloist. An interpretation can help affirm or shed light on the life path the psoloist sees himself being on—or simply affirm that the psolodrama itself had meaning and value (as opposed to being random improvisation). Sometimes, an interpretation offered by the witness gently points to a new way of seeing the psoloist’s issues, problems, thought or behavioral patterns—perhaps leading to an “Aha!” moment for the psoloist, a new insight.

Here is one example, from a psoloist-witness pair who had known each other for several years:

*The psolodrama has two distinct scenes. The first is a reenactment of a dream in which members of the psoloist’s family are acting cruelly, threatening to write her out of the family’s will (jokingly offering her only “grandfather’s maid”), and presenting her with gifts of fine art while puffing up their own egos. In the second half of the psolodrama, the psoloist embodies two of her favorite kittens, debating with the audience and defending her love of cats as being based on their lack of a hidden agenda and expression of pure love, and has audience members enter the action and embody their own favorite animals.*

*In the sharing process afterward, the witness first reflects back the different scenes he saw, and some of the key details. Then he adds: “One thing that really struck me was a contrast I noticed between the two halves*

*of the psolodrama. In the first half, there's a family and an atmosphere of hidden agendas, the need to be very political—almost a feeling of malice.” The psoloist nods vigorously. “In the second half, the protagonist expresses a love of cats, and how they have no agenda, what you see is what you get, a feeling of pure love.” The psoloist agrees. “It occurred to me that these two parts of the psolodrama could not be more different—as if they fall on two extreme opposite ends of a spectrum. Which leads me to wonder: can growing up in this kind of family environment lead one to seek out the opposite, to want to spend more time with beings who have no agenda and are just loving and present?” The psoloist's face lights up and her eyes widen. She says: “Yes! That's really interesting.” She speaks further about the link she sees between the nature of her family of origin and her present day love of animals.*

The interpretation offered by the witness in this case helps the psoloist make a connection for her that she was then able to elaborate on and explore, leading to further insight.

Interpretation poses challenges, however, that authentic movement reflection and psychodramatic sharing tend not to: first, that the psoloist may not want her psolodrama to be interpreted, and second, that the interpretation may be wrong (or at least, not useful for the psoloist).

As the story about Moreno and the psychiatrists illustrates, there is a basic problem with interpretation: rather than allow the psoloist to walk away from the experience with her own insights and conclusions, when the witness interprets he cannot help but insert his own agenda, desires, projections, etc.—and, if he's not careful, unconsciously pin them on the psoloist, rather than acknowledge them as being his own.

If he would like to share an interpretation, there are a few things it may be useful for the witness to be aware of first:

**Intention.** *Would I be offering the interpretation truly in service of the other, or am I really sharing it to serve myself—e.g., to get it off my chest, to assert my superiority over the other, to display my wisdom, to have fun or be clever, or to put the other person down in some way? Is my interpretation about the psoloist or is it really about me and my own life—and, if the latter, can I offer it that way, as personal psychodramatic sharing, rather than interpretation?*

**Permission.** *Is the psoloist interested in hearing an interpretation? And is the psoloist open to interpretive remarks from me? Particularly if we are new to one another, it is important that I ask; in the therapist-client relationship, the client may expect some interpretation.*

**Appropriateness.** *Will my interpretation be useful and appropriate to the sharing process? Is the timing right to share it? Is my interpretation at odds with what the psoloist has already shared—and if so, would my interpretation be received as a useful additional point of view, or as a contradiction?*

**Approach.** *How do I share this in a way that acknowledges my limited, subjective viewpoint? As witness, can I must cast myself not as the voice of wisdom and experience, but instead to hold the attitude that this is just one person's take on the meaning of the psolodrama, and that it may be completely wrong?*

Interpreting another's psolodrama should not be a heavy-handed affair. If the psoloist's response is "Thank you, Dr. Freud," the witness is doing something wrong.

