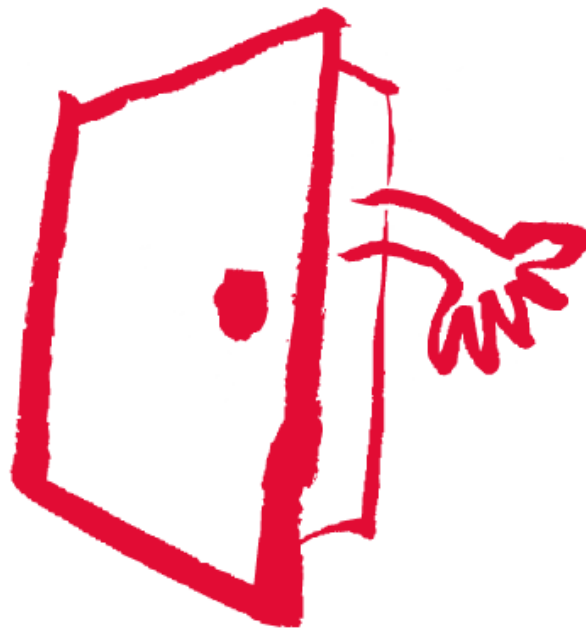


SOCIODRAMA THEORY AND PRACTICE

Capella Activity Handbook



Jos Razzell

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INTRODUCTION

Capella and sociodrama

Capella is a community association which promotes the development and use of sociodramatic action methods by facilitators, coaches, leaders and trainers. We run training programmes to learn how to use sociodrama methods, and support trainee and practitioner peer learning opportunities (action learning sets) to further develop applied skills and practice.

Sociodrama is used internationally in a wide range of contexts, both organisational and therapeutic. At Capella we are passionate about spreading awareness and use of sociodrama and action methods in the UK. We know from our own experience how effective and transformational these approaches are, with any people, in any context. Our practitioners work across a wide range of contexts, from helping senior corporate leaders shape the future of their organisations to supporting teenagers in making choices and taking positive action.

What is sociodrama?

Sociodrama was developed by JL Moreno as a primary method in his theory of interpersonal relationships. Moreno believed in the fundamental importance of spontaneity and creativity in facilitating human connection. His vision was to establish creative spaces where groups and individuals could use storytelling and drama techniques to investigate and re-shape collective stories, solve problems and heal trauma. He called this a sociodramatic or action methods approach as it's about moving, making connections, telling stories and looking at the world from different points of view.

Moreno's work on sociodrama can be seen through four key perceptual frames. Firstly, an awareness of roles — which may include personal, social or even archetypal roles — and how they frame individual or group experiences. Secondly, a curiosity about the inter-relationship of individuals and systems and a commitment to actively explore the inner structures or sociometry of groups, surfacing information that might be useful for personal and group development. Thirdly, how stories — both those we tell ourselves and those we tell others — allow us to access our spontaneity and creativity, helping us to engage and forge deep connections with others, as well as building a strong sense of collective purpose. And fourthly, the importance of giving symbolic form to relationships, feelings or situations through the use of objects and space. Moreno advocated that by physicalising or making tangible abstract perceptions, individuals and groups could more easily reflect on possible solutions to problems and gain deeper insights about seemingly intractable issues.

Sociodramatic work emphasises the qualities of warmth, spontaneity, creativity, empathy and truth. It is the facilitator/sociodrama director's task to

‘hold the space’ and ensure that a group or individual is suitably ‘warmed up’ to work in this creative, spontaneous and imaginative way. The director negotiates a focus that addresses the present needs of the individual or group, using their own spontaneity and creativity to help release the unique creativity and intuition in others.

All sociodramatic work is conducted from a place of trust and belief in others. Evidence shows that other people’s unspoken negative beliefs and assumptions about what you are capable of makes a direct impact on your progress and achievement. This of course works in reverse, so by showing you believe in the potential of those around you, you are becoming a powerful force for positive change. If we are to help make positive change it is important to help people see their full potential and believe in the very best versions of themselves and their work.

What is it like to work sociodramatically?

Sociodrama is highly kinaesthetic and participative. It frequently involves movement along with other people in a group, so people are up on their feet much of the time, instead of sitting at tables in static relationship to one another. This creates a different orientation and focus in the way tasks are approached. By engaging imaginatively through physical concretisation and storytelling, participants connect with each other in a more immersive way, activating many more parts of their brains (especially right hemispheric processes), allowing creative and spontaneous solutions to naturally emerge.

The importance of brain states

When we access a state of deep connection with ourselves, others and the world around us, we feel more peaceful, alert, purposeful and alive. Problem solving becomes easier, solutions present themselves intuitively and collaboration flows. Working in this way allows individuals to drop the frequency of their brainwaves from a beta to an alpha state, helping them to access a state of ‘flow’. In this state of flow we can feel simultaneously more relaxed and more alert and perceptive. In this way remarkable things can be achieved.



This handbook

This handbook explains the core skills and perspectives which underpin action methods and sociodrama: storytelling, role development, concretisation and sociometry (the investigation of personal, group and systemic beliefs, approaches and relationships). It also describes key activities and techniques, for use in both pre-designed sessions and more spontaneous work with groups and individuals.

In today’s world, with its fast pace of change and high levels of uncertainty and anxiety, developing the means to help people have powerful experiences

of choice and control is more important than ever. The insight and practical techniques offered here will help you support people to make positive and productive change, on either an individual, group or organisational level.

Sociodrama and action methods build empathy, teach groups and teams to trust their intuition and unconscious problem solving abilities and shift long-embedded inner 'blockers' to create lasting change - often in a short space of time. Our human brains are naturally hard-wired for narrative: sociodrama's powerful storytelling methods work with this innate ability to enable people to unlock and retell self-stories, imagine themselves into new identities or points of view and access unconscious solutions to problems.

If you're interested in what you've read so far, and would like a copy of this handbook, please contact jos@capellaworks.com to order your copy for £5 + £2 postage.