

JUNE 14, 2022



MOVING BEYOND WALLS

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Paper presented to the Psychodrama Institute of Melbourne
towards Certification for Psychodrama Directorship

Preface

Dear Reader,

My paper is a joyful sharing about me discovering my own spontaneity as a director, in action. I especially want to share with you, how my spontaneity activated spatial creativity in me. Moreno defined spontaneity as *“the ability to respond adequately to a novel situation or coming up with a new response to a familiar situation”*. Over the last 4 years, I had been noticing in my work with individual clients that I made a lot of spontaneous directorial calls in relation to the use of the therapy room. Over the 18 years of my therapeutic practice, the situation of working with individual clients was familiar to me, but with the learning and integration of psychodrama, a new form of spontaneity relating to spaces developed in me. I would use different therapy cabins, adjacent therapy rooms, common office areas, glass partitions and spaces outside my therapy room as a way to enable role shifts, bringing about progressive roles in my clients.

Upon reflection, I realised that my spontaneity kicked in the most whenever I got in touch with fixed or frozen roles in my clients. I picked up the need for some novel or different kind of movement to help them move out of retrogressive roles. This gave rise to spatial creativity within me and was the reason I had been taking different spatial calls. It was beautiful to connect the dots as to how my spontaneity was the bridge between the fixed and/or frozen roles in my clients and my new found spatial creativity.

Connected to this was another significant discovery in action about how my tele with my clients was working. I realised that my spontaneity was not an individual process within me but a tele response to those roles in my clients that lacked or had very little spontaneity in them. When I came across roles in them that were on one end of the continuum, full of anxiety and fear, I took the most spontaneous of my directorial calls, thereby balancing things at the other end of the spectrum.

An additional discovery for me in individual therapy work has been that my spatial creativity comes out the most in response to the limitations of the singular therapy room. While I work with groups, the space or hall is large and there is a lot space to move. As a person, I have always loved the freedom of movement and flow, thereby never liking constriction. While the individual therapy room felt okay for talk therapy, it somehow felt smaller to me in terms of what I needed to do with my clients psychodramatically. My use of spaces adjoining my therapy room, was my way of creatively crossing over spatial limitations to aid my client's healing process and role development.

In this paper, I am sharing with you in detail, my work with one client over several sessions and how this discovery of the twin principles of spontaneity and creativity unfolded gradually. I feel loads of gratitude for discovering my spatial creativity and want to share its impact with you in the hope that it might be of value to you in your personal and professional work.

Warm Regards

Meenakshi Kirtane

Acknowledgements

I would like to first of all express a big thank you to my supervisor Ms. Sue Daniel. Her relentless effort with me to help me realise that I need to share and celebrate my work with readers, made me aware of how selective my Clear Seer Role was. I had the internal permission and ability to clearly see everything around me but no permission to see anything about me. Due to her, writing this paper, has therefore been a huge progressive journey towards acknowledging my work and the creativity in me that has always taken very many forms right since my childhood.

The other big thank you is to my client who not only permitted me to write about her dramas but also participated in the writing by proof reading and adding parts of the drama that I may have forgotten.

My heartfelt thank you to both my Gurus – Dr. Carl Rogers (Founder of the Person Centered Approach) and Dr. J.L. Moreno who believed and worked on the principle that *Experience is the fundamental way through which we learn, form our personalities, heal and change*. My experience of my own directorial spontaneity and creativity was the best way that I could have learnt both about these concepts and what their integration into active personality meant.

My thank you to all my psychodrama, psychotherapy mentors, colleagues, trainees and clients who have helped me to grow and develop over the years.

Finally, my thank you to you my reader for taking the time to read my paper.

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Introduction

I welcome you to my paper. It is about my enriching journey with my client, her role development and the numerous things I learnt on the way. In the main body of my paper I present a detailed narration of five dramas that we did together. I call this section 'Client Work'. Though I worked with my client for almost two years, I have chosen these dramas over numerous others because they represent a very significant shift in my client. From a place of disempowerment, and disconnection with her feelings, she moved to getting connected with herself and claiming her own personal power. This major shift, changed her relational world in a remarkable way. My client not only broke old patterns of helplessness, oppression, and an inability to take a stand in her dramas, she went on to confront people in her every day relationships where these patterns occurred. Even in the new relationships she made like new friends, some new colleagues and her spouse, she was able to maintain herself and experience mutual respect. These dramas were life changing for her.

In the 'Client Work' section, I have laid out all the five dramas as they happened. Each drama is followed by a discussion about what roles I saw develop in my client. I have also added a paragraph on what I learnt from each drama, because I realised that I developed many new roles while directing her. I too like her have not remained the same person after her dramas. I experience and see relationships in a new light now.

Design of Paper

I have designed this paper in sections; 1) Introduction, 2) design of paper, 3) psychodrama terminology used in the paper, including sharing with you, how I understand and use these terms in the dramas, 3) the psychodramas with a discussion after each drama and my own learning, 4) consolidated discussion about the overall role development in my client and me, and 6) a conclusion. Maybe reading the terminology section before you start reading the psychodramas might help you stay more connected to my description of the dramas, especially if you are new to psychodrama. *If you wish though, you could jump straight into reading the dramas and refer to this section, if and when you need clarification on any concept.*

As I was writing the consolidated discussion section I looked at the entire journey from the perspective of a mountain climber. Looking from this mountain top where my client and I reached, I saw a valley, and in this view I saw our starting point and the entire journey travelled together. I share with you how both our role clusters went on developing as we crossed drama after drama after drama.

With a wish that this my sharing and experience adds value to you in some ways, I welcome you once again to the following pages.

Psychodrama Terms

In the following few pages, I am sharing with you, my understanding of the psychodrama terms I have used in my paper. I am also referencing them with books where they are described in detail, in case you would want to know more about them.

Tele

To begin with, I am talking to you about *Tele*. During my directing, I had an experience of this term quite differently than how I had experienced it as a protagonist and a group member. As a protagonist, I had experienced tele as the warm and trusting relationship I always experienced with my director. How in the comfort of her presence, I could simply let go and allow my drama to flow without knowing or having to control where my drama would go. This experience of safety was tele for me. Further in the choices of auxiliaries that I made, I would always marvel at the mutuality of choice when auxiliaries would share what the role I had picked them for, meant to them. As a group member, I would always notice in me and others, how we made choices; how I felt pulled toward certain members and felt like keeping away from some and felt nothing either ways with some. I also learnt in groups that all these directions, helped me to learn something about myself and develop in those areas. What my directing has taught me is alignment. That when the tele is right and there is unquestioned mutual trust, I don't have to do too much work. Putting trust in that relationship, when I allow my tele to guide me about my client's role and needs, I automatically know what directorial calls to take. All my work as a director can keep flowing from the tele of my relationship with my client. The above explains the concept of tele and how I work with it. Here is Moreno's earliest definition of Tele, "the simplest unit of feeling transmitted from one individual towards another that travels into a distance".¹

Spontaneity

The next connected term I want to talk about is *Spontaneity*. I have experienced this in my body, as a need to move and do something. In moments when I experience myself as being propelled by joyful and light energy, I know I am being spontaneous. My directorial experience made me realise that my spontaneity wasn't operating in isolation. When I looked in detail at all those moments where I had taken spontaneous decisions as a director, I realised that they were all in a relationship with, and a response to, the roles in my client at those moments. To my surprise, I found that the less spontaneous the roles in my client were, (eg. frozen in fear or apprehensive about moving), the more spontaneous my decisions were. The more there was lack of movement or minimal capacity for movement in the roles that emerged in my client, the more spatially creative I became. By spatial creativity I mean, using the space and objects around me in completely new ways; ways that I had never seen or heard of, or even thought about before. In those moments, something unique and completely original emerged for the first time. For example, my use of glass partitions as a way of creating enough safety and distance for my client to be able to see her vulnerable self. A glass partition

¹ Moreno J.L. p 314, ch. 3, Who Shall Survive. Beacon House Inc. 1953.

ensured that she could see something but because of the barrier (thankfully), it couldn't reach her until she was ready. In looking at this and many other moments like it, I realised that all the production techniques that we learn in psychodrama, while important to know and learn, the most important thing for a director to know is that techniques must be used in the context of relationships. The relationship between the protagonist and director, the precise roles that are emerging in the client in that moment, the precise moment in the overall flow of the drama, the physical space in which the drama is happening, the auxiliaries who are already on stage and many more things are taken into account when production techniques are used. They are not simply implanted or used at some point in the drama in isolation. Moreno defined spontaneity as the adequate response to a present situation.²

Spontaneity – Creativity Twin Principle

When I look at the *Spontaneity – Creativity*³ twin principle in psychodrama, I remember reading that these two principles operate together. During my directing, I actually experienced the connection of these two principles as they flowed from one to the other in me. It started with me being in a trusting relationship with my client. Going forward, based on our tele, I picked up her verbal and non-verbal cues. My spontaneity kept emerging as a response to her low spontaneity and served to keep her safe and flowing. Going forward I took creative directorial calls related to the spaces around us. This in turn helped my client to shift roles and move into more empowered progressive roles.