How the witness uses language matters:

*“The role of the old warrior represents your father.”*

→ *Interpretation is stated as fact, bluntly declaring “x = y.”*

*“When I see the protagonist become an old warrior, there is something in the warrior’s voice that feels to me like the voice of a father figure.”*

→ *This version acknowledges the subjective nature of the observation, using subtly qualifying words and phrases (“something in the warrior’s voice”, “feels”) and first person language (“to me”). It also avoids labeling “your father” and uses the more general “father figure” (which can just as easily be referring to the witness’s father).*

Using subjective language is not a form of “spin;” it is important the witness understand, and acknowledge, that her interpretations have more to do with *her* than with the psoloist. By using subjective language, the witness takes responsibility for her projections. She begins to break the habit of projecting unconsciously, no longer seeing ideas that arise as “*the truth*,” but instead as *her truth*.

It is also important not to jump to conclusions. A psolodrama that looks like a clear-cut scene between the psoloist and his wife may in fact have more to do with the psoloist’s relationship with his sister, or his chronic fears of abandonment (or all of these things at once!). When in doubt, it is best to let the psoloist take the first steps into interpretation—it is not necessary for the witness to provide an interpretation at all.

That said, even an interpretation that feels “off” to the psoloist can be useful: by moving the psoloist to differ, it motivates him to express how he actually feels, sometimes initiating a deeper conversation about the meaning of the psolodrama. (This is

similar to doubling in psychodrama: in a way, it is impossible to do it “wrong”—inaccurate doubling, by forcing the protagonist to speak his truth, helps open up his real feelings, leading to new insights or authentic emotional expression.)

Perhaps the best approach to interpretation is to tread lightly. There are ways of speaking that are playful, exploratory, open, receptive, and unattached—a creative dialogue between psoloist and witness. For example, the witness can use general interpretation, linking the metaphors, images, and roles that arise within the psolodrama, making connections that the psoloist, who is still immersed in the drama, may be unaware of. The witness can do this in a way that does not presume anything about the psoloist’s life—avoiding personal interpretation—just playfully arranging elements that may point to potential meaning, and checking in with the psoloist to invite him to negate or build on those ideas.

### **Another Kind of Sharing: Asking Questions**

Sharing after psolodrama may not be limited to authentic movement reflection, psychodramatic sharing, and interpretation. For example, it is possible for the witness to ask the psoloist questions. Questions can help the witness better understand what happened during the psolodrama, offer the psoloist a chance to further explore aspects that had energy for him, and also provide different approaches to reflecting on the psolodrama and its broader meaning.

Questions should be used with caution. Asking questions should only be in support of the psoloist and not to satisfy the witness’s curiosity. It’s also best not to start by asking questions: when the psoloist has just shared something deeply personal or meaningful and may be feeling vulnerable or raw, possibly the last thing he needs is a

question forcing him to speak and explain himself. Better to begin (after asking the psoloist whether he would like to speak first) with authentic movement reflection or empathic psychodramatic sharing, both of which give the psoloist something in return for his efforts. The witness can usually sense when the psoloist may then be open and ready for a question.

There are different kinds of questions. Small questions of clarification are usually fine—e.g. “Sorry, it was a little unclear to me: was that the audience or the director who spoke to the protagonist after the mother hung up the phone?” Later, toward the end of the sharing process, bigger questions can be asked in a sensitive way—e.g. “So how do you feel now?” or “What are you taking from this?”—*if* the witness feels they would be helpful to the psoloist and that he will be open to those kinds of questions.

Questions to avoid include “why” questions: “Why did your mother hang up the phone?” Probing is usually not appropriate: “Do you think your mother was angry at you?” (One exception to both of these rules is if the psoloist is the witness’s therapy client—then these types of questions might be used to help further the therapy process.)

### **Acknowledging the Psoloist**

When her psolodrama is over, the psoloist can feel exposed, alone, and awash with powerful feelings from the experience. Sharing provides an opportunity for the witness to help reestablish the sense of a safe, supportive container. One of the most effective ways of doing this is to acknowledge the psoloist.

Skillful acknowledgement is a subtle energy that can imbue all of the witness’s comments, helping make the sharing process a gift to the psoloist. Enthusiastic, specific,



and authentic acknowledgment is an expression of *metta*—a way to embrace the psoloist with words, strengthen the supportive container, and help the psoloist feel safe enough to share more, and in greater depth.

