Playback theatre and narrative therapy: introducing a new model

Adi Barak*

The Emili Sagol Creative Arts Therapies Research Center, University of Haifa, Israel

This article explores a new synthesis between Playback Theatre and Michael White’s narrative therapy. Through an exploration of the two methods the article elaborates how such integration can be achieved and how it can contribute to the process of narrative re-authoring. The discussion also includes the limitations and possible drawbacks of such integration, for both playback theatre and narrative therapy. Finally, a structured therapeutic model integrating White’s approach to narrative change with Playback Theatre techniques is detailed.

Keywords: narrative dramatherapy; playback theatre; narrative therapy; Michael White; problem externalization

Introduction

Combining narrative therapy and dramatherapy is a widely accepted therapeutic practice. Narradrama, founded by Pamela Dunne (Dunne 2000, 2003) is a comprehensive approach that combines narrative therapy, drama, and other forms of creative arts. Dramatherapy techniques are also embedded in narrative therapy sessions and are accepted as having a valuable contribution to the field of practice (Novy, Ward, and Thomas 2005). Finally, dramatherapy has been shown to open up new possibilities within narrative therapy while remaining in line with its basic principles (Chan 2012). However, discussion of narrative-oriented dramatherapy models in the professional literature has been scarce and warrants further consideration. To address this knowledge gap I wish to suggest a new model for narrative dramatherapy. The model combines Playback theatre (PT) with Michael White’s narrative therapy. I will begin by briefly describing both methods.

Playback theatre and narrative

PT (playback theatre) is a theatrical form that was founded by Jonathan Fox, his partner Jo Salas, and their group ‘It’s All Grace’ during the 1970s (Salas 1996).

*Email: barakadi@gmail.com

© 2013 The British Association of Dramatherapists