Moreno looked at both the processes of spontaneity and creativity as different but strategically linked. While creativity belongs to the categories of substance, spontaneity belongs to the category of catalyser. Creativity without spontaneity becomes lifeless and spontaneity without creativity is empty and runs abortive. The living intensity of any form of creativity increases and decreases in proportion to the amount of spontaneity it partakes. When they come together in the right proportions, a new response, thing or creation takes form.⁴

Role Theory

The next term I want to share with you is progressive roles. In order for me to share my understanding of progressive roles, let me begin from the fundamental of what I understand is a *Role*. To me a role is that part of me or any other person that is activated in the moment. It feels to me as if the whole of me is in a certain steady state and depending on what I am interfacing with or what comes my way from the outside or within me, a part of me gets activated. To give you a visual, if there are hundreds of bulbs connected to one another through wires, depending on where the energy or current is passed from moment to moment, different light bulbs would go on and off. A role therefore is that part of me that is energised or comes to light in any moment.

² Moreno J.L. p 336, ch. 3, *Who Shall Survive*. Beacon House Inc. 1953.

³ *Spontaneity – Creativity Twin Principle*

⁴ Moreno J.L. p 39-40, ch. 1, *Who Shall Survive*. Beacon House Inc. 1953.

Moreno talked about different type of roles which have been very beautifully laid out and expanded on further by Sue Daniel in the role map she has presented in her article Psychodrama, role theory and the cultural atom.⁵ She has explained how role development is on a continuum and can be mapped to understand where it might be in any given moment. All of us have endless roles and all these different roles can be at different levels of development.

The Role Framework (Map)

Progressive (Life) Roles		Coping (Survival) Roles				Retrogressive (Inert) Roles	
<i>Well Developed</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Going Toward</i>	<i>Going Away</i>	<i>Going Against</i>	<i>Freezing</i>	<i>Diminishing</i>	<i>Fixed</i>

As you can see in the diagram above, on one end there are the retrogressive roles, fixed and diminishing roles that usually are very old and archaic ways of responding to situations or people. We very often keep repeating these responses though they may have outlasted their utility. With some of fixed roles, through self work or other life events, we realise their futility and start developing some new roles. As these develop, the older fixed roles start diminishing.

The next group of roles are the coping or survival roles which are for self-protection. Here we can make four choices. In a situation that has the possibility of having to face anything that threatens us, we might either start 'freezing', and enact a role where we have little or no emotional, cognitive or action response. A second option is to take up a role that assists us in 'moving away' from whatever threatens us (Going Away). Or sometimes we might 'go against' things that scare us too much. The fourth option is to 'go towards' a person, situation or thing. All these coping roles though protective in nature, in some situations they may block our growth. They may not be adequate for the situation and may become patterned responses rather than choices.

The third and last group on the role map is that of progressive roles. These are growth oriented roles that keep us connected to ourselves and to possibilities. Through my journey with my client, I learnt that the development of our overall personality is the result of many roles developing and that our personality is never set. There are times when movements happen where clients choose to drop certain coping roles and adopt new ones. These new roles offer clients a completely different way of engaging with persons or situations. The more the client meets with success and has a sense of adequacy, the more the roles become fully formed and develop over time. Sometimes there are quite a few roles that bundle up together and organically form a cluster. This means the person has become more integrated in themselves. My client developed many progressive roles and role clusters during our journey, that changed her in a lasting way.

⁵ Daniel Sue. Psychodrama, role theory and the cultural atom: new developments in role theory. Advances in Theory and Practice, Routledge, 2007.

The Psychodramas – An Overview

This section has five dramas. The first drama is about my client facing and meeting her vulnerable self for the first time. Through this meeting with her adolescent vulnerable self, my client also was able to face her shame, self-criticism and lack of empathy towards herself. She not only maintained herself through the intensity of all these feelings and realisations, she further went on to become her own empathy provider and safe acceptor of self. In role theory language, her roles are 'Empathic Companion of Self' and 'Safe Acceptor of Self'.

Somewhat self-assured through the first drama, my client went on to engage with an even younger and more vulnerable self in her second drama. This drama illustrates the beautiful transition my client made. She started her drama, with a relationship of disgust towards her little self, and ended with my client seeing how resourceful and dynamic this little self was. She also acknowledged the fact that not only had the little self survived, but it had also retained joy through playing and the development of a sense of humour.

My client's third drama is about a confrontation in a significant relationship. This enabled another confirmation of self. She was able to have the experience of maintaining herself in the face of intense fear. Not just that, she was able to go ahead and fully express whatever she wanted, to her ex-boyfriend. Despite her intense fear, being able to stand up for herself, encouraged her to go even more deeply into her last two dramas.

The fourth and fifth drama to me are a continuation of the same drama with a week's pause in between. The fourth drama is about a strong confrontation with her father. She had been very scared of him since childhood. In this drama, for the first time, she could fully express to him, how much she did not like their home and family environment. The following week, she came into our session confidently and resolutely, started her drama, exactly where she had left the previous one. What was left incomplete in the fourth drama was beautifully finished in this fifth drama when she confronted her aunt. This was new, and many progressive roles emerged during the drama. She had never known how to call Aunty out for all her unfair, unjust and cruel behaviours. She finished a big piece of work for herself, by taking on and confronting her entire family system. My client felt a level of increasingly intense fear in both of these dramas, however she was able to manage her own safety as she went right on ahead and expressed how she had been wronged, and how certain behaviours on their part were not right.

As you read through all of the five dramas, I trust you will experience the kind of blossoming that happened in my client. She was able to keep coming more and more into her own power and maintain herself, as significant progressive roles kept emerging, strengthening and developing in her in relation to her oppressive family environment.

The Context of My Client

I had been working with my client who I will call Kusum, a single female, 25 years of age, for over a year by the time I introduced psychodramatic action into our work. When she first started, I experienced her as someone who was quite self-aware and I admired the fact that she had a very well developed clear seer role. She told me that being a beginning therapist herself, she knew that though she was quite aware of what was going on in her at a cognitive level, she was still scared of getting in touch with her intense feelings. She told me that she wanted to work with me so that she could develop the ability to feel and handle all her feelings. Both she and I felt (and discussed) that this would not only help her personally but also assist her in her professional development.

From the beginning of our work together, I could see that *freezing* had been her way of coping with difficult emotions. For example, during our sessions when she wanted to express something or had started to get in touch with any strong feelings, she would suddenly say that 'I am blank' or 'I am disconnecting' or 'I don't feel anything'. Sometimes I would observe her body becoming extremely tight.

Before we began our therapeutic work together, she would *move away* from her intense feelings by *freezing*. I noticed that the way she would be speaking would suddenly become feelingless. Through our therapy work together she was wanting to be able to go towards her feelings and feel them. Her aim further was to be able to fully embrace her feelings and be free to experience and express them, thereby integrating them. I was also aware that though my client was very courageous, I had to be gentle and go slow with her as this movement towards opening up to her own emotional world was very new and petrifying for her.