Skillful acknowledgement is not empty flattery. It is both **specific** and **authentic**—the witness is precise about what he is acknowledging, *and* honestly expresses how he feels. If his acknowledgement is lacking either of these qualities, the psoloist will usually be able to tell. There is a difference between saying: “That was a great psolodrama,” versus “I was particularly struck by the interactions between you as protagonist and the director role—there was sensitivity and caring there.”

*How* one acknowledges the psoloist is as important as the content of the words. The witness may feel his acknowledgement is authentic, but if his facial expression is blank or his voice is flat, the incongruity may convey to the psoloist disingenuousness or disconnection.

It also helps to be spontaneous and use a variety of approaches—otherwise one’s acknowledgments may begin to feel repetitive and stale. Anything the witness noticed in one of the “witnessing for” categories (see the previous chapter, “Witnessing Psolodrama”) can be the object of an acknowledgement—e.g., the quality of the psoloist’s movement, the use of her voice, a particular image that stood out, the way she played a certain role or the dynamic interaction between two roles, the depth and resonance of the story, etc.

A more subtle, perhaps deeper, form of acknowledgement is for the witness to take on the imagery, language, and energy of the psolodrama in his reflection, to, in a

sense, *enter the poem of the psolodrama*. This can help the psoloist feel deeply heard and empathized with—the most powerful form of acknowledgement.

Finally, if approached skillfully, with sensitivity and an intention to support the psoloist, one cannot acknowledge too much or too often—it is rare to find someone who feels “over-acknowledged” in their life.

### Sharing as Meditation

*“Both psoloist and witness are entering a realm of presence to the imaginal that is, well, sacred.” — longtime psolodrama practitioner*

As with the act of witnessing, sharing, too, is a kind of meditation. Each type of sharing has its own parallel in meditation:

**Authentic movement reflection** is in itself an act of mindfulness and concentration, the witness focusing in on and reproducing her memory of what she observed. This form of sharing also gives voice to *vipassana’s* choiceless openness to the senses, the witness drawing from her memory of what arose in each of the six sense doors as she observed the psolodrama.

**Psychodramatic sharing** is a direct expression of *metta*, the witness empathizing with the psoloist, speaking from the heart.

**Interpretation** is best if the witness understands that her ideas are just thoughts, not to be attached to.

The simple act of speaking and listening in dialogue can itself be a meditation, if approached with that intention. By slowing down and noticing what is happening *inside* during the conversation, both psoloist and witness can break free from habits of conversing and allow the sharing process to come from a deeper, more mindful place. Greg Kramer, the creator of Insight Dialogue (1999), teaches how to Pause, Relax, and Open—pausing to be mindful, relaxing when noticing one’s own reactivity, and re-opening to the other. By treating the sharing process as a meditation, the witness can be aware of her presence, and by doing so be of even greater service to the psoloist. She can choose to relax, slow down, listen more, let go of her preconceptions, and really hear the psoloist in a fresh, unfiltered way.

### **Dealing with Hindrances**

**Reloading.** A famous management guru once said: “Americans don’t listen, they reload.” During the psoloist’s sharing, if the witness notices her mind planning a response, she can let that go and come back to what the psoloist is saying, which—along with remaining aware of her own bodily/emotional reactions—is the object of her meditation. She can allow her face to soften, and gently nod or make subtle guttural noises (“mmmm”),

“uh-huh”, “yes”) in response to what the psoloist is saying. When it is her turn to speak, she can take it slowly, with sensitivity, following her intuition, entering the stream of feeling, imagery, and story that the psoloist has already established.

**Forgetting—and worrying about forgetting.** Striving to remember everything, and straining to reproduce all of it, can make the witness tense and interfere with a relaxed, organic sharing. A better approach is for her to take a deep breath (releasing her bodily tension on a relaxed sigh of relief) and let go of the need to cover everything, trusting that she will recall what is most important. Then she can simply reflect back what stands out first, describing it slowly and in depth. This will often naturally lead to the next thing to say, or to the psoloist’s response. It is not necessary to say a lot as the witness—even very simple reflections can be invaluable to the psoloist. That said, if the psoloist is open to it, the witness can take notes during the psolodrama, to help her recall details during the sharing process.

