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#### PSYCHODRAMA ACTIVITY

#### Doubling; Role Reversal

*My Getaway*

* Aims: - to make students have relaxed conversation;

- to give students the opportunity to contribute to the class with their own experience;

-to encourage positive communication;

-to have weaker students repeat items of language.

* Focus: describing people’s positive experience; describing people.
* Level: intermediate and above.
* Time: 50 minutes (one class)
* Preparation : props: things around the classroom, scarves, hats, jackets, sticks, cushions etc.
* Procedure:

1. **The warm-up**: The participants are asked to step on the stage one behind the other and form a train. The first of the students is the engine. The engine sets off and imprints a certain movement (flaps arms, moves the head in a certain way, hops) that the rest of the students have to copy. Once everybody has copied and executed the movement, the first student in line, who has been the engine, moves to the back of the line and the next engine sets a new movement for the participants to copy. The exercise repeats until each student has been the engine and everybody has copied their action.

The students are invited to lie/sit down on the stage floor to relax, in total silence; they breathe deeply in and out with their eyes closed. The teacher asks them to imagine they are on a train. The teacher/director asks a set of questions each of the students answer in their minds: “What sort of a train is it?”; “Is it a fast, modern train?”: “Is it old and slow?”: “Are you enjoying your ride?” etc. The teacher announces that they have reached their destination and that they are ready to get off the train. The students exercise their creativity and are guided by the director on an imaginary journey, to a place of their own, in which they meet someone they know: “You now get off the train. You have your luggage in your hand. You step on the platform. You look around. What is it that you see? Can you sense any smells? Are there any other people? Is the place crowded? Do you recognize anyone? Wait… Yes! There is someone you know… Are they expecting you? Are you surprised to see them? I want you to open come back to the classroom now and open your eyes.

By this time there will have been at least a few students eager to expose their story to the rest of the group. There is a negotiation between students and teacher and the protagonist for the activity is chosen.

1. **The action**: The protagonist goes onto the stage and uses props to create the scene he/she has imagined: scarves, cushions, boxes, sticks. As he/she arranges the scene, the protagonist describes who and where he/she is, what he/she can see around, the smells and noises that surround him/her. The protagonist is supported with questions by the director who is standing outside the scene: Who are you? How old are you? Where are you? Describe what you can see! Look around! Is there anyone else there?

The protagonist introduces the other character in his/her scene. At this point, the protagonist invites one student from the audience onto the stage and assigns the role of the other character in his/her story. The auxiliary, the new character, is given a distinctive mark – a hat, a jacket, a moustache – as representative, according to the protagonist, for the particular person. The protagonist becomes the director of his/her own scene and instructs the other character about what is going to happen in the scene.

In order to clarify what the relationship between the two characters is, the director interrupts the scene and asks the two characters to reverse roles. The protagonist takes up the distinctive mark of the other character and becomes the other character in his/her story. He/she is invited to sit on a chair on the stage. The other character steps off the stage and watches from aside, along with the rest of the audience as the protagonist is asked a set of questions that only the people involved would know what to answer: e.g.: Who are you? How old are you? How long have known X? How would you describe the relationship you have with X? Why are you here? Etc. The director draws attention to the students in the audience to try to remember as many answers as possible, as they will need the information later on during the activity. After having answered all the director’s questions, the characters reverse roles again. The auxiliary comes onto the stage, takes the representative mark and becomes the previous character again. He/she sits on the chair to tell the audience about him/herself and the relationship he/she has with the protagonist. The protagonist will watch the scene from aside.

In order to provide as many details as possible, the auxiliary is asked to choose a double from the audience to stand behind him/her to support his/her speech. It is important to allow the auxiliary choose their doubles. He/ She will either choose one student he/she is close to or someone who is a better speaker, to act as a linguistic double. The auxiliary will start: My name is......,I am........years old, I have known X for............ Whenever the auxiliary pauses or cannot find the right words, the double provides more information and the auxiliary simply repeats whatever the double has uttered. If the double stumbles too, the auxiliary will invite a second double from the audience to come onto the stage and so on. The more complex the interview has been, the more information was offered about the characters, the more doubles the auxiliary will need.

Once the relationship between the characters is set, the protagonist will return onto the stage to go on with the story of his/her encounter with the other character. The story can be interrupted by the protagonist and he/she can ask to reverse roles again in order to exemplify.

1. **The sharing**: The protagonist and the auxiliary return to the audience and discussions about what has been going on follow. They provide an opportunity to de-role, too. One technique of de-roling used in psychodrama is for the auxiliary egos or the doubles to say:”One, two, three, I am me!”. The sharing offers the protagonist the opportunity for closure.

The discussions must not denaturise into a trial of the protagonist and they should be conducted towards processing, identifying with the characters, elements and the situation enacted on the stage. The sharing must not about giving advice about what could have been orabout analysing the protagonist’s psychodrama. The director is the one who makes sure that the vulnerability of the protagonist is protected from any judgement on the part of the audience.