In our work during the first year through talk therapy, I provided her with a lot of strong holding. Sometimes I would gently sit beside her with her permission, when she was sharing a difficult memory. Sometimes, with her permission, I would stroke her hand or her back or hair when she would start getting tight in her body. Sometimes I would gently but strongly hold her with her permission when she was breaking down into sobs. Whenever she would say, 'this is too much' or 'I am not ready today', I would not explore that area further. My always asking her permission to touch her and constantly matching my steps to what she was ready for, made her to know that I wasn't going to push her to feel anything she wasn't ready for. This not only assisted to her developing trust in me but it also gradually developed in her, the ability to stay in touch with almost all her emotions, however scary or overwhelming the emotion itself or its intensity. She started trusting that whenever she would collapse, or break down into tears or sobs, she would be held by me and this freed her to feel her emotions and thereby have a catharsis of abreaction and integration. Every time she would meet or stay with a new and difficult emotion, I would not only applaud her but also point out to her jovially that she had survived experiencing her feelings and was still safe and alive. This mirroring that she was safe, helped to anchor the new role 'it is safe to feel'. Once this trust had developed, I felt able to share with her that I had noticed her body getting very tight quite often during many of her earlier sessions with me. I said that every time I had touched her, I had sensed a tightness too. She agreed and also shared that given her childhood and family history, she had to tighten herself up to deal with all the screaming and shouting

happening at home. I then shared with her that a lot of times when people grow up in difficult and anger filled family environments, this tightening of the body helps them to survive on the one end the external onslaught of oppression and on the other end the intense visceral responses to that. Therefore, people end up storing a lot of pain, fear and anger within their bodies. I also shared with her that out of all the emotions she had processed over the year, I had rarely seen her express or throw her anger out powerfully. Every time she tried it in action, she would was not able to maintain the role and instead turn into painful crying. She agreed and said that she didn't feel powerful enough in her body. She said, she most often ended up feeling helpless and powerless.

I asked her that if she was ready, then we could begin a deeper journey of exploration. I asked her this because by this time, I knew that my client was ready to take the psychodramatic plunge. During most of her sessions, she could hold onto simply being with an intensely painful emotion and express it fully. Additionally, I didn't see in her, any need to run away from any aspect of her. On most of the days when we started the session, she would have thought of and initiated, the area she wanted to explore and heal. She was not only willing and open but actively found different aspects of herself that she wanted to heal. Much progress had been made over the year. We were ready to proceed into action!

Drama I The Beautiful Embrace

A common theme and role that kept coming up in various dramas of my client was sudden loss of energy in her body, so much so that without support or help she wouldn't be able to stand. The first drama where this came up was when she was wanting to face girls who had bullied her in High School, and confront them. When we began, she described what she wanted to explore. I noticed that her toes and fists started tightening. Over the year of working with her, I had noticed that this physical response had been one when she would block herself from feeling intense feelings. As it was early in the session, I did not ask her to maximise this bodily response. Instead, I checked with her and she confirmed that this was a difficult area for her to explore. She might start getting to scared while facing her bullies. I asked her to create a safe space for herself. She chose one end of the room as her safety corner and placed a cushion there. It meant a comfortable place where she could hide and take a break, in case she felt too petrified. In the space that we were doing a drama, she chose a brownish grey stole to represent her school building. She put it on the left-hand side, just ahead of where we were standing. Then she chose 3 other small cushions and bundled them together. She kept them at around 4 feet in front of where we were standing. She came back and stood beside me, ready to look up and face them. As she started moving her head upwards to face her bullies, her legs turned into jelly and she started collapsing. As I was looking at her, I saw that her body started becoming loose and her knees had started caving in. I quickly firmly held her and helped her to move out of that place. In those few moments of holding her, I got my first experiential understanding of how deeply powerless that role was. I felt that if I would not continue to hold her, she would collapse on the floor. I asked her to keep breathing. After she took a couple of breaths, in and out, I gently asked her to come out of the drama into the mirror position and see what was happening. She said she saw a young girl with her head down and that as she was seeing this girl, she was realising that the

girl was experiencing a lot of shame and was very alone in that shame. She further shared that she was realising now that it was this shame that had made the girl powerless to face her bullies. She looked at me and added that she was also realising that she had very judgemental about her own self back then. She had been very critical towards this girl for not having taken a stand for herself. I asked her what she was experiencing. She said she felt regret at not having known this earlier and not being there for her younger self. Even before I could say anything further, my client looked at her adolescent self and apologised to her for not being there for her and for having judged her. In the role reversal, the adolescent self replied that it was not just then, but even now as an adult she still judges her. The adolescent further told her present self that she had never really seen her or accepted her completely before this. In the role reversal, my client accepted this fact that she had only now in this moment seen and non-judgementally accepted her younger self. She apologised to her adolescent self. She then told her adolescent self that she wasn't alone anymore, that she saw her now and wanted to be with her. She asked the adolescent self if she would allow her to come closer to her and hold her. In the role reversal, the adolescent self was initially resistant to the compassionate and understanding present self as she wasn't trusting of the understanding and kindness coming towards her. As the drama progressed though, she did make an attempt to walk her share of the 2 steps towards the present self. The adolescent said to me that she wanted go closer but felt scared. At which point I asked her if she would like me to walk with her. She said 'yes' and I held her hand as we walked towards her present self. The amount of time it took and the way my client clung on to my hand as we walked towards her present self, showed me how courageous my client was being. We stood in a group hug for a while after which I left both of them in a hug together. They stayed in that peaceful quiet hug for a while. We ended the drama on these progressive roles where her scared adolescent self could take the leap of faith and trust her present self and the present self felt capable enough of fully accepting an aspect of herself and provide safety to it. There was a full catharsis of integration.

Discussion

Role Development in Client

While working with my client, I realised that the moment of realisation my client had in the mirror position was the first turning point in the drama. My client became a *clear seer* and not only saw the shame and loneliness of her younger self but also how critical she had been of this aspect/self. The clear seer then helped my client to get in touch with her own *kind empathiser* role. As we moved on, my client took on the *active listener* role and the *acceptor of what the adolescent self's complaint was*. Finally, my client's sincere apology and willingness to be there for her adolescent self reached that aspect of her. It brought about a role shift and that aspect started moving toward my client. It slowly took on a *hesitant truster* and *courageous mover* role. It was beautiful for me to witness how the role relationships took a complete U turn from my client being critical of this aspect (going against) to her wanting to understand (a new progressive role) and support this aspect to finally this aspect beginning to trust her (tender shoot of a new progressive role). I guess when my client became ready to be her own double, I was not needed to be around.

My Learnings

While directing my client, there were 3 major learnings for me. Firstly, I learnt how bodily disempowerment feels like. As I touched or walked along or held my client through her different emerging roles, I experienced the huge disparity in the bodily sense of empowerment between the different roles. While my client seemed empowered as her present self, as soon as she took on the adolescent role, there was a huge change in her meekness, demeanour, slouching shoulders, weak knees, avoidance of eye contact and overall sense of power in her body.

Secondly, through the drama, I also saw that as role reversals and conversations progressed, the adolescent self role, though slowly, became increasingly confirmed in herself and ready to try and trust the present self. The more it was seen, accepted and heard by the present self, the more power that role gained. So much so that towards the end, she could take the risk of walking a few steps. Additionally, the more the adult self, accepted her own disowned and rejected roles, the more integrated and empowered she became in herself. Such is the power of role reversal that it changes the cultural atom which further influences role relationships.

The third significant learning for me in action was that none of this would have happened if my client would not have stepped out of her drama into the mirror position. This spatial movement and looking at what was playing out from another place was very helpful for her. Before that, me helping her step out of the initial place she was standing at and standing in another place helped her to move out of a completely powerless role. This experience of spatial movements and how quickly and deeply they impacted my client, stayed with me and I utilised movement more and more in the coming sessions with her.

During this session, my client wanted to explore why she had so much difficulty in building any relationship with her inner child. When I asked her, what 'inner child' meant to her, she explained to me that as part of her professional development, she had read books on the codependency model by Pia Mellody. She had read about the concept of inner child which consists of a range of our little selves ranging from birth till around adolescence. But when she has previously even thought of her little self, she would feel a block. She knew through her own experience that she did not like children as she felt very helpless around them. She had an inkling that this difficulty with children had to do something with her own relationship with her little self. She had recently become an aunt and wanted to be able to enjoy this new relationship of her life. It was a very significant relationship for her and gave her the impetus to find out what her difficulty with her little self could be.

