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Role-Playing (Psychodrama) in the Social Rehabilitation of Juveniles

Abstract: The article discusses the term of psychodrama in the aspect of the social rehabilitation process of juveniles. An important area of considerations is noting the most effective form of work in the modification of socially desirable behavior. Moreover, the identification and wider discussion of the aspect of psychodrama interaction indicates the emotional, therapeutic, and above all correctional dimension, so desired in the social rehabilitation of juveniles.

Key words: role-playing, psychodrama, resocialization, juvenile, therapy.

Introduction

Contemporary problems of children and youth, particularly affected by the process of social rehabilitation, are a very difficult and sometimes complicated area of psychological and pedagogical interactions. For this reason, but regardless of disturbances and sources of life dilemmas of juveniles, many therapists are looking for the ideal corrective solution. There are many activities supporting the social rehabilitation procedure, however, the most effective may include psychodrama.

The term “psychodrama” comes from the Greek word “psyche” (soul/spirit) and “drama” (action), which means the presentation of the soul in action. The classic psychodrama today is seen as a method of psychotherapy, in which potential participants are encouraged to continue their activities through dramatization, role play and dramatic self-presentation (Kedem-Tahar, Kellermann 1996, p. 28).

On the other hand, according to the *Dictionary of Foreign Words*, psychodrama is a method of diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, which consists in expressing feelings and conflicts of patients in the form of improvised scenes, in which patients take an active part together with the therapist (Dictionary of words 1999).

Psychodrama is considered one of the most important auxiliary methods in group psychotherapy. Its task is to create psychodrama scenes through which abreaction takes place and ultimately achieving corrective emotional experiences (cf. Grzesiuk 2000; Stankiewicz, Tomczak 2012 and others).

Due to the wide range of effects, psychodrama is most commonly used in group work. As pointed out by Stanislav Kratochvil (1988, p. 178), the use of this method in group psychotherapy takes place when there is a need expose ulterior motives and desires. It creates the opportunity to try different ways of solving specific and problematic situations for the patient. This method provides quick and precise access to the problem that arose in a person's life and trying and practicing alternative forms of their behaviors (Kratochvil 1988, p. 178).

One could say that psychodrama therapy should be considered in terms of social learning, but also using it in the correction of disorders and modification of behaviors of juveniles. It should be noted, however, that quite often psychodrama is identified as a method to help the process of social rehabilitation (cf. Konopczyński 1996; Czerkawski 2006; Florczykiewicz 2010; Motow 2013 and others).

Psychodrama and social rehabilitation of juveniles

The issue of social rehabilitation of juveniles is considered in the context of implementing therapeutic and prophylactic measures; it aims to create personal development, recognize the values of social order and human freedom associated with it. "Paradoxically (considering the fact that a significant part of social rehabilitation procedures are carried out in closed facilities), one of the most important values of social rehabilitation is freedom. It constitutes the final value of human life, autotelic, and at the same time it is a means of realizing other values and goods (satisfying everyday needs and creating culture)" (Jaworska 2012, pp. 25–26). Hence, the process of repeat socialization of minors requires a specific psychotherapeutic approach, so that the effectiveness and durability of personality changes achieved had their impact on the functional part of their lives. However, it should be noted, after Robert Opora, that in many cases, juveniles do not have "properly developed mechanisms of inner control, therefore, they experience serious decision-making problems in situations of temptation, they do not show appropriate emotional responses in a situation of breaching legal or social norms" (Opora 2008, p. 261). In addition, the author notes quite an important issue concerning treatment itself of minors, which should be focused

on organizing such a situation so that young people can experience success and socially desirable behavior.

In reference to the above observations, one can assume, after Irena Motow (2013, p. 2) that “it’s easiest to observe the effectiveness of social rehabilitation in the area of behavior modification. It is a kind of training of normal standards of behavior, without the need to change attitudes or beliefs of the individual”.

Researchers of this issue, however, emphasize that “classical forms of interaction on minors in institutional environments and natural environments, are scarcely constructive and inefficient, which is why new roads should be sought to reach the consciousness and emotional sphere of difficult, unadapted and criminal youth. These roads should be attractive, catch the eye and not very complicated. One of such roads turns out to be creative social rehabilitation, the essence of which is an attempt to show that the identity of the young deviant person can be changed in a different manner from established routines of social rehabilitation” (Szajek 2012, p. 20). Corrective therapy – creative, it is in fact becoming a more and more accepted form of re-educational interaction, both in the individual’s work, and group work, and psychodrama meets all these criteria.

