



Psychodrama and Sociodrama Using these Tools to Support Law Student Well-Being

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Program Goals

Psychodrama and **sociodrama** are powerful tools for collaboratively problem-solving important issues for individuals, groups, and organizations.

Today we will focus on the use of the empty chair and doubling in managing emotions and facilitating problem solving with law students.

The first profile anxiety is “the problem”. the second profile involves “frustration/anger” about not getting a position/internship.

The Empty Chair

- 1. Provides a placeholder for negative emotion that may be holding the student back**
- 2. Brings awareness to the functional purpose of the emotion so it can be leveraged more productively**
- 3. Differentiates negative emotions from the student's core identity**
- 4. Gives leaders a way to hear and understand students with empathy, reduced defensiveness, and a collaborative stance towards success for all concerned**

Glossary of Terms

Psychodrama

is one of a family of methods developed by J. L. Moreno in the early 20th century in which we tell our stories in action rather than just talking about them. Psychodrama is used in therapeutic, educational, organizational settings and to train trial lawyers.

Protagonist

is the term for the role of the individual who is seeking to work out a problem, gain insight, or to expand their skills in a new role. The protagonist is the central focus of the action or scene in a psychodrama.

Sociodrama

refers to an exploration in action utilizing composite representations of larger social roles, themes and issues. Roles are developed collaboratively by the group and facilitator to be explored in a more general way. This allows relevant information to emerge while providing anonymity for individuals (e.g. “This scene will explore options for bettering the onboarding experience for new junior attorneys in small to mid-size law firms. What roles do we need to represent to explore and problem-solve this issue? Who is willing to play each role?”)

Action Insight

is the term used to describe an “ah-ha!” moment the protagonist or role player might have at any point in an enactment. Since this experience occurs in action or interaction, it tends to be deeper than the more common insight that occurs at just the cognitive level.

Role training

a critical element in action methods, is identifying, exploring, and practicing possible options and new, adequate responses in a particular role. Moreno believed that the human personality is made up of the **different roles we play in life**. Just like an actor on a stage, each of us has many roles: child, parent, friend, worker, leader, sibling etc. These roles shape how we think, feel, and act in different situations. A reason role training is so effective when done in action is that interaction and scene can be rewound and replayed until an adequate or novel response is discovered.

Concretization

is a technique in which something abstract or intangible is made visible or concrete. This could be a feeling, a sensation, or a problem. Any of these can be projected onto and held by an empty chair (e.g., in this chair is your colleague, or spouse) or we might ask that someone choose an object to represent the thing (i.e., find an object in the room that can represent your stress, or depression, or the bar exam).

Doubling

in psychodrama is an empathic guess of what a protagonist may be thinking or feeling. It's not telling someone what they feel, it is offered and done succinctly in the first person e.g., "I feel disappointed." We always ask if this is accurate and the protagonist is free to reject it, amend it, or put it in their own words.

Role Reversal

occurs when the protagonist changes and steps into the role the person, institution or things that is involved in their enactment. This is a way that the protagonist can see things from the perspective of another. We ask the protagonist to “embody” a particular role not merely imagine. Given that in psychodrama, we can *concretize* abstract or intangible internal thus private experiences, the protagonist can step into the role of a feeling or an internal experience of stress or anxiety, or a particular problem.

Ventilation

in psychology is the free and open expression of emotions, particularly negative ones like anger, frustration, sadness or anxiety, often to relieve emotional tension or stress. It's a technique used in therapy and can also be a part of everyday coping mechanisms. While it can be helpful in releasing pent-up feelings and gaining perspective, the effectiveness of ventilation depends on how it's done and who it's done with. The empty chair provides a contained place to put these emotions so they can be worked with productively.

Panelists



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Dr. Frank Bartolomeo is a psychotherapist, organizational consultant, and scholar with more than 35 years of diverse experience.

He specializes in helping attorneys, executives, and other professionals address burnout, anxiety, depression, and substance misuse.

An expert in group psychotherapy and psychodrama, he has facilitated over 1,000 groups for high achieving individuals and public-facing professionals.

Frank's work emphasizes resilience, effective leadership, and professional well-being, and he is passionate about bringing psychodramatic methods into academia, training programs, and legal education.



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Anna Schaum is the Founder of Dramatic Changes: Center for Sound Relationships. She is a licensed therapist, group facilitator and moderator, executive coach, and organizational consultant.

Ms. Schaum assists leaders and their teams through a systems lens on change, demonstrating actionable skills that leverage individual and group potential.

A former professional violist who achieved tremendous career success, Anna is well-versed in the unique demands on high-performing professionals and has honed uniquely perceptive listening skills alongside fluency in collaboration, gesture, and systems-based learning, all of which translate to the multidimensionality of her work.

Additionally, Anna has worked successfully with trial lawyers utilizing psychodrama as a tool for trial preparation as well as professional and personal development in the profession.



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Mary has co-taught courses on Professional Identity Formation and Leadership.

Prior to her current position, she worked for seven years as an Associate Director of the Office of Career and Professional Development at Brooklyn Law School.

Mary received her BA from Binghamton University and her JD from Brooklyn Law School. She has dedicated her career to coaching and empowering emerging legal professionals and serves as co-chair of the New York City Bar Associations' New Lawyer Institute.



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Kim counsels law students and graduates, handles the ABA employment data collection and manages student participation in regional job fairs.

She earned her Bachelor of Science in Communication and Psychology from the University of Houston-Victoria in 2011 and is currently pursuing a Master of Art in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at St. Mary's University.