I started the session, by asking her to close her eyes and tell me a few words that came to her when she imagined her little self. She started describing this entity as a 6 or 7-year-old ugly, helpless and vulnerable girl. Even while saying this she started to turn her face away to her left, shutting her eyes even tighter, as if trying to avoid seeing her. Her hands started to clench and she intertwined her toes tightly. I asked her to breathe and slowly open her eyes. I asked her what she was experiencing. She said 'disgust', with a lot of force. From my previous work with her I knew that this tightening of her body was related to her getting in touch with intense feelings. I said to her that the work further might be painful and she could go ahead or stop at any point. (I put across this question to my client and put her in her head to make doubly sure that she wanted to do this) She said she had been avoiding this for long but wanted to give it a try and push herself a little. I asked her if she was okay to invite her little self to our therapy room today. She hesitated and started getting tight in her body. With this tightening coming in again, I intuitively knew that I had to make things safe for her.

We were sitting in a therapy room that had a glass partition with an openable curtain. If one moved the curtain a little, one could see through the glass into the other room. I spontaneously came up with an idea and suggested to my client if it was okay to invite her 6-year-old self in the other therapy room. That way she would be able to see her little self and due to the glass partition, remain at a distance. If she got too overwhelmed, we could quickly draw the curtain. She agreed and said that she wanted to at least attempt to see her little self with open eyes. I asked her to go ahead and concretise her 6-year-old self in the other room and then return to this one. I observed a change in her body and she walked with more energy. In those moments, she became a curious explorer. She chose a brown wooden tissue box for her concretisation, put it in the centre of the other room and came back to our therapy room. I asked her "What do you see". I did not take her into the mirror and instead asked this question to her present self as she was the one who wanted to see her little self. She answered that "I see a very small, sad, helpless, vulnerable and beggarlike child. I also see that the child is lonely and unprotected. I have always found her ugly because she is so helpless and vulnerable." Her words and tone were informing that she was being critical of her little self. But before I could enquire about that, I saw that her face had become blank and

her tone had become matter of fact. I sensed that she had disconnected. I asked her what do you feel. She said “Nothing”. In response to her disconnection, instead of further asking her more about the little girl (Like what she was wearing and so on), I decided to take my client into the mirror position for two reasons: One I did not want her to loose her warm up and secondly when she had begun the drama, momentarily she had gotten in touch with her disgust. I did not want my client to get into a critical role vis-à-vis her little self.

I took her into the mirror position to help her to get out of her frozen role and asked her, “What do you see?” She replied that she was realising that her present self was going through a very difficult moment. She told her present self that she had been very brave today and even if she had disconnected, not to get disheartened. She had begun a journey today. Slowly in her own time, she would form a better relationship with her little one. I asked her to reverse roles. She moved back into her earlier position and became herself again. She relaxed in her body as she heard her own message from the mirror position.

I then asked her, whether her little self was always sad and unhappy or does she remember times her little self would be happy. This question jolted her a little. Her eyes brightened and she said “Yes”. I took this opportunity and immediately asked her to concretise in our therapy room, all those activities and events that made her little self happy, sequentially over the growing years. She concretised 5-6 different moments. She chose a yellow smiley ball for when she would be playing games as a child, a small pink dustbin for her humorous and funny moments while growing up, (She chose this because her mom and sister would jovially tease her as a garbage collector in childhood due to her fancy for collecting small stones and pebbles!!), a register depicting her being in british library and reading books, a white coloured ceramic candle stand to depict some moments from high school when she would be singing and finally she chose a head bobbing puppet depicting her having fun, bantering and joking around with friends in college.

Once she had completed concretising, I took her into a different mirror position and asked her what she saw. She smiled a little and said that she saw a child who wasn’t sad all the time. It was a child who knew how to be happy and was happy in different moments. She also saw a child who had survived all the shouting and anger at home, trauma, her own sadness and somehow grown up on her own over the years. I said to her that she has survived well. There was a bigger smile now and she said to me, that she was not only glad that she had survived but that she had experienced some joyful moments while growing up. I asked her what she felt and she said that it was relief for her to know that her little self likes games and humour. I then asked her if she would want to say something to her present self. She said yes and explained to her present self that her little self was a very fun loving and humorous person. That little children are actually small and vulnerable but that doesn’t mean that they are weak and helpless. Her little self has definitely been a survivor. She further explained to her present self that humour, games and fun were the bridge she could use to connect with the little one overtime. I asked her to role reverse and repeated the dialogues from the mirror. My client smiled with relief and said to me that though it would take time, she now knew how to begin building this relationship. All along she had believed that her ‘inner child’ was this ugly and weak person but today she saw that this wasn’t true. Infact her little self wasn’t one entity at

just one point in time but rather a very fun loving, resourceful and evolving entity who had found ways to experience fun and joy over time.

At this point of relief and hopefulness, where my client had connected with her little self, we closed the drama.

Discussion

Role Development in Client

As we were working along, the first moment where I saw an important progressive role in my client appear was when despite her freezing, she said to me that she had been avoiding this for too long and today she would want to see her little self, even if it is for a few moments. My asking her a question about whether she wanted to continue, made her consciously come into the role of choosing what she wanted to do. This brought alive the *courageous goer towards herself* role in her and helped her to keep inching on in the drama. I also observed that unlike her previous drama, while dealing with something intense this time, her knees were not caving in and she was more empowered in her body.

The second time this *courageous goer towards herself* role was though briefly but amply evident, was when my client as her present did look at her little self. She could not sustain the connection for too long but even if for a moment, it did happen.

Further on, the visibility she received from the 1st mirror position about how courageous she was being, confirmed this *courageous goer towards self* role in her and made her appreciate her efforts.

Another major shift came in my client when I asked her this sociometric question about whether her little self was only sad all the time. This intervention made her to think differently and to her own surprise, a lot of progressive roles came up in her.

Finally, the 2nd mirror position completely changed the role relationship. From this vantage point the client could see that there was so much more to her little self. She could appreciate and celebrate the resourcefulness with which her little self had survived. Not just that she had been able to maintain her zest for life and was fun loving. Registering this made her realise how she had been holding a very limited idea of her little self. It was beautiful for me to experience the relief in my client when she could see that her little self wasn't a singular static entity but a live and dynamic person who had survived and become her own person despite all odds. She became open to befriend her little self and started looking for ways to build bridges. As I share this with you, I wonder why I took my client in the 2nd mirror and not allow herself to be in the place of her present self. When I look back I realise that my main reason could have been that from the place she was standing as her present self, she had gotten disconnected and tight. Secondly, she could see her previous concretisation of her little self in the other room. I wanted my client to have a completely new place that would be free from her own previous biases. A place from where she would be able to develop a fresh perspective of her little self. This spontaneous call that I took helped my client look in from a completely new view point.

My Learnings

My major learning in this drama was the realisation of my spontaneity in use and timing of the production techniques and usage of props. When I went ahead with my spontaneity, I saw the kind of impact it had in bringing around completely new roles in my client. As I reflect back now, I realise that the second time when my client started to get disconnected and tightening her body, I somewhere picked up that these roles had almost nil or very less spontaneity in them. As a response to that I got in touch with a lot of spontaneity in me and took 'out of the box' production calls. For example, my use of the adjacent therapy room was a very non- standard production call that made the distance safe enough for my client. The glass partition additionally made sure that whatever was concretised she in the other room could be seen but not touched. If she did not wish, nothing in the other room could touch her. This instantaneous use of the existing glass partition as a psychodrama prop was exactly what she needed to feel completely safe. I learnt that as a director, not just the props that we keep regularly but anything that we feel a natural tele towards in that moment from our surrounding can become a support and medium in our client's healing.

Drama III Empowered Confrontation with Ex-Boyfriend

This was the third drama I did with my client and what was beautiful for me to experience was how an entire cluster of powerful progressive roles came up in my client within a span of half an hour. What was also amazing for me was how beyond a point in the drama, my client was taking calls about what she wanted to do on her own and was completely warmed up. The only thing left for me to do was to keep out of her way!!

When we began, my client shared that she wanted to express her anger towards her ex-boyfriend. While she was in a relationship, her boyfriend had not only cheated on her but never admitted to it. This denial had left her without a closure. She also felt that whatever she had sensed and picked up was invalidated. Additionally, my client had a lot of unexpressed anger towards this denial of cheating. She went onto inform me that on her own whenever she had tried to get in touch with her anger or imagined lashing out at her boyfriend she had been unable to do it. The mere thought of this confrontation made her go weak in her legs and not feel any strength.

