



DR KATE'S MUSINGS



Each month I'll be writing about an area of interest or idea that has popped up as a result of my work and life at the moment. At this point in time, through all the accidents and physical traumas I've suffered, through a real touch of my own mortality, I've been so involved and so pleased with the amount and quality of work I've been doing. This has led me to thoughts of the beginnings of TSM and its connection with, and lineage from, classical psychodrama. Our first training group from 1992-1995 developed this safe model for the treatment of PTSD by integrating clinical psychology with classical psychodrama at the time.

Original TSM Team, 20+ years later
Mimi Cox, LCSW, TEP, Dr Kate, Francesca and
Cathy Wilson, M.Ed., MSN, CP → → →



From the beginning, our biggest contributions were to make the model a system of *intrapsychic* personality change *before* moving to the interpersonal world. We added what we call the Prescriptive Roles as Scene 1 in any TSM drama, building strengths of observation, restoration, and containment to deal with the internalization of trauma. Thus, I have spent the last 25 years working inside the expressive arts community preaching the need for clinical safety ("Safety, Safety," is our mantra) that has changed the way psychodrama, in particular, is done around the world, according to Dr. Dale Richard Buchanan.

It is interesting that, since I am now in a stage of Generativity of our model, I am again returning to an emphasis on the Canon of Creativity (Moreno and Moreno, 1969)—a concept so simple, so elegant that we sometimes forget its therapeutic power. It clearly states that the goal of all psychodramas is to increase spontaneity to change old patterns and to produce creative new solutions. The generally accepted definition of spontaneity by the Moreno's is that it is either:

1. a new response to an old situation, or
2. an adequate response to a new situation.

In both cases, the end result is a new, creative action that helps people get unstuck from the past.

Here are two personal-professional examples. As I began working with Armand Volkas, LMFT, RDT, a very talented drama therapist in San Francisco, the last two years, I saw ways to expand our Six Safety Structures ([article on website](#)) to include more spontaneity training and creative action while still maintaining the clinical focus on safety and containment. I was also influenced by Dr Lai Nien-hwa from Taiwan to make the Six Safety Structures more culturally sensitive. Two examples, one from Nien-hwa and one from Armand's work follow.

For several years working in Taiwan I argued with Dr Lai about how to create the Circle of Safety we use to begin each workshop: she stating that it was "impolite in Asian culture" to state a strength one has and own it, and I telling her it is psychologically important to own one's strengths. Suddenly, on one visit she told me she had a new version of the Circle of Safety and, of course, I was open to a new action demonstration! She showed how two people can pick up scarves that represent the other person's strengths and give them the honor of being recognized interpersonally, which is accepted in Asia. It was a profound moment for me to move beyond my own Western 'cultural conserve' of owning one's strengths to see the creative power of having it done interpersonally. It is now a widely used method of building the Circle of Safety, even when I teach in Western countries!

Armand taught me how to use a short 3-line story about a strength overcoming a trauma as another way to build the Circle of Safety, which warms people up to taking roles spontaneously during the very beginning of the group. The directions to the group are to think of a time that you were successful in using a strength to overcome a trauma in childhood or adulthood, and then to pick someone to play you. Then, immediately, the two people sitting beside the person picked to play the storyteller become the other actors and a short Playback Theatre scene is directed for the protagonist to be able to see themselves from the Witness Role. This was particularly potent at our most recent workshop on *Finding Your Way Home*. A woman, who had to set firm boundaries from a Tough Love stance of not allowing her adult autistic son to live in her house anymore, watched in amazement when 3 others played out her simple 3-line story, bringing depth to her experience of completing that spontaneous and creative action.

I hope that you all can learn these interventions, if you are a professional, to use in your own work with trauma survivors. If you are doing personal work,

I hope the belief that spontaneity is available through the Prescriptive Roles, helps you make more creative solutions to old trauma patterns and find the life of creativity that you deserve.

With all good wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving and continued success in bringing spontaneity into your personal and professional repertoire.



Kate