### **Taking Care with Language**

For the psoloist, how the witness uses language makes a significant difference in his experience of the psolodrama and the sharing process.

As mentioned earlier, using language that acknowledges the witness’s subjective point of view is skillful, for by its very nature the witness role is a subjective one. The witness cannot read the psoloist’s mind and know for certain how he experiences a particular feeling, image, or role—so, by necessity, much of what she has to share is just one point of view, and not the most important one (the psoloist’s experience is primary). In order to be of greatest service to the psoloist, the witness approaches the process with

self-awareness, avoiding unconscious projections of her own experience onto him and avoiding language that implies projections.

**A few keys to “sharing with caring” as the witness:**

**Be careful at the start**, particularly if you are the first to share. Do not assume anything.

**Say “this is my experience of what I saw,”** rather than “you did this.” A self-aware witness takes ownership of every interpretation, no matter how small.

**Use “responsible subjectivity:”** own the imperfect nature of the witness point of view, and check back with the psoloist for accuracy.

For example, to say “you yelled” or that a role “yelled” is an interpretation. A different approach is to describe the moment on a physical level, and take ownership of one’s own reaction to that moment: “When I heard the protagonist in what I interpreted to be yelling, I inferred him to be angry.” The witness can physically demonstrate the facial expression and body posture she saw when reflecting back this moment. She can then check back with the psoloist to learn if what she had perceived was true for him or not.

In the above example, it’s also worth noting the use of first and third person (“I” and “the protagonist”), intentionally omitting the second person (“you”). For some, it may feel artificial and stilted to not say “you”—after all, the psoloist is right there in front of you! In my experience, I use slightly different language depending on who I am with and the level of informality I have established in the process. But even with a peer I’ve known for years, I will still often say “the protagonist,” rather than “you,” partly to help

differentiate which role in the psolodrama I am referring to, but also to avoid laying on the psoloist an assumed identification with the role he played in that moment.

No matter how long you have known the psoloist, never make assumptions. The witness may think that a certain role she observed was the director, but it does not hurt to check in with her psoloist as she speaks. Instead of stating, “then the director asked ‘how do you feel?’,” it’s often better to ask “then you reversed into what I took to be the director role, who asked ‘how do you feel?’—was that the director?” She may be surprised to learn it was actually the role of the protagonist’s sister, appearing in the psolodrama to comfort him. By not making assumptions, and checking carefully with the psoloist, the witness can better understand and empathize with the psolodrama.

### **Bridging Gaps Between Psoloist and Witness**

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of witnessing psolodrama is dealing with differences between the psoloist’s and witness’s perspectives—and knowing how to respond skillfully when they conflict:

**Focus Gap.** The psoloist had his awareness on his fingertips, while the witness saw a whole-body image of the psoloist lying in a fetal position. Or, the psoloist’s big takeaway was when Albert Einstein appeared as an auxiliary ego, whereas the witness was most struck by a dialogue between the roles of mother and father. In these examples, the witness brings a different point of view from which the psoloist could possibly benefit. On the other hand, if these observations are shared in a way that is disconnected from the psoloist’s experience, the psoloist may feel that the witness is not in synch with him, not really watching, or didn’t understand. **One Approach:** It is always best to begin, as the

witness, by acknowledging, describing, or commenting on what the psoloist has already shared about his psolodrama. She can then add details the psoloist may have overlooked, or bring in aspects of the psolodrama she appreciated that the psoloist may not have, as long as she does it in a supportive way that acknowledges her subjective point of view.

