

Living Moment by Moment

by Max Clayton and Philip Carter

The following text is excerpted from Chapter 27 of 'The Living Spirit Of The Psychodramatic Method.' The book is based on recorded sessions from a three day training workshop led by Max Clayton. Each session is followed by a discussion between Max and fellow psychodramatist Phil Carter.

The Session

Max: Do you notice Kate is very responsive to you there?

Emma: Yes, I do.

Max: Does it make you want to pursue what's going on there with her? Are you motivated at all to do that?

Emma: I come and go with it.

Max: Ah huh. Right. That's interesting.

Emma: I get bored and then I pull back a bit.

Max: You could be a bit of a part timer like she was before.

Emma: I think so.

Max: You could visit this site and then go to another site. Then at the end of the day you've had a lot of site visits. Is that what you want to do?

Emma: Um. There is some goodness in

that for me. For making some contact with most people, rather than focusing on some relationships.

Max: So when it comes to me, me, me, site visits could be really good.

Emma: I don't understand.

Max: Well, you said it was good for me, for me, me, me. But then, I wonder if it would be good for you because, you see, if she gets left high and dry and if the same thing happens with someone else, maybe everyone in the group's been left high, and then you've got a whole lot of high and dry people to relate to.

Emma: I guess it depends what my sense of sight visits are.

Max: Ah huh.

Emma: Maybe they're not necessarily something...

Max: But hang on, hang on. This is theory now. Now you're talking theory. Now

you're being a researcher, you see. But this is it, this is now, for real. See? I'm discussing this actual thing, here and now.

Reflecting on the Session

Max: Philip, there's the work which every trainee does well to do and that is the work of really considering the nature of their script. So here, work is going on to make sure that every trainee in this group pauses and takes a good look at themselves. So, during this period of time effort is being made to make sure that excuses are not made, or that hypothetical things are not presented so that every member of the group starts to actually wake up to what is actually happening here and now. And through generating experience of the here and now, start to build up a sense of what their script is and what is the script that they really do want. So, I think this would be a fairly good example of some effort to stimulate a trainee to consider their script and then consider rewriting their script. So questions are being raised here with Emma, 'Is this what you actually want?' and furthermore, 'Is it actually good for you in terms of your social interactions?' An effort is being made to stimulate her to role reverse with the other people. 'Are these people going to hang around, if she functions in the same way forever? And if they're not going to hang around, is that what she wants?' So we're really working with her so that she considers the total social atom which she's in, what sort of social atom does she actually really want.

To me what we are doing is important work with respect to her script, and while she's doing that work, everyone else in the group is also doing the same work. Kate certainly is, which you see in this segment of the tape. Kate is extremely warmed up to this area. We can see how she's benefiting a lot from what Emma is doing. I think she's benefiting

much more from what Emma is doing, than if we had kept focusing on her directly. Well, those are my thoughts on that interaction we have developed with Emma and then the interaction we have started to develop between Emma and Kate.

Another facet of it is that there is quite quick, strong interaction and this to me is very good spontaneity training. Its good spontaneity training for me as the trainer primarily, but it's also good spontaneity training for Emma. So again, as we were saying earlier on, it's not that I'm trying to be right in everything I'm doing, it's that I'm trying to live moment by moment and I'm confident in myself that if I do something that's out of line or out of harmony with Emma or the group or myself, that that will be discovered as we go along. Because as the spontaneity level of me increases, the spontaneity level of everyone increases and therefore their contact with different roles also increases and therefore the likelihood of us all becoming more alert and alive to the reality of the situation increases and therefore disharmonies get recognized and get corrected. So in my view, when there's an intimate situation starting to develop, there's quite a good chance that freeing up the expression, living more moment-by-moment, is going to be effective and productive. But that's the chance I think we are taking here.

Philip: You sound confident that intimacy will develop and if you make a mistake, that it'll get worked with.

Max: Yep, I am confident. I have been burned sometimes in the sense that I have experienced rejection for what I have done or said, from time to time. Mostly, the people who have expressed strong rejection, have hung around and my relationship with that individual has grown very strong and creative, but quite often temporarily there is

rejection or experience of pain. It has proved to be so that a person does revert back to a warm-up to safety, that is they warm up to authority relationship and they start to feel criticised when they're being coached and they don't recognise that the coaching is with a view to them enlarging their abilities. And the general context is that their general abilities are being recognised and there's also the possibility of those abilities enlarging, so it's not so much that there's a criticism but sometimes when a person is being coached they do perceive it as a criticism. And I do certainly do that myself. I suppose everyone does that from time to time. So even though you do get a group developing a more intimate sort of atmosphere or accepting sort of atmosphere, you still have a reversion back to other dynamics from time to time and sometimes that happens all of a sudden, without any apparent warning. The trainer or the group leader can easily themselves revert back to a warm-up to authority relationships and maybe feel shattered by the criticisms or rejections or whatever.

So, as you know, it is a very great challenge for a group leader to stay present in the here and now and continue to accept everything. I doubt very much if there's ever any group leader or trainer who is

able to do that consistently. There's always emotional turmoil from time to time. In other words, there's conflict and a sense of inner conflict and there's memories come into the foreground of one's consciousness and so on. I tend to be quite influenced by Victor Frankl's spirit where Victor Frankl would keep hammering away at the notion that if you feel frightened, then you show what a frightened person can do. Or if you feel rejected, then you show what a rejected person can do. Or if you feel ashamed, you show what an ashamed person can do. And that kind of a viewpoint has become part of me and tends stay somewhere in the foreground. So I have a tendency to want to stay present even though I might feel like shit, sometimes, but I have a tendency to want to keep going.

Philip: You can show what a person who feels like shit can do.

Max: That's right. That's correct.

Clayton, Dr G M, and Carter, Dr P (2004), "The Living Spirit of the Psychodramatic Method" Resource Books, Auckland, www.resourcebooks.co.nz