Individual and group interaction of psychodrama on a socially rehabilitated person is positive in that in most cases it is a game without specific instructions for elements or structure. Thanks to these determinants it is definitely easier to encourage potential participants not only to classes, but primarily to relative and full participation. Unfortunately this is not an easy task, particularly early on in therapy, because not every socially rehabilitated individual is ready to enter the played roles.

Psychodrama as a method examines human behavior, which in the initial process of therapy is often illegible due to the lack of skills in expressing oneself naturally. According to some authors (Grzesiuk 2000; Sikorski 2002; Konopczyński 2006; Opora 2010 and others), psychodrama is not only the procedure introducing into a role, but also has a strong impact on changes of human attitudes and aspirations. The interaction of this kind of therapy in socially rehabilitated juveniles very often tends to reveal positive values instilled in the past (if any), and also for their innovative discovery by oneself during therapy. The correctness of natural and socially acceptable behaviors then becomes more easily digestible. Hence, the rules of the social rehabilitation proceeding start to make sense, since the joint actions of groups refer not only to observations, but also to inner feelings.

Thanks to psychodrama we can arrange many situations recognized by the social communities. Joanna Moczydłowska (2000) believes that the elements of psychodrama in the therapy of juveniles teach to express positive experiences, but are also helpful in observing disclosed psychological needs, such as: acceptance, a way of expressing oneself, recognition, etc. On the other hand, Tomasz Stołowski (2006, p. 41) highlights that despite the observable in socially rehabilitated

people low level of trust, social and emotional immaturity, aggression, revenge behaviors, reduced ability to control conduct, low level of empathy in relation to that declared previously – fear appears, often unjustified, and the resulting from the individual's conflict with social norms.

Hence “the possibility of spontaneous preset role-playing gives many opportunities to work through one's own attitudes, emotions and problems. It provides a lot of information about oneself. It allows the manifestation of hidden, sometimes unconscious emotions. It allows one to get to know oneself, boosts creativity and broadens life activity” (Turaj 2002, p. 1). It is these qualities, desirable in the process of social rehabilitation, have a much greater chance for putting into practice and conscious perception of social expectations in the process of discovering one's own inadequacies and their causes. Thanks to such activities, changing life attitude is often a matter of time, however, one cannot be sure of broadening the repertoire of desirable behaviors, because we do not fully understand the extent to which the family and social environment will have an impact on the socially rehabilitated individual at the end of corrective measures.

In social rehabilitation therapy, it is assumed that the difficult behaviors of children and youth have their psychological background. They are often accompanied by unpleasant emotions such as: fear, guilt, anxiety, rage, anger, loneliness and specific, mostly negative, cognitive judgments about the person. They are the result of one's past experiences or currently difficult emotional states, deprivation or less satisfying relations with loved ones. Fear of failure leads to isolation, lack of trust, and the final result is internal defense against emotional sensations and the emotions of others. Such a person looks for self-assertion, often violating the rights of others or displaying hostile behavior towards oneself or the environment (Sawicka 1998). On the other hand, the basis of social adaptation disorders, as emphasized by Janina Florczykiewicz (2009, p. 275) may be a biological (constitutional or functional), psychological and social; however, whatever the source, they usually manifest themselves in behaviors inconsistent with the social standards, in this sense constituting deviation from the norm, i.e. a medical condition (social pathology).

Thinking of social rehabilitation in terms of therapy is included in the position represented by Lesław Pytka, as the author suggests the perception of social rehabilitation in terms of a process (variety) of social recovery (Florczykiewicz 2009, p. 277). In these circumstances, the role of psychodrama can be considered helpful, which through its therapeutic role creates the conditions for attenuating negative interference with the psychological and social functioning of the juvenile.

The growing interest in psychocorrective work in social rehabilitation of minors can be considered highly successful, as the changes occurring in a person, such as the development of spontaneity, empathizing with the role of other people or discovering their attitude towards loved ones and understanding others, are

characteristics creating the correct perception of human reality, especially important for socially rehabilitated people (cf. Opora 2010; Pospiszyl 2012; Ostrowska 2013).

In the psychodrama, like in Freudian therapy, there is a difficult both for the therapist and the patient moment at which a person subjected to therapy begins to mobilize all defense mechanisms. The resistance they show is contradictory to their conscious attitude. For participants of therapy using the method of psychodrama the most important are three elements:

1. Emotional abreaction, release from pressure and excitement, “cleansing passion”, which is a cathartic moment.
2. Finding in one’s story raised to the rank of a myth – in a theme around which action takes place, and understanding of the symbolic meaning of different situations.
3. Empathizing with the situation of persons whose role is being played, which results in a better understanding of others (Smarz 2002).