**Emotion Gap.** In psolodrama, the psoloist experiences his emotions first-hand, while the witness observes signs of these emotions from the outside, ideally empathizing with them. Meanwhile, the witness also has emotional reactions of her own. One gap that can arise is that the witness may not perceive or understand all of the emotions the psoloist is having. Second, the witness's own emotions may be different from and not necessarily supportive of the psoloist's. **One Approach:** As much as possible, if the witness is sensing emotional content she feels unsure about—or is dealing with her own strong emotional reaction—she should let the psoloist lead the sharing. If the psoloist prefers not to speak first, the witness can begin by reflecting back the more clear-cut aspects of movement, sound, speech, and role, etc. This will usually prompt the psoloist to share more about his inner experience.

**Aversion Gap.** The witness may find she is personally uncomfortable with some of the content of the psolodrama. It is tempting to speak about her discomfort during the sharing process. However, the psoloist may perceive her remarks as judgmental, perhaps causing him to judge his own process, or to question her ability to be an impartial, supportive witness. **One Approach:** A better way might be to wait until after the sharing process is complete—or even wait a day or two—before raising the issue with the psoloist (“Would it be OK to share with you something that came up for me during our psolodrama process?”). Or the witness may decide that it is best not to speak about her

negative reaction, but work with herself to accept that the psoloist's ideas, fantasies, beliefs, morals, etc., are different from her own.

**Interpretation Gap.** The psoloist and witness may have very different ideas about what happened in the psolodrama and its meaning. **One Approach:** The witness should let the psoloist lead the sharing, and in her own response stick to authentic movement reflection and psychodramatic sharing. If she does share her interpretation, it should be done in a way that underscores her limited, subjective point of view.

**Expectation Gap.** Sometimes the psoloist and witness have different needs or expectations about what each wants to get out of the experience. For example, the witness may feel bored, yearning for more action in the psolodrama, wanting to be entertained; meanwhile, the psoloist is doing some very subtle, careful, meditative work. **One Approach:** The witness needs to remember that she is there completely in service to the psoloist's process. This means she needs to readjust her own expectations to better fit what is happening, and bring her attention back to the details of what the psoloist is doing—treating witnessing as a meditation (see the prior chapter on witnessing). A key guideline of psolodrama is that the witness will get what she gets—this is not a play and the psoloist has no responsibility to entertain or even communicate clearly. In sharing, the witness seeks ways to reflect and affirm the psoloist's discoveries, and not let her own unmet expectations cloud the interaction.



## Sharing Do's and Don'ts

In summary, here are some of the key things to do—and not do—as witness when sharing:

Sharing Do's	Sharing Don'ts
Enter with an intention to serve the psoloist and her process.	Enter with the attitude of an audience member, wanting to be entertained.
Pay close attention during the psolodrama so that your sharing will be detailed and accurate.	Allow distractions or drowsiness to steal your focus.
Begin by asking the psoloist: "Would you like to speak first, or shall I?"	Jump in and start sharing before the psoloist is ready.
Listen intently to the psoloist's sharing.	Interrupt the psoloist to add your observations or ask questions.
Focus on authentic movement reflection and psychodramatic sharing in your response. Add interpretation only if/when the psoloist is open to it.	Interpret the meaning or emotional content of the psolodrama before hearing the psoloist's take on it.
Be detailed, using your body and voice to demonstrate what you saw and heard the psoloist doing.	Sum it up in a few words.
Acknowledge the limited, subjective perspective of your sharing ("it seemed to me that...", "what I felt was...", etc.).	Speak as the expert, or contradict the psoloist's perceptions of the psolodrama.
Acknowledge the psoloist specifically, authentically, and enthusiastically.	React to the psolodrama with judgment, critique, apathy, or clinical distance.

## The Sum of Sharing's Parts

As psoloist and witness get to know one another better, the boundaries between authentic movement reflection, psychodramatic sharing, and interpretation tend to melt. Sharing becomes a fluid conversation, a chance to look at the psolodrama from many angles, and engage in an honest—and sometimes profound—dialogue on the nature of life and death, happiness and suffering, morality, beliefs, family, work, relationships, etc.

This conversation is not only a reflection on the psolodrama process; it extends, amplifies, and deepens it by creating new opportunities for insight and growth for both witness and psoloist.

## References

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