

Creative Arts as Therapeutic Tools for Mental Health **Theatre and Mime as Alternatives of Psychiatry**

The world is changing rapidly. No matter of what is the nature of the change. It is fair or unfair, better or worse in perspective of our strenuous worldly life. Radical changes have come to our view, about issues in relation with politics, economics, health, social affairs and so on. Today I like to present a nature of change, rather I like to say, modification in our view about one specific issue. The issue is Mental Health System in context of the Inclusion of Persons with Psychosocial Disability.

According to our traditional views about Mental Health we are mostly dependent on Psychiatric Treatment. We cannot imagine cure without medication continued for long time, in some cases for life long. We have to abide by the ultimate urgency of the role of Psychiatrists to be on guard to tame our 'violent' emotions, 'erratic' behaviors, 'dangerous' mood swings and 'destructive' sensitivity. Even then the anguished disasters like suicides and murders are taking place in a very alarming rate in the world. Besides inhumane conditions in mental health clinics, because of implementing forced medication and detention for long periods of time, the present Mental Health System is becoming the concerning factor, to speak against Psychiatry and to promote Alternatives of Psychiatry.

Time has come to focus on the issue of mental health from a different point of view to fight off deep rooted stigma about the 'mentally ill' people being unsound, unable, misfit and harmful which have formatted a long lasting inhumane reality of Exclusion for Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities.

The cure is no more dependent on 'Medication', rather than on 'Meditation'. Actually we mean the impact of meditation, that is the awakening of individual in ourselves. The individual in us are no more able to accept having 'unsound mentality'; rather we are differently able persons claiming our 'selves' for independent living with dignity in a diverse and inclusive society.

We are not completely against psychiatry as we do not ignore the need of medication in emergency situations, as we know it. We are for the support of the need of alternatives and initiatives in psychosocial care, on the basis of their tremendous healing power we have observed, in our working areas.

In this regard, I, on behalf of the in country representatives of Bangladesh like to present our views and experiences about Creative Arts, specifically Theater and Mime, in relation with Counseling based Mental Health Approach that we like to say "Psychosocial Care", in depth is aimed at the Inclusion of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities .

Counseling is purely 'talk therapy' consisting of thought-provoking conversations aiming at increasing the client's self-awareness. However, just talking about thoughts and emotions might not always be enough. All those emotions we experience require a physical outlet which Theater Therapy and Mime Therapy can provide. The key premises on which these Therapeutic Performing Arts rest is that Creative Art is a force that has unique power to heal.

First of all let's focus on Theatre as a therapeutic tool. To demonstrate the utility the tools, let's explain the nature of Theatre as a Creative Art form and then the ways and areas to incorporate the unique nature of Theatre as a therapeutic tool.

Theatre Therapy

Theatre is a collaborative form of Art that uses live performers, typically a dramatic presentation of actors and actresses to present the experiences of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place, often on a stage. The performers may communicate this experience to the audience through combinations of gesture, speech, song, music, and dance. Properties of Creative Arts, such as painted scenery and stagecraft such as lighting might be incorporated to enhance the physical expressions with different gestures & postures; actions and reactions of the experiences in context of different situations. The specific place of the performance is also named by the word "theatre" as derived from the Ancient Greek meaning "a place for viewing", itself from theáomai, means "to see", "to watch", "to observe".

As a "holistic" Creative Art, Theater has such an obvious connection to the emotions that it can awaken in people in a way that no other medium can.

Due to the dramatic presentation, Theatre as a therapeutic tool is active and experiential. The form of creative art can provide the context for participants to tell their stories, set goals, solve problems, express feelings, achieve catharsis and even solving problems in the process of counselling. Through drama, the depth and breadth of inner experience can be actively explored and interpersonal relationship skills can be enhanced. Participants can expand their repertoire of dramatic roles to find that their own life roles have been strengthened.

The participants as the performers of Theatre show have the opportunity not only to play their roles in relationship to the threatening figures in their lives and minds, but also to deal with them in more effective ways in rehearsal periods and thereby to gain the more solid insight from observing others playing themselves subconsciously. Accordingly when theatre therapy is done in groups, essentially these are group experiences that emphasize creativity and release, humor and playfulness, imagination and joy, rather than discussing and analyzing personal problems with a therapist. The rituals, games as Theatre Arts are remarkably contributory at their best in the rehearsal sessions as a unique type of healing process.