To start the drama, I asked my client if she would want to put out a scene in the future. I suggested this based on what my client had shared with me in the beginning. Creating a scene of confrontation in the present could have been too petrifying for my client. This suggestion of a future scene was my way of creating safety for my client. My client created a neutral place in the future where she would confront her ex-boyfriend. This was a college campus with lot of open spaces. A spot that has privacy and others cannot listen in to them is what she chose. Our therapy became that spot and she put one cushion at one end of the therapy room that represented her ex-boyfriend, while she and I stood at the other end.

M (holding her hand): Shall we begin?

As soon as my client looked up, she started going weak in her legs and started crying. While holding her hand, I could sense that if I don't hold her around the waist, she would collapse onto the floor. I recognised that her old role of 'weak knees and disempowerment in the face of intense feelings' had come up within her. I held her firmly around the waist and asked her to move into a mirror position. As we slowly walked into the mirror position, she started standing straight again and her crying stopped.

M: What do you see?

Kusum (Looking at herself): She is scared of being bullied and manipulated again. She fears that whatever she might say or express will be twisted and distorted."

M: What do you experience when you see that?

Kusum (Looking at her ex-boyfriend from the mirror position): Loads of anger at what this one has been doing to her.

M: Do you feel like saying or doing something?

Kusum: I want to concretise my fear of being manipulated.

With that she looked around the room and a concretised a black box as her fear of being manipulated.

Kusum (further adding): I want to go and throw it out of the room.

M: Would you be okay to go out alone or do you want me to come along.

Kusum: No, I want to do this bit on my own.

She then picked up the black box and threw it out of the room. As all this unfolded, while I realised that in the mirror position, after the third sentence, my client had moved into her present self, I did not point that out to her or pause her. I wanted her to stay in touch with the empowerment she was experiencing in that position.

M (Upon her return): How are you feeling now?

Kusum: I am still angry and feel ready to talk to my ex-boyfriend now.

M: Would you want to go to the place from where we started the drama?

Kusum: Yes

She took up the position from where she had started her drama. I stood near her but not too close and I felt from the erectness in her body that she was ready to take this on, on her own.

Kusum (As her present self angrily to ex-boyfriend angrily): What you did to me was wrong. Though you never accepted it, I know what you did to me was wrong. You not only cheated on me but the most terrible thing was that you tried to distort my reality by denying things and trying to tell me that I am not open minded. You can't do this to a person. You can't distort their sense of reality or their sense of what is right or wrong. It is terrible to make someone loose their self-belief.

Having expressed this, my client broke down into sobs and sat down at the same place where she was standing. She kept sitting there and crying for a while. I sat next to her. From the way her body had eased with relief as her crying gradually slowed down, I could see that a huge catharsis of integration was happening for her.

M (Once she calmed down): How are you now?

Kusum: My tears were of relief and grief both. The drama has made it real for me that something wrong had been done to me. Uptil this moment, my reality had been so muddled and covered under layers and layers of manipulation and distortion that I had never been able to fully admit the cheating to myself.

M: I am very glad that through this drama, you were able to own up to your reality and experience.

At this place of integration of my client's reality, we ended our session.

Discussion

Role Development in Client

As I reflect on this drama, I realise that the understanding I had developed about my client through her previous dramas was very helpful to me. As we were contracting, her sharing that even the thought of any confrontation with her ex-boyfriend made her go weak in the knees, registered in me. I remembered how strongly her retrogressive roles of disconnection and bodily weakness had come up in previous dramas. This prior information made me suggest a future scene to my client. It gave her the hope to start with - that even if she weren't ready now, at some point she would be. That safety helped to go ahead and start her drama.

Though we created a future scene, the old roles did come up and just like her previous two drama, the mirror position was a significant turning point for my client. As soon as she saw that it was her own 'intense fear of being manipulated' that was coming in the way, she knew exactly what to do with it. The kind of empowerment, her clear seer role brought in her was a joy to observe. The strength and power in her gait when she decided to throw out her fear on her own completely transformed her into a *powerful self-protector*. She remained integrated and aligned to her rightful power right till her confrontation was over.

Another remarkable moment in the drama was when I intervened and asked my client – whether she would like to go back to the place from where we started the drama, in order to confront her ex-boyfriend. It was a kind of role test. With her fear out of the equation and her clarity about what had been happening, would she be able to remain in touch with her rightful anger. Beautifully, she did and went ahead expressing herself. During the confrontation, integration happened at various levels. Firstly, she could maintain herself while experiencing her own anger with its full intensity in her body (None of the old roles of disconnection or weakness in her body. Secondly, she could express her anger as anger instead of crying or getting touch with her pain. Thirdly, she could express her anger at the intensity she was feeling it.

Finally, my client had another catharsis of integration when she cried at the relief of being able to accept and make it real for her, all that had happened to her in her relationship.

My Learnings

I had two major learnings from this drama. One was that time is such an intriguing aspect of psychodrama. Just the amount that can be covered when the protagonist is ready, was amazing to see. The speed at which certain role shifts can happen. How role development builds over time and various dramas. Some are very slow and the protagonist inches on just a little and then as we go along small step by small step, suddenly one day, leaps happen!! As I trusted the method, in their own time, things fell in place for my protagonist.

The other major learning was when to let go of the power completely. There were moments when my client was fully in charge of and clear about exactly what she wanted to do. It was transformational for me to see that knowing when to get out of the way is as important as all the other roles I take up vis-à-vis my client.

As I start to share this drama with you all, I feel like saying a little about my sessions in between. This drama did not happen immediately after the earlier three dramas. My client was at that time, meeting me every week for her sessions. After the first three dramas, she took 3-4 sessions of talk therapy where she started talking about her home environment. How her household environment was oppressive. It had been like this all her growing up years and she had not liked it all. How her entire body starts stiffening and tightening every single time that she is about to reach home. Sharing this with me teared her up several times. She also discussed with me her realisations from the earlier dramas. She liked the fact that she was taking stands against forceful and domineering people in her dramas. She also liked that wasn't crippled by her own fear as much. When she said she felt ready to confront her parents, especially her father about this, I knew that her 'stand taker role' had developed enough for her to look at relationships that were more threatening and up close at home. There was a lot of resoluteness in the way she said to me before leaving the session that next time she would do a drama.

Drama IV Confrontation with parents about household environment

On the day this drama happened, she came in as a person with a very clear agenda. She had been hurting within herself, with all this for too long. She did not want to waste anymore time and so we got onto work immediately. As she wanting to confront her parents about the oppressive home environment, I asked her, how she would want to create a safe space for herself before we start. She said that as she creating her household environment in our therapy room, she would open the door and leave the room, if it gets too much.

With that we started and I asked her, what would she want to concretise as her household environment. She put her big black backpack as the oppressive environment. She put it in one corner of the room and came and stood next to me. When she saw it, she said that she wanted to concretise her family members too. She spontaneously picked two big throw pillows. One representing her parents as a pair and the other, her uncle and aunt as a pair. She kept both these pillows near the bag and came back to her original position.

As soon as she came back and stood next to me and looked at the whole scene, she started crying. I held her gently as she wept. She then said to me that she would want to have a conversation with her father. She looked at one of the pillows and said "How could you wish bad for your own children. You have always held us back, never said that anything good can happen to us. Never celebrated any of our accomplishments, always were uncomfortable with our growth. What kind of parents do this? Do you not realise that all of this is so wrong."

As she completed this expression, she had another major bout of crying. I kept holding her gently and stroked her back. After some minutes, she said she was feeling very tired and we both sat down on the floor. She told me that as she was speaking to her father, she realised that her parents didn't have any thought process of their own. In all the major areas of their life, they mirror her uncle and aunt. She said as her father had always been the financially

weaker one, he had submitted somewhere to his brother and sister-in-law. Her mother had always been submissive to her father. Her parents in fact had no power at all as themselves.

She said she also realised that this wish that she and her sister never prosper are those of her aunt. She has always been envious of them. She always wanted what was best for her own daughters but would get very envious of her and her sister especially when they experienced or did or had anything good in life. She very maliciously and manipulatively made sure that my client, her sister and parents felt less about themselves.

