AGPA Connect 2025

San Francisco
Turbulent Times: Using Groups to Overcome Divisions and Foster Engagement

Healing Divisions Through Reflective Citizens and Theater

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www.GAPDallas.com

Reflective Citizens groups developed in the Balkans to heal ethnic divisions. After a dramatic presentation from the *Vagina Monologues* you will be invited to share your dreams, reflect in small and large group, and apply your learning to your local situation. We will use the Reflective Citizens methodology to move from monologue to dialogue and hopefully to true discourse in service of healing the divisions that span male and female, LGBQ+, rich and poor, and the panoply of racial divides.

Learning Objectives

- Identify 2 ways in which theater can be used to inform the ways in which we work with challenging topics around gender.
- Experience the emergence of the social unconscious in the Social Dreaming Matrix and apply that material to small group conversations
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- Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between community outreach groups and therapy groups.
- Analyze their own resistance to embracing their authority to lead the effort for community healing.
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Dr. Sabar Rustomjee (2012). The Creativity of Social Dreaming. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 62,* 157-160

Mojović, M. (2022). Thinking Together in Reflective Citizens -Transforming Social-PsychicRetreats. In M. Ringer, R. Gordon, B. Vandenbussche (Eds.). *The collective spark: Igniting thinking in groups teams and the wider world*. Gent, Belgium: Grafische Cel. 211-22

Group Analytic Practice of Dallas—Collaborative Theater Events

www.GAPDallas.com

We began our relationship with local theater companies by inviting psychiatric residents and PhD clinical psychology students to summer productions of Shakespeare in the Park. ***The Taming of the Shrew***, ***Winter's Tale***, and ***As You Like*** were the featured plays beginning in 2003.

We worked with the Dallas Theater Center. All the events below were done in cooperation with the Dallas Theater Center. ***The Fannie Lou Hamer*** play was done at the Bishop Arts Theater in association with the Dallas Theater Center.

2024 After watching ***The Life and Music of Fannie Lou Hame***r we convened a social dreaming matrix and then had a small group where we discussed what had arisen in the dreams and in the play. See page 8 of the Playbill below for a full explanation.

http://www.gapdallas.com/images/Fannie%20Playbill2.pdf

2024 After watching ***Every Brilliant Thing,*** a play about suicide, we convened a social dreaming matrix and then broke into small groups with the actors and director to discuss *Theater as Anecdote: Depression and Suicide*.

http://www.gapdallas.com/images/depression-and-suicide-theater-as-antidote.pdf

2017 The morning after watching Sophocles' ***Electra*** we convened a social dreaming matrix and convened a median group to discuss the themes of mothers and daughters with Electra (the daughter) and Clytemnestra (the mother). We focused the discussion on victims, vengefulness, forgiveness and justice and their dynamics in psychotherapy.

http://www.gapdallas.com/images/Electra%20Program%20(5).pdf

2014 We took Sherry Wickman, a character out of ***Tigers be Still***, and had her come to an initial interview with a CBT therapist and a psychoanalyst. The interviews were back-to-back in front of an audience and were followed by a discussion focused on values and ethics when considering alternative psychotherapies.

http://www.gapdallas.com/cbtpdt

2013 Following a production of ***King Lear*** we interviewed Cordelia around the themes of the destructive narcissism of her father and forgiveness.

http://www.gapdallas.com/king-lear-gap-dallas

Here are 10 ways to personalize a monologue while keeping in mind that you're inhabiting a character rather than speaking as yourself:

1. **Connect with the Character's Emotions:**
   Relate your personal feelings to the character's emotional state. Think about moments when you've felt similarly, then channel that emotion into your performance.
2. **Find Personal Parallels:**
   Identify aspects of your own life or experiences that mirror the character's journey or struggles. This helps bring authenticity to the portrayal without blurring the line between you and the character.
3. **Experiment with Vocal Nuance:**
   Adjust your tone, pace, or volume in ways that feel natural to you while still reflecting the character's personality. Use subtle inflections that resonate with both your personal style and the character's mood.
4. **Use Personal Gestures as Inspiration:**
   Consider gestures or body language that feel natural to you and adapt them to suit the character's context. This personal touch can make the performance feel more genuine while keeping the character distinct.
5. **Embrace Personal Improvisation in Practice:**
   During rehearsals, experiment with slight variations in delivery or emotion. Note what feels authentic to you, then refine it so it serves the character without overshadowing their identity.
6. **Reflect on Your Own Vulnerabilities:**
   Tap into personal vulnerabilities or moments of self-discovery. Using these feelings as inspiration can lend depth to the character's experience, even as you keep the narrative clearly their own.
7. **Develop a Unique Rhythm:**
   Personalize the cadence and rhythm of the monologue by incorporating pauses or emphasis that feel natural to you. This can help you own the performance while still representing the character's intended pacing.
8. **Tailor Your Facial Expressions:**
   Allow your own expressiveness to guide your facial expressions. However, ensure these expressions align with the character's situation, maintaining a clear boundary between your personal reactions and the character's narrative.
9. **Internalize, Then Separate:**
   Work on internalizing the monologue fully so you understand it intimately, then consciously "step out" of your personal self when performing, acknowledging that the voice is that of the character.
10. **Use Personal Reflection to Enhance Subtext:**
    Identify any underlying themes or motivations in the monologue that resonate with you personally. Use these insights to enhance the subtext of your performance while keeping the character's identity distinct from your own.

Each of these methods allows you to draw on your personal style and experiences, enhancing the performance while clearly maintaining the distinction that it's a portrayal of a character, not a direct expression of your own self.

Step-by-Step Guide to Presenting a Monologue:

Step 1: Understand the Monologue

- **Read the text carefully** – Understand what is being said.
- **Who is speaking?** – Identify the character and their background.
- **Who are they speaking to?** – Even if no one is on stage, imagine the person they are addressing.
- **What do they want?** – Every monologue has a goal (to convince, confess, explain, plead, etc.).

Step 2: Break It Down

- **Find key moments** – Look for shifts in emotion or thought.
- **Underline important words** – Words that carry emotion or meaning should stand out.
- **Decide on pacing** – Some lines may be faster, others slower.

Step 3: Memorization (If Needed)

- **Chunk it** – Learn the monologue in small sections.
- **Repeat aloud** – Speaking it out loud helps memory.
- **Use movement** – Walking while reciting can help retention.

Step 4: Find Natural Delivery

- **Speak like a real person** – Avoid sounding robotic or over-the-top.
- **Experiment with tone** – Try different ways of saying lines to find what feels right.
- **Add pauses** – Silence can be powerful and add realism.

Step 5: Use Your Body

- **Facial expressions** – Show emotion naturally, without forcing it.
- **Gestures** – Use hand movements if they feel natural.
- **Eye focus** – Look where your character would look (not at the floor or darting around).

Step 6: Rehearse in Different Ways

- **Practice in front of a mirror** – See what your face and body are doing.
- **Record yourself** – Listen and adjust pacing or tone as needed.
- **Perform for a friend** – Get feedback on clarity and emotion.

Step 7: Perform with Confidence

- **Take a deep breath before starting** – Helps calm nerves and other physiological responses that can distract from your presentation.
- **Continually check in with your breath**—are you breathing?
- **Stay present in the moment** – Don't rush.
- **Trust your preparation** – If you know the piece, you can focus on delivering it with meaning.