The psychodrama session mostly takes place in three stages. It begins with a warm-up designed to encourage spontaneity and relaxation of the atmosphere in the group. For this purpose, there are various pantomime, imaginative and dance techniques. Then we move to the preparation stage consisting in establishing an important and current issue for the group. Participants of psychodrama must know the purpose it serves. The actual psychodramatic game is work on the presented problems of the group or its individual members. The next step is a discussion (Stankiewicz, Tomczak 2012, p. 17–18).

By analyzing psychodrama according to Jacob Moreno, in social rehabilitation work we can notice that the effect of these activities, and also its main objective, is to broaden the repertoire of social roles. Moreover, at a later time, a freer expression or evident strengthening of one’s own identity is often revealed. The observed therapeutic effects for people involved in psychodrama are:

- a) greater understanding of their feelings and emotional conflicts;
- b) increase in motivation to work;
- c) reduction of the negative symptoms;
- d) attempting to transfer corrective experiences from the group into one’s own life¹.

Therefore, in the therapy according to Moreno, one can discern many positive aspects of corrective interaction, also on socially rehabilitated individuals. He believed that the trauma that people experience mainly in childhood cause powerlessness, helplessness and in this way spontaneity of response is inhibited, which is a condition of mental health. Lack of spontaneity expressed in creativity brings up rigid structures and inadequate behaviors, which Moreno called the pathological role (Sikorski 2002, p. 45). Assuming, therefore, that the socially

¹ Ambulatorium terapii i rehabilitacji psychoz – grupa psychodramatyczna www.terapia-schizofrenii.krakow.pl/TERAPIA/.../AmbulatoriumPl.html > [access: 27.01.2014].

rehabilitated person, when subjected to therapy comes in contact with reality, where two separate, opposing principles of the typological identification of good and evil start to interact, then being free from fear and life helplessness causes dissonance of feelings and the possibility of unconstrained choice of one of the roads. This dualism of experiences played out manifests new possibilities of the individual's functioning, which are often forced from the subconscious as unattainable.

It is worth noting after Kleopatra Psarraki (2006) that by psychodrama one seeks to explore both early trauma experiences and methods of affecting life. The opportunity to study the inner world of hidden emotions, repressed memories, allows a person to acquire better knowledge of themselves and the roles they play in their life. This also gives the opportunity to experiment with new ways of being, especially when the script of the psychodrama presents an event that is to happen (Psarraki 2006). Therefore, the question arises whether psychodrama, as a psychotherapy method, can be an effective way of working with young socially rehabilitated people? It is difficult to give a definite answer due to the high relativity of therapeutic activities. However, in this case, we notice that freedom of action and perception of what the protagonist presents in many cases concerns patients themselves (cf. Galińska 2004, p. 17–28). It is through psychodrama that they find their confusion, often understanding the reason for its inception. They feel responsible for words, gestures and actions that correspond with the fates of participants, sometimes imaginative, but possible to exist in the real reality. Emotionality of psychodrama is sometimes a genuine reflection of human lives that we can play in many ways. The verifiability of the situation correlates with commitment and creativity of the protagonist, but it is not detached from the action of the group, or even an antagonistic approach of another recipient (cf. Konopczyński 1996; Kedem-Tahar, Kellermann 1996; Puszka 2008; Szajek 2012; Stankiewicz, Tomczak 2012 and others).

One could say that this created reality of spontaneous psychodrama very often shows the world that most socially rehabilitated people refer to with a distance – often with a negative emotional attitude. Very often these pejorative emotions do not allow them to realize their real participation. Therefore, in social rehabilitation, whose main task is to correct defective behaviors and disturbed social attitudes, the method of psychodrama may affect not only the change of personality, but is able to develop the ability to understand others and the right approach to life.

In many cases, socially rehabilitated youth begins psychodrama therapy while under the influence of adverse situations in life, emotions, resulting very often from incomprehensible circumstances that decided about their fate. It sometimes happens that psychodrama is introduced individually, so that entering a group does not have a negative impact on deepening destructive behaviors or feelings. In analyzing literature on the subject, we also notice that individual therapy refers

to closed people, experiencing deep trauma in life, as well as for those who are burdened with social deprivation (Pospiszyl 1998).

The educational advantages of psychodrama result from an arranged situation, but the “corrective function, which results in the development (creation) of creative personality plays in education equally important functions: corrective (repair) and prophylactic (preventive)” (Górski 1984, p. 57). Educational correction refers to the removal of psychosocial disorders of the development of adolescents, and its effectiveness depends on respecting the principles and mechanisms of psychotherapy in this proceeding. Whereas prevention is to prevent using psychotherapeutic methods various system dysfunctions and deviations of the educational process (Górski 1984, p. 57).