With that she said to me, “I don’t know if I would be able to confront my aunt today but I want to try”. We both stood up, my client composed herself and looked at the other pillow that represented her uncle and aunt. As soon as she looked at her aunt, her legs started going weak, she started getting tight in her body and I knew that her paralysing fear was back. I held her tightly by her waist and told her that she did not have to go through this if she weren’t ready. The intensity of the weakness in her body informed me that this was not a good place for her. I asked her if she would want to leave the room. She immediately said yes and we both left the room and came out into the common open space of the office. I asked her to keep breathing. She started taking bigger and longer breaths. Very slowly started feeling better. I asked her if she would like to drink some water and walked a bit within the office space. As she did this, her composure returned.

I asked her what would she want to do now. She said she would deal with her aunt at some later point in time but for now she did not want to go back into the therapy room at all. I did not want my client to end her work with feeling helpless and weak in the face of malice. I spontaneously came up with an idea and asked her whether she would want to talk or share some more or close her session in another therapy room. She said yes. We went into another room and sat down next to each other as I knew she was very tired to stand. She told me, that in the moment she saw her aunt, she realised it with full force, how malicious and manipulative her aunt is. How she had viciously damaged their household environment over years. How she had mistreated her in small and big ways but always in those moments where no one else would be seeing. How no one could win a discussion or an argument with her as she could put everything on the other.

She realised why it felt like an impossibility to confront her aunt as she was scared that everything could be over turned.

While she was sharing all this, an idea came into my mind. I knew she would be getting married in the near future, so I said to her that in the coming future things would change and she would have the chance to create her own family environment. I asked her if she would like to create in this room a home environment that she likes and could create for herself in the future. Her face brightened slightly and she said yes. She concretised books, coffee, nature, music, a few close people, her work and quite space. After concretising this, she came back and sat next to me. Though she was tired, her body was more relaxed now. She said to me with a reassured smile “Someday I will create this for myself.” In this moment of hopefulness, we finished the drama.

It was amazing for me to observe the beautiful moments of shift in my client over the drama. Starting from realising how powerless her parents were in the entire family structure to how she took a call to not go back into the oppressive environment to creating her own home environment. It felt as if within that hour and fifteen minutes of work, my client had travelled such an expanse. Through the different valleys and hill tops, she could see her own horizon in the end.

Discussion

Role Development in Client

This drama went on for almost an hour and a half. In my client's healing journey, I think that this drama was a major turning point. A lot of progressive roles had gotten developed over the one and half years of work together and through her dramas like, the *stayer putter in the face of bullies*, the *container of intense emotions*, the *clear seer of absolute truths* and *expresser of one's voice*, the *stand taker*, the *clear knower of what she needed* and so on. All these roles not helped my client to go through this drama but also develop the roles that I am mentioning below.

Though tiring, this drama had helped her see very clearly the powerlessness in her entire family system and the origin of her fear of being manipulated. The intense prevalence of powerlessness helped her understand the extent of weakness that came up in her body. With no protection from her parents, she was always left alone and felt inadequately resourced to deal with her nasty aunt.

This was the first drama, when while confronting an oppressive and aggressive person, my client did not get any of her old coping roles of weak knees, numbing or disconnection. Though the role of weak knees and powerlessness came up when confronting her spiteful and cunning aunt but my client wasn't scared of her angry father anymore. In the face of upfront anger, she could maintain herself.

What was amazing to note for me was that at different points in the drama, the clear seer came in my client as she was being her present self. In order to see things clearly, she somehow did not need to go into the mirror position. Magically the mirror position emerged in her present self. It was beautiful for me to see this progressive integration. Both, 1) when she saw how her parents had given away their power to her aunt and uncle and 2) when she saw the extent of her aunt's wickedness, she was standing in the role of her present self. Yet both times, what she shared with me felt as if the clear seer was speaking to me.

It was also beautiful to note the clarity my client had in terms of her safety, throughout the drama. Right in the beginning, as we were contracting, she was very clear that she would leave the therapy room if it got too much. Again, during the middle of the drama, she was clear that she neither wanted to confront her aunt further on that day nor go back to the therapy room we were working in. I could see that the role of the *self-protector* had developed very well in her.

My Learnings

This drama brought out the significance of space in psychodrama once again for me. Unlike a hall where one can clear a scene or park a scene in one part of the hall and recreate something else in another part, individual therapy rooms are quite small. My spontaneous use of the common office space and another therapy room was extremely useful for my client to understand that while she was coming out of the oppressive environment of her family of origin, she was also moving towards creating a family and home environment of her own. It could make her see the future of her own creation. A future that was in a different space and free of the past completely.

The quick thinking on my part when my client refused to go back to our therapy room, helped her to complete her drama with hope. If this other therapy room would not have been empty, I am sure I would have thought of something else. But the major point of learning for me was, that the entire universe has healing energies in it and as I director whatever we can utilise for the healing of our client, starts to aid the process. As Moreno said that we are always in a relationship – and whatever we invite people, animals, things and/or spaces, they are start emanating the cosmic healing energies.

It was beautiful this transformation that my client went through from an extremely difficult past to a hopeful and beautiful future.

I am sharing this as the last drama of this series with you as I see this drama to be the climax in the 'personal power' role cluster of my client. While her journey started with freezing in the face of her own intense feelings, this drama represents a significant integration of her personal power. A drama where she could not only stay with the full intensity of her own anger, not feel trapped in her fear of the other and fully express her anger.

Drama V Fearless Confrontation with Aunt

This drama happened in the immediate week after the last one. Based on where she had decided to pause the confrontation with her aunt in the previous drama, my client felt even more motivated to have a conversation with her aunt. The clarity about the nastiness of her aunt helped her to know what she was dealing with. When she arrived, there was the same 'lets get to business' demeanour to her. I could see the new role of the determined, fearless confronter in her. She informed me that she wanted to confront her aunt in the same room where she had created her household environment. She was sure that she did not want to feel scared of her aunt any more. Listening to and observing her, I mirrored her and told her how much I loved the clarity in her. As she was very warmed up, we immediately started.

Interviewing her, I asked her what would she want to put out. She immediately looked around and went and got a cushion. This cushion represented her aunt. She put the cushion at a distance and came back to where we were sitting. (This was our unspoken contract and we went straight into a confrontation) Even before I could ask or suggest something, she looked at her aunt and started speaking to her firmly. She told her how horrid she was as a person. That how she had always been extremely malicious. Not just that, she had made sure that she always misbehaved in the absence of others. She never wished or had done well towards her and her sister. All of this was so wrong. No one had the right to treat either family or children like this. How could one not keep food for children or purposefully ensure that they are locked out of the house for hours when their parents are not around. She could now see very clearly how her aunt operated. She further told her aunt that even the way she treated her parents and oppressed them was not done. That she was a cruel, wicked and mean person and that she hated her. There was a lot of disgust on her face as she was expressing this. I was very glad that my client was expressing all this by herself without any intervention from me. She was really warmed up to this.

As my client was expressing all of this angrily to her aunt, she looked at me and said to me that she wanted to express more anger. I asked her if she would want to stand up and talk down at her aunt. Also, if she would want to throw things or beat something up. My client said she would want to try. We both stood up and I handed her a pillow which she threw on the floor with full force. For a good 3 to 4 minutes, I kept on handing over different pillows and items which were safe to throw and she kept throwing them. As she was throwing things she kept saying loudly to her aunt that she had really done a lot of wrong towards her family, that she was a wicked person. How could someone be so selfish and mean. Throughout this catharsis of abreaction I was doubling her.

After this, I noticed that my client looked tired and so I asked her if she was tired. She said yes. I asked her if she wanted to throw out some more anger or stop here. She said she wanted to continue. She kept throwing more pillows and beat them up with her hands. After another few minutes passed she said it was okay for her to stop. At this point, she was breathing very heavy and fast, so I asked her to drink some water, breathe and relax. As she drank water and started to cool down, both of us sat down quietly and I gently held her hand to caress. I knew my client had done a big piece of work today. I could see how tired she was and asked her if she would want to lie down quietly for a while. She agreed and we both cleared the stage. I informed her that I would be outside the cabin and would leave her to rest for a bit. As she lied down to rest, her body dropped down both with fatigue and relief. I knew that something big had gotten over for her. Now she was experiencing a catharsis of integration. As I gently closed the door behind me, I could see the calmness on her tired face. A silent prayer came from within me and a sense of gratitude on witnessing her peaceful calmness.

