

## Warm up

### Principles for Couple Therapy

#### Warm-up and Group Work

The term warm-up is widely used in psychodramatic circles, sometimes to refer to individuals, and often to a quality of the group as a whole. The latter use may be in reference to the sociometry in the group as well as the roles of the members. I think of warm-up as being the extent to which a person or group is "ready, willing and able" to do a specific task. Moreno defined it as "the operational expression of spontaneity." (Moreno, 1953, p. 42) Warm-up is relevant to the selection of a protagonist, perhaps more so than an application of any specific sociometric techniques. Moreno is speaking to the audience about the warm-up:

"Another significant aspect is the warm-up. In this session the participants were entirely unprepared, while in other cases they may be warmed-up in advance as to the problem to be worked out... Then there is the warm-up which takes place in the first few minutes of the session... The form which the warm-up takes may come from the director or the group itself."

(Moreno, 1951a in Fox, 1987, p. 177)

Warm-up is also a quality of the group as a collective. The degree to which the group operates with spontaneity is influenced by such things as the purpose and planning that has gone into the event, such factors as the communication prior to the meeting is influential. The warm-up is not simply a given, warm-up can be created by the director. The aim of the current study is to focus on the ways the director may assist in the revelation of the warm-up and name it. An accurate assessment of the current warm-up will assist the ability to influence it.

From: *The Group and its Protagonist*. Psychodrama Thesis -- Walter Logeman 1998

## Warm up and Couple Therapy

We can think of the warm up stage in couple work as the stage where the couple clarify they wish to *work together* on the relationship. They identify a theme that would be constructive to work on. This is an important part of the work.

### *Warm up of the therapist*

The therapist is grounded with non-judgmental commitment to the couple *as they are*. Committed to their knowledge, theory and philosophy. The therapist is able to breathe freely, create space for to attend to self and process. The therapist can orientate to the couple, and lightly hold some guiding ideas in mind for the session.

### *Warm up to each partner*

Meet and greet each person and connect with them in turn. Make eye contact. Attend to both equally. Connect with each person. Possibly: Mirror, validate and empathise. Note their thinking, feeling and body language. Identify needs.

### *Warm up to the relationship and collaboration*

Psychodrama is often a group process, with a protagonist emerging and working on a group theme. A couple working with a therapist forms a small group. The principles are the same, a warm up takes place and the full enactment of couple therapy begins when there is an agreement to collaborate. The couple work on the "stage" at the same time so in one sense the relationship is the protagonist. Is the relationship dead, ailing, thriving, volatile strong and so on. What is the purpose of the session? "What does the relationship want?"

In dialogue couples need to be complementary, for example a talker and a listener. The couple take turns, and then it is useful to think of one partner being the protagonist, and the other an auxiliary. Which partner is more ready to initiate? Whose turn is it to be the protagonist?

Couple therapy begins when there is an agreement to collaborate to heal repair or enrich the relationship.

### *Ambivalence*

Agreement to collaborate is sometimes easily achieved and sometimes the main work.

While there is ambivalence by one or both about being in the relationship at all the warm up will need attention. Investigation and assessment is needed by the therapist to determine if the couple are to initially meet together or apart.

William Doherty's Discernment Phase of therapy creates a large space for a warm up with clients who may not be in agreement on what is needed. See article from the Psychotherapy Networker:

<http://psyberspace.walterlogeman.com/files/2012/william-doherty-discernment.pdf>

An audio interview here: <https://www.box.com/shared/rlp9y3ilp6>

### **Create a sense of space for the warm up to unfold**

The interactive phase will benefit from agreed clarity of purpose for the session, if this is not present, be ready continue the warm up phase. Engage the “adult” functioning. Work to calm excessive intensity and invite fuller presence if there is withdrawal. Value every contribution including body language. Minimise unfocussed or less than purposeful interaction between them in the warm up phase.

During the warm up phase it is often useful for the therapist to act as conduit, where each person to talk to the therapist. This will model the attentive and purposeful listening.

Once clarity is established manage interaction so that it is clear and purposeful. Invite interaction when clear requests or proposals can be articulated.

### *Warm up to appreciation.*

To counter the tendency most couples have to focus on the problems attention needed on what is working. They are both here, that shows a great deal of commitment to attending to the relationship.

Ask each person what has gone well. What they appreciate in the other and themselves. Make room for what went well between them.

What is new? How did they achieve that?

Have them express these things to each other and the partner mirrors the appreciation.

### *Therapeutic frame*

The warm up phase is complete when there is clarity and readiness for the interactive phase. This may involve a statement from the therapist that will enable the transition.

The therapist articulates the factors around the possibilities and constraints taking into account the facts and circumstances as they are. Create realistic goals and frames to achieve what is possible within the constraints.

See documents from Marshall Rosenberg on needs:

<http://www.psybernet.co.nz/rel/evaluative-words-confused-with-feelings.doc>

<http://www.psybernet.co.nz/rel/needs.doc>

Frame the experience and concerns of each person as something they can work on together. Identify who will initiate interaction with their experience as the topic for the session and prepare the other to be an “auxiliary”, someone who can contain their concerns for later, perhaps another session. Note how they are both working in a different way for the “third entity”, the relationship.

This document and more resources are online here:

<http://www.psybernet.co.nz/rel>

**Updated: Sunday, 10 November, 2013**