With older adults, for example, Theatre as a therapeutic tool can maximize cognitive and communication skills, build community, and strengthen self-esteem. With addicted clients, this creative art modality helps them to express emotions more openly and envisions a drug-free future. Because it is active and allows clients to act out negative behaviors—without consequence—while facing them directly and truthfully.

Often using puppets and dolls, theatre therapy with children and adolescents taps into the appeal that play has for young people—assisting them to overcome feelings of isolation and gain mastery over conflicts and anxieties.

Using role play method, theatre games, mime, puppetry, improvisation, mask work, psychodrama and developmental psychology, theatre therapists work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, schools, mental health clinics, prisons, clubs and business places.

Mime Therapy

Though not much comprehensive and holistic like Theatre, Mime being another Creative Art form has its unique utility as a therapeutic tool for being an effective alternative of psychiatry.

Conventionally speaking, Mime is a Performing Art that relies on expressions and body movements to communicate inner feelings and activities without speaking. As there is no space of verbal communication, mime as a performing art demands a highly-refined sense of body and muscle control.

As a creative art modality, Mime itself is a language and gesture of feelings, emotions, and actions expressed by body movements. As there is much physicality, the creative art form generates extreme level of energy and dynamism to fight off lethargy originated from depressions. By the movement techniques of Mime, words of emotions get an expression in an art form. Accordingly, Mime is not only an art of entertainment, but it also develops physical and mental health care.

Based on the knowledge of body awareness, the easy step-by-step practice of classical mime technique helps to gain self-esteem, self-confidence and self development to empower the individuals in our “selves”. The practice of mime movement technique may also help grow stamina and power, as well as enlightening the senses and imagination.

In rehearsal sessions, the participants as performers sitting quietly with eyes closed allow pictures to form in their minds. These images may be motivated by bits of relaxation, meditation, breathing, narration, music, sounds, smells etc. Accordingly, they build self-esteem, self-confidence, self-awareness, and motivation by practicing and training mime as going through a unique healing process. Mime imagination power encourages to invoke dreaming power and the clients can reach at the level of developing ambitions. They learn the magic of dance through mime visualization movement.

The motivations of physical, emotional and psychological movements are explored through mime. Accordingly Mime Therapy can be a profession of a Mime Therapist. Mime therapy as an amalgamation of the study of anatomy, physiology, nervous system, psychology, circulation, breathing technique, alignment technique, visualization, relaxation, meditation, stress management, reflexology and yoga technique and so on. By the enormous amalgamation, mime as a therapeutic tool helps clients to recover the fear, anxiety and depression as well as pain management as a type of physiotherapy.

Mime Therapy being a powerful combination of breathing and movement technique detoxifies the tissues and purifies. Alignment techniques of each movement maximize the physical and mental benefits. Yoga postures can be merged with mime techniques to offer more benefits.

Chronic pain can provoke Emotional reactions such as fear or even terror can provoke Chronic pain, depending on what we believe about the pain signals. So the medical professionals especially who specialize in treating chronic pain in several western countries now recognize mime not merely as a means to create a sensation, like vision or touch, but minimizes chronic pain that is strongly influenced by the ways in which the brain processes the pain signals. Ideally, use of pain management techniques help patients feel less dependent on pain killers and feel more empowered to be able to control their pain in a process of Psychosomatic diagnosis and treatment. In this way, Mime Therapy is to be recommended to deal with mental and physical difficulties with the association of tools and techniques for improvement, recovery, reductionism and development of mental and physical abilities.

Conclusion

To envision a discrimination free, enlightened democratic world, there is no doubt that we have to ensure “Inclusion”. And for ensuring “Inclusion”, “Independent Living” in a diverse society is to be one of the concerning factors. In this regard, we have to concentrate on right based approach and no more service based approach for the Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities as being one of the most vulnerable groups of people who are overwhelmed with deep-rooted stigma. To fight off the haunted experience longed for more than thousand years and still alive like a fresh wound even in the highly progressive and civilized world we like to recommend that self-esteem and self-awakening of the Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities are ensured with developing their sense of enjoying rights with dignity in an all-inclusive society. So, we like raise objection to Psychiatry being dictatorial approach and to voice for the promotion of Alternatives of Psychiatry.

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