Though we went on to work for another year on a weekly basis and covered a lot of ground related to many aspects but after this drama, her relational life changed. In all her relationships with people, she was able to stay more and more authentic. She was able to draw boundaries, state categorically what she needed or did not need, could call out people, confront bullies and did not remain scared of navigating through difficult interactions.

Discussion

Role Development in Client

I feel so proud to write this discussion. Right from the beginning till the end, it was a joy to observe both the fearlessness in my client and the firmness in her expression. I experienced an individual who was fully in charge and clear about what she wanted. Not even once did any of her retrogressive roles come in at the slightest. She remained in a progressive role and maintained herself throughout the drama, thereby establishing an empowered place within herself.

She developed the role of *seer of wrong doing in close relationships*. This role along with her earlier role development of *container of one's fear* helped her develop the *caller out* role. All these put together then helped her own up and experience her own anger in its full intensity. She wasn't scared of her own anger. She knew very clearly that it was rightful anger and was equally clear about expressing it. This was also the first drama where she vented out through beating up and throwing pillows, her full-bodied anger. This developed the role of the *rightful anger owner* in her which then had a ripple effect in her life.

My Learnings

I experienced through this drama how moments of complete alignment in any person look like. When the thinking, feeling and action component in any role are completely aligned, there is such an amazing flow. As no energy is getting wasted anywhere else, both the speed and intensity of the role are amazing. The *rightful anger expressor* role in my client though

very tiring for her, felt like a piece of art to me. Though we were doing anger work, it was a so graceful and seamless.

I also realised that for Indian women, anger is the most judged emotion. The cultural conserve around women informs them to be demure, soft spoken, nurturing and kind. There is no permission for them to be angry. Everything around anger needs to be supressed because their suppression of anger is the key to a happy home environment. Yet when my client not only challenged herself, her family and the huge cultural conserve, her anger looked beautiful as it was real. It felt and looked nicer than the protocol related niceness expected from us Indian women.

I further learnt that this anger expression would not have been possible if the hundreds of smaller and bigger roles that finally enabled this, would not have developed. The one year of talk therapy and the previous four dramas with the in between sessions, built the foundation for this drama to finally happen. It made me understand in action the importance of continuous role development in clients, in me and in people in general.

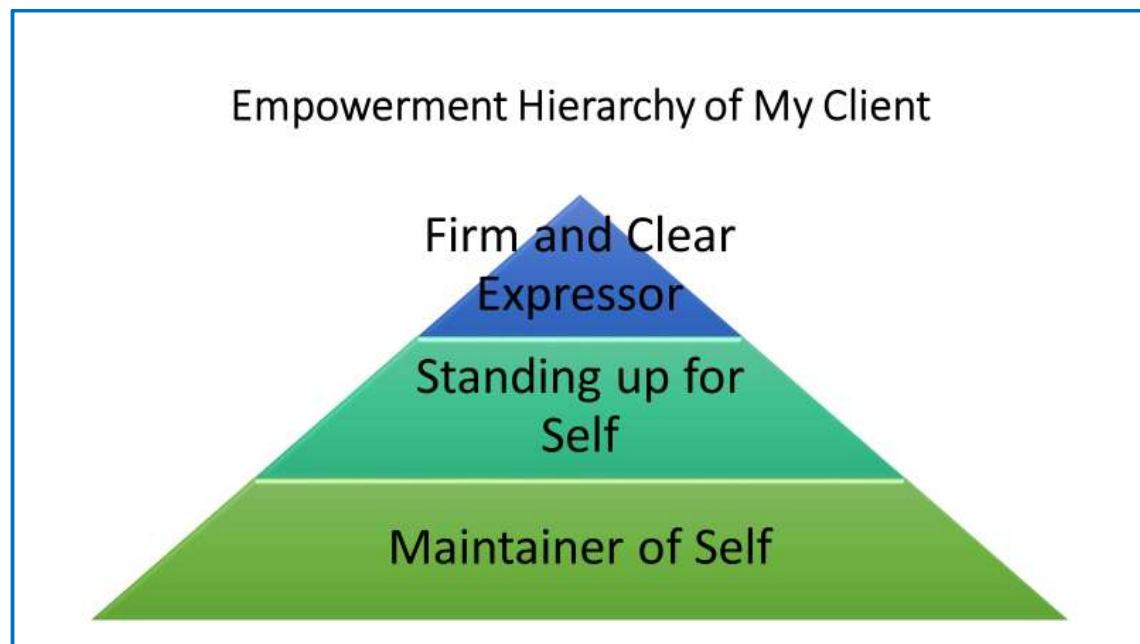
In the following discussion and conclusion section, I move on to share about the role development in my client and myself over this series of dramas.

Final Discussion

The place from where I am writing this discussion today seems like a vantage point. A point from where I can look back at the entire journey my client and I traversed together. It feels like a valley view from where I can see our starting point and relish the many progressive roles that both she and I developed as a result of each drama. We both continued to add to our respective role clusters, important roles we developed as individuals by the end of this journey. I am starting with the transformation I observed in my client, followed by my own role development.

My Client's Role Development

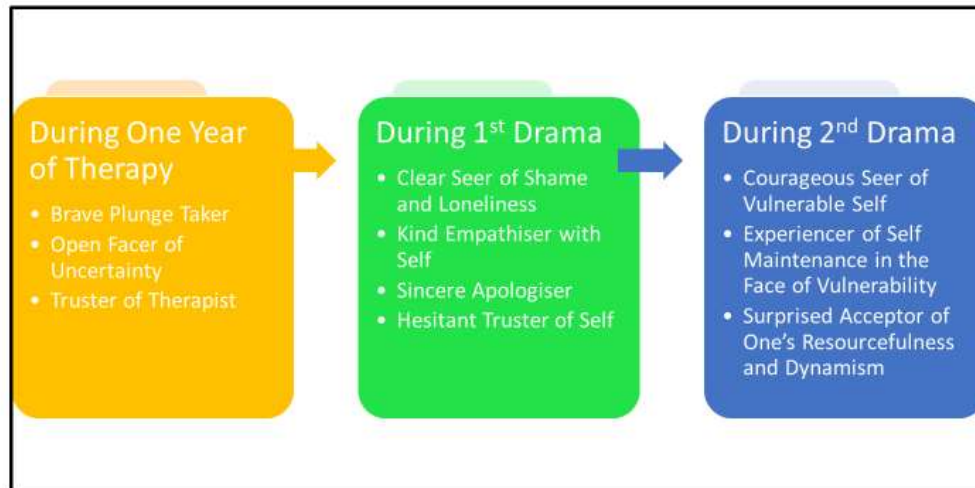
When I look at her journey, I see a theme in the endless progressive roles that emerged and developed in her. These role clusters around a single theme seem to have developed on top of each other. The diagram below shows three main themes. My client began with roles designed to help her maintain herself in the face of her own intense painful feelings. Once this cluster was adequately developed, it gave strength and supported the development of roles that helped her to confront and support herself in the face of misbehaviour and injustice. Finally, her experience in standing up for herself while being able to maintain her own safety, helped her develop several roles that enabled her to express her anger towards different people in her dramas and consequently, she found her own voice.



Within each theme, I also saw how different dramas fed into the next one and how roles that developed in each drama, set the stage and context for the next level of development.

The Development of the 'Maintainer of Self' Role Cluster

'Maintainer of Self' Role Cluster



The theme of the first role cluster is the '*Maintainer of Self in the Face of Intense Painful Feelings*'. This was not only an extremely significant role cluster but also the foundation on which the other two role clusters developed. The ability to maintain herself without getting disconnected or freezing in the face of intense fear, anger or pain, helped my client become more confirmed in her self-care abilities. As you can see in the diagram above, for this foundational role cluster to fully develop, there are a lot of small and big roles that developed on the way. Even before we began dramas together, my client had some of these roles in place due to one year of our therapeutic relationship. When we began the dramas, she was already a *brave plunger* who was okay to go into the uncertainty of what all different dramas could bring up. She also had immense trust in me allowing us to comfortably travel along in all directions.

During and after the first drama, my client realised that she was not only able to meet with her own intense shame and sense of loneliness but she was also able to empathise with her own younger self and provide her safety. It confirmed her ability for self-care. From there she was ready to meet an even more vulnerable little self. Even here, she could not only stay with this part but also realise how she had been quite resourceful and dynamic throughout her life. This furthermore confirmed her *believer in own resources* and *self-carer* roles. Armed with her newly confirmed self, my client moved into the next dramas.

