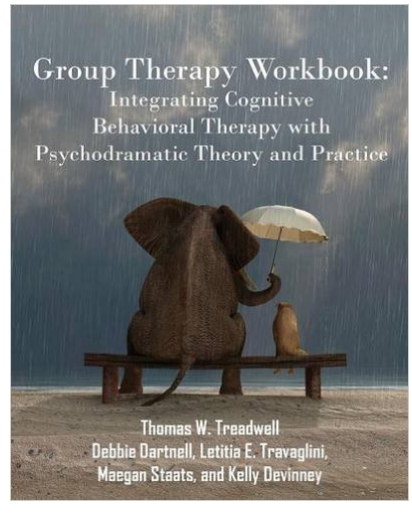
# Book Reviews

*Group therapy workbook: Integrating cognitive behavioral therapy with psychodramatic theory and practice*

by

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Outskirts Press, 2016




Reviewed by Jenny Wilson

I am delighted that Tom Treadwell and his colleagues have written this book. It is a first. It is the only book that I am aware of that integrates Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Psychodrama. I hope it will lead the way in generating more interest and more activity in this area as the combination of these two therapies has potential to be richly productive.

This is what the title says it is, a workbook, so there is understandably a focus on methods and techniques employed by each of the therapies. The theory of CBT is summarised with an even shorter coverage of

psychodrama theory. Rather than focus on theory, the authors have taken a practical approach and made suggestions about the use of various methods within a group format. This focus makes the book reasonably easy to read, but much of what is understood by a skilled CBT therapist or psychodramatist is left unsaid. Each of these therapies could claim to be an integrative therapy – able to adopt some techniques from the other. However, it is at the level of theory and philosophy where they differ significantly and where integration questions will arise.

In my own work integrating CBT and psychodrama, I'm aware of a number of dilemmas and contradictions. For example, traditional CBT focuses a great deal on *containing* emotion; theory and strategies are focused on specific goals related to managing, tolerating and reducing distressing symptoms in mental health conditions. Psychodrama by contrast often gravitates towards deepening experience across an extensive range of life experiences, and *emotional catharsis* is an important concept in psychodrama theory. When to contain, when to expand or maximise if we integrate the two? The CBT therapist and psychodramatist in me frequently disagree about this!

Classical psychodrama and traditional CBT also have quite different perspectives about when to expand on experiences from the client's *family of origin* - or even whether to do this at all. If one goes on a hunch (rather than a theory) you will find that you have in fact, gravitated to a preferred theory of your own. I would have loved to see this workbook (or a companion therapist manual) tackle these and other issues.

One of the richest elements of psychodrama is the group-work process and relationships between group members. Traditional CBT groups on the other hand are likely to give process a relatively small amount of attention, instead focusing a great deal on techniques. Psychodramatists trying out the suggested CBT approaches in this workbook for the first time are likely to experience significant tension (maybe dismay!) related to time spent on written CBT content (e.g., psycho-education; filling out forms related to thought records and symptom measurement; setting and reviewing homework). Personally I think that the most helpful gifts that psychodrama can bring to CBT are great action alternatives to the form filling and written tasks. However, a CBT therapist will struggle to direct the enactments suggested in this book unless they already have training and skills in group process.

The workbook assumes a level of therapist competence in conducting psychodrama enactments, and so is probably targeted at experienced

rather than new therapists. The detail in the enactments provide helpful examples of CBT and psychodrama strategies combined that a psychodramatist is likely to be able to adapt and make good use of. Those hoping to make use of the suggested therapeutic techniques will probably need to extend their reading and experience beyond this workbook. The reference section suggests books and papers that will be useful for the reader interested in doing so.

I think this book will be a useful addition to the psychodramatist's library. Psychodramatists are well placed to learn and use CBT techniques within their work, and may find it strategic to do so in today's funding climate. This book offers a sensible introduction to CBT theory and very smartly also includes an introduction to Schema Therapy (a more recent development that has much more overlap with psychodrama). Several ideas for sessions are outlined and there are good suggestions as to how they might be included in a group setting. A selection of useful participant handouts and information sheets are provided that will help the group leader prepare for such a group. The CBT therapist with an interest in group therapy is also likely to find this book interesting. It offers tantalising examples of the power of psychodrama in a group setting, and may prompt readers to find out more about the method.



***Jenny Wilson*** *is a clinical psychologist and psychodramatist. She has an easy and familiar relationship with both Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and psychodrama, which took some time and wrestling to achieve. Jenny is currently enjoying a settled and creative period with a new focus on learning about, and making, art.*