When speaking about the correction process, it should be emphasized that in psychodrama we distinguish the existing rules for all participants:

- principle of variability of scenes;
- principle of realism of scenes;
- principle of functionality of scenes;
- principle of spontaneity of scenes;
- principle of continuity and integrity of scenes;
- principle of integration;
- principle of informality;
- principle of democracy;
- principle of sociometric group analysis;
- principle of stability and commonality of the psychodramatic field (Szełąg 2006).

The process of creating and “reconstructing” personality corresponding to the principles of psychodrama very often encounters externally and internally varied complications, independent of the environment. Most often they concern the same individual, their development and understanding the surrounding reality (Nagorno 1984, p. 83).

Human nature and its complexity stems from the obvious rules of development and progress, but for many reasons it is not easy to initiate within the correction of behavior, especially among socially rehabilitated adolescents. The reasons for the difficulties of a proper “fitting” of social rehabilitation methods to the psyche of charges stem from two main sources:

- the complexity of human nature does not allow to determine precisely what individuals exhibit susceptibility to social rehabilitation “in general” and which do not; nor does it allow to answer the question whether there exist such types of derailed mental people, who are “influenced” only by method of social rehabilitation interactions, and others are not;
- difficulty in classifying various methods of social rehabilitation interaction in terms of their effectiveness (Pospiszyl 1998, p. 150–151).

Referring to the observations of the author it can be noted that the proposed concept draws attention to the important issue concerning the adaptation of a specific therapy not only to the disturbances of the juvenile individual, but also to the same person. In the case of psychodrama the importance of a problem is very often decided by the group, therapist, and indirectly the immediate family, which after all should show interest in progress of psychotherapy. In addition, a considerable indicator of educational progress is the willingness to participate in psychodrama therapy. One can even believe that the understanding of the situation and the purpose to which one is heading is crucial for the further fate of the young, socially rehabilitated person.

In the context of this problem it is worth noting that the heterogeneous standards of methods and therapeutic techniques that can be incorporated into the treatment of juveniles assume that an individual subject to these types of classes has certain expectations and satisfying them is not easy (cf. Sikorski 1995; Konopczyński 1996; Bartkiewicz 2001; Czerkawski 2003 and others). In terms of psychodrama there is the possibility of dealing with the past, because, as noted by Pytko (2000 p. 346), for many juveniles, crime appeared as a form of life adaptation, as an attempt to adapt to highly complex and intricate social situations. It is this relationship that puts psychodrama at the forefront of social rehabilitation methods. Thanks to it, the participant may even become an antagonist and “create a role, in which he is able to better understand both their behavior and the person they believe is responsible for their suffering. By confronting them in simulated conditions of psychodrama they can verify their position, more rationally assess the actual participation of these people in losing their own integrity, experienced failures, etc.” (Sikorski, 2002, p. 314).

Summary

In assessing psychodrama as one of the most effective methods of social rehabilitation one may ask whether it guarantees a change in the individual's views, as well as a positive in social understanding activation of a juvenile after completing the therapy. The answer could be the observations of Joanna Szajek (2012, p. 20), who notes that research and studies of some authors (Konopczyński, Urban, Stanik, Konieczna, Szulc), suggest that the method of creative social rehabilitation to a significant extent enriches and facilitates the process of social rehabilitation of juveniles. In contrast, Elżbieta Bocheńska-Schjetne (2007) notes the possibility of rebuilding social courage, thanks to which false, previously existing authorities begin to lose meaning. It is this courage, as a factor mobilizing a young person to formulate new goals and attempt to realize dreams previously unattainable, in which blockages have occurred and both reluctance and fear of changes lock has rooted, that becomes the target means in therapy (Bocheńska-Schjetne 2007). So we can say that

the changes taking place in human personality become in part a guarantee of an attempt at evolving the current lifestyles and once again, fully existing in society.

From the point of view of the theory of social rehabilitation, but also other scientific disciplines cooperating in the treatment of minors, we note that there are many indications of beneficial effects of psychodrama on socially rehabilitated individuals. Justifiable are also the opinions of cited authors stressing that every attempt to introduce a person thus far unadapted into the world of social norms, is nothing other than extending the repertoire of behaviors that are relatively harmonized with the experienced situation. It is these circumstances that offer an opportunity not only to change themselves, but also their attitudes and behavior.

The method of psychodrama used in modern therapy of socially rehabilitated youth, regardless of what period they are introduced, produces positive results in most people. However, we can have hope that the transformation made in a person is permanent, although this is not always possible. It depends on the social environment, the family, which in all its diversity can end the therapy work in both the positive and negative sense.

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