The Development of the '*Standing Up for Self*' Role Cluster

'*Standing Up for Self*' Role Cluster



The '*Maintainer of Self*' role cluster gave my client a real experience that she could not only face her most painful aspects but also figure out what to do with them. This encouraged her to do the same outside and take up long pending confrontations with the different oppressive relationships of her life. The third drama gave her an experiential glimpse of the fact that though scared, she could protect and maintain herself in the face of the possibility of another's anger and still go ahead and express her own anger fully. This experience aided the development of the next role cluster - '*Standing Up for Self vis-à-vis Oppressive People*'. From this point on my client stood up for herself in the following dramas with increasingly dangerous people in her world.

The Development of the 'Firm and Clear Expresser' Role Cluster

The 'Firm and Clear Expresser of *Self*' Role Cluster



The last two dramas that I have shared in this paper show that even in the face of the most oppressive and unsafe people, my client could be in charge of her own safety, her own direction and express all that she needs to express. She experienced that she now was in control and her fear was no longer controlling her. This developed the final role cluster of 'Firm and Clear Expresser of *Self*'. This role cluster has continued to help my client in her everyday life where she is able to experience personal power in all her close relationships.

My Role Development during this Journey

Just like my client, I also developed endless roles during my work with her. The constant experience through my entire development was “Oh so this is what this psychodrama concept or principle looks and feels like in action!!”. Out of the many roles I developed, the ones I am sharing with you in these following pages are particularly important to me because through my work, they became a living reality for me.

Realiser that the Entire Crux of Psychodrama is ‘Relationship’



(Working Together in a Tele)

I have not only heard this phrase ‘psychodrama is about relationships’ from my trainer and supervisor Sue Daniel numerous times but I have also read about it. Till I went on this journey of reflecting about my work with my client, I had never registered the full intensity of it. After every drama, when I reflected on what I did in a particular drama, the techniques I used, the interventions I made, the production calls I took, every single one of them came from my relationship with my client and how attuned I was to her.

Endless roles came up in me while directing my client like the *Creative User of Glass Partitions*, *Spontaneous Chooser of Therapy Cabins*, *Asker of “Is your little self just one fixed entity?”*, *Guider towards the Mirror Position*, *Firm Holder of My Client’s Body at Different Points* - my list can just go on and on. Most important was the realisation that none of the roles that came up in me, came up in isolation. In fact all of them came up in me in response to the roles in my client. Even as I am sharing this with you, I am feeling such a deep sense of connection with my client. I am also experiencing an overwhelming happiness at having finally realised what relationship as a living reality means. If my client and me did not have this solid tele as I have portrayed in the picture above, our work together could not have happened!!

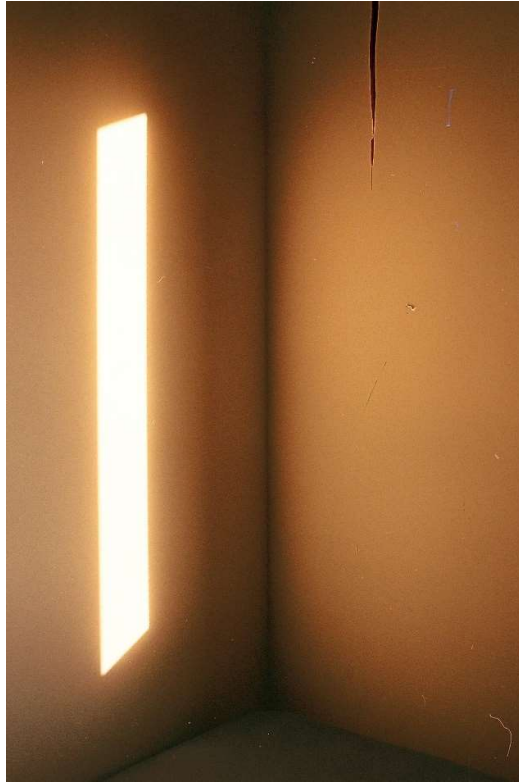
Spontaneous Producer



(Everything in the Universe has Healing Capacity)

When I look back my entire directing, I can see that throughout I was in a flow. All the production calls I took were intuitively informed from the client. My use of Common Office Spaces, Cabins, Glass Partitions which weren't officially the props arranged for our work, showed me that when I was allowing myself to simply flow with my client, I could use anything and everything for healing. Just like this picture, I feel as if healing is everywhere in the universe simply waiting to be tapped into. I learnt again in action, that in order to be a well-developed director, I need to be open and ready to use everything that is available, instead of focusing on the right kinds of props or other arrangements. If I simply observe my surroundings and use all that is, every entity becomes a healing agent.

Awestruck Observer of My Client Taking Charge and Lead in Her Drama



(The Clear Empowered In Charge)

Another major realisation for me in action was that as I managed to stay in the *Attuned Warm Companion* role, my client simply followed her inner direction and did all the work she needed to do. Starting from this place where felt unsure in the face of intense feelings, my client not only developed roles for self-protection but became more and more confirmed in herself. As this confirmation increased, she naturally started taking a greater lead in her dramas and very often what I had to do was not to get in the way. Towards the later dramas, where I simply needed to intervene in few places, my trusting presence made her take greater charge of her own direction. She was like the stripe of light in the picture above, started beaming with bright inner light and self-assuredness. While I, like the adjoining wall became the *Joyful Celebrator of her Clarity*. This beam also represents moments I saw in her dramas where the thinking, feeling and action components of her 'Clear In-Charge' role were fully in alignment.

Realiser of Effect of Indian Cultural Conserve around Expression of Anger



(The Lock Up of Cultural Conserves)

The amount of time and effort it took for my client to confront the oppressive people in her life and express her anger to them, made me realise the effect of cultural conserves. The various roles my client had to develop in order to reach this place, made me realise that this role repertoire itself was almost absent or negligibly developed. I realised that despite education and awareness, how strongly this Indian cultural conserve around expression of anger impacted my client. It is almost like a role cluster of 'No's. An Indian woman can't have a voice, an Indian woman can't express anger, an Indian woman can't express her views to elders as it is seen as disrespect, an Indian woman can't raise her voice, an Indian woman can't disobey her elders. All these are called '*Maryada*', a word in Hindi meaning a line of appropriate behaviour. If she crosses any of these lines, there would be dire consequences. I realised that all lines that are not to be crossed are so deeply entrenched in us and in her, that had she not done these dramas, I don't believe that only awareness and financial self-sufficiency alone would have helped her to cross these over. I experienced the power of cultural conserves in action. Before these dramas, I had never realised how strongly they could pull back or as reflected in the picture above, lock up a person.

Conclusion



(Divinity Within and Around)

In conclusion, I would like to say that I feel immense gratitude for the journey me and my client travelled together. From the first time I met psychodrama, I have been in love and awe of it. But this journey with my client has awakened me very intensely to the potency of psychodrama. After the entire journey, my client transformed from being someone who froze in fear to begin with into someone who powerfully claimed her rights. She became an empowered person who not only healed during the sessions but carried the role development into the living reality of her life and ensured rightful respect for herself in relationships. This huge range of transformation in my client makes me bow in awe to psychodrama!!

Furthermore, these dramas, woke me up in a distinct way towards the principles of relationships and space in psychodrama. In action I learnt that if I remain open as a director and allow myself to be attuned to both my client and my immediate surroundings, magic happens!! During these dramas, on one end, as an empathic companion I allowed my tele with my client to guide my production calls and directorial interventions. On the other end, as I remained in relationship with our immediate surroundings, every space and everything around me became a channel of the universal healing energy. In these moments when I became a connector between the leads from my client and the universal healing energy in everything, I experienced divinity. Just like the picture above, everything within me and around me came to life!! Till the end of my lifetime, I see myself as being a psychodramatist and psychodrama trainer. I know from this work that this path in life I have chosen is not just for all the clients and trainees, but for me too. It is precisely in these multitudes of relationships that I will and they will experience the magic of psychodrama together!! Just like I experienced divinity, my client too, due to psychodrama, transformed into this confirmed and empowered person who has since then gone out into the world and created relationships that are full of mutual respect!!