



*The Body Remembers*

How and why to use yoga as a gateway to  
psychodramatic work

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## 1. Introduction - The body remembers

My path to this topic was a long but sudden one. Since the age of twelve I have intuitively done therapeutic writing by myself, some may call it writing a journal. And I have always wanted to write a book. Writing was also my gateway to psychodrama.

In 2007 I was at a writing course in a monastery in Italy. My teacher, Merete Morken Andersen, had some education in psychodrama. I was there with the first draft of my still unpublished novel and was about to get feedback on this. But instead of critiquing my writing Andersen started to ask me about my life and my health. This made me mad. Of course she had stepped right into the fire. I was pretty sick at the time.

Like many others, I suffered from chronic physical problems. My body was just a very dysfunctional vehicle and I had lost my vitality and joy of life. What a brilliant move then to focus my energy on writing a story about *somebody else*. I was not at all sensitive to what Morken Andersen was trying to point out to me; that you cannot be a good writer if you are not in contact with yourself.

At that time I was not able to see my illness as significant. I had not yet learned to listen to the pain and let it guide me. This is a lifelong learning. But being in my mid thirties and the mother of two toddler's I was luckily not ready to accept that this would be my life from now on; living in constant pain, lack of energy, and barely being able to keep my head above water.

Although Morken Andersen made me angry being the first one to recognize what state I was in, she also said the magic words; "the body remembers". This gave deep resonance in me even if I didn't fully understand what it meant at the time. Now I find that John P. Conger is talking about this in *The Body in Recovery*:

*"Our illness may not be inevitable. A powerful remnant of our pasts lies anchored in body structure "unrecovered," creating pockets of weakness open in time to illness and strain. Our bodies will for years carry the burden of unhealed injuries. Many people do not know how to work through the losses life brings. Our body faithfully records the traumatic events in contracted musculature and energetically withdrawn tissue." (1994:xvi).*

No, I did not know how to work through. I knew everything about walking around. Because I had practiced avoidance for as long as I could remember. But I was getting tired of it. And I was getting tired of being sick. And; I wanted to be a good writer, not to mention a good mother. Still it took me two years but I finally started my education in psychodrama in 2009. Thinking that my writing would release any second, and that I soon would make the same happen for others. But no. This wasn't yet my first order of business.

My healing and educational journey took me in a different direction. The deeper I got into the process of cleaning my pipes and learning about psychodrama methods - the more interested I got in my own body - and in bodywork in general, together with the connection between psyche and soma. I had started my physical recovery in 2007. Getting cracked, kneaded, needled and healed, - changing my diet, doing Pilates and walking for hours by the sea. In 2012 I started practicing yoga and that took me to yet another level. As I started my psychodrama education, I was working parallel with my body the whole time. Not in any way to undermine the effects of psychodrama, because I have seen it do wonders for me and so many others. But along the way, it was getting clearer and clearer to me that I was missing the bodily (especially) and a more holistic aspect in this therapeutic work. The thought had started to arise: The combination of yoga and psychodrama was making me healthy, - can I use them both to inspire other people to get healthy as well?

Psychodrama does focus on the body. For sure. We use signs from the body to go deeper into the soul, to tell us about what is wrong, and how we feel. Some psychodrama therapists evidently work on the psychosomatic level. But in my opinion we don't really work to *make the body healthy along with the soul* in psychodrama. I feel that the group member's ability to build physical strength, and the physical potential of healing, is commonly overlooked. There is not enough focus on the body, mind and soul as one. And to me there is a separation between body and soul in psychodramatic work, as I also believe there is in the daily life of many people.

This might be one of the biggest problems of the modern, western world. I'm sure you've heard many times that body and soul belong together. But do you feel it? Do you live it? *Or do you live like a pressed flower?* I believe you cannot truly be healthy in your soul and spirit if you don't have a close, conscious relationship with your body. How can you be present if you disregard your vehicle? That doesn't mean you have to have an ideal body, or be in perfect health. To me it means working through, instead of walking around. Seeing and accepting what is, and being willing to address it.

Still, up until a supervision class in December 2013 I was going to write about using psychodrama to release creative powers. It was my plan all along, and also the reason I started taking this education in the first place. As I told my supervisor. And then I continued: "... But... now I'm so focused on the body, and I keep thinking about using yoga and psychodrama together." - "If that is where your focus is, that is what you should write about", my supervisor answered. And as I could feel my breath get deeper, and my shoulders drop, I instantly knew that was true.

*"If your life has not three dimensions, if you don't live in the body, if you live on the two dimensional plan in the paper world that is flat and printed, as if you were only living your biography, then you are nowhere. You don't see the archetypal world, but live like a pressed flower in the pages of a book, a mere memory of yourself." (Jung on Nietzsche's Zarathustra edited 1988:972).*

*Now, who would want to be a pressed flower?*

I'm so happy to invite you with me on this journey. Come; let's see what we can do!

## **2. My issue and how I will go about it**

I want to find out if combining yoga and psychodrama will be a good way to cure *dis-eases* in the body and soul of the modern human being. Will bringing yoga to the equation add something valuable to psychodrama? And possibly inspire a more holistic approach to healing than psychodrama can offer alone? (With yoga I am talking about asanas, breathing and meditation). By using yoga as a warm up, will it give me and the group member's easier access to deep somatic issues, and other bodily knowledge? And ultimately; can combining these methods help close the gap between body and soul that I believe western people suffer from, and therefore lead to a healthier and happier life?

To expose this I will be looking at psychodrama and yoga history, and see how and where these two methods are practiced today. By comparing terms and concepts from the philosophical systems of psychodrama and yoga I will see if they have the same ideas and can be united. I will also bring in history and practice of bioenergetic therapy. Mostly from J.P. Conger, whom is a bioenergetic therapist that challenges the separation of verbal and bodywork therapies. And Alexander Lowen, whom invented bioenergetics. From Moreno the central theories will be the role theory, his theory on spontaneity and creativity, catharsis, the creative man, and the cosmic man.

In a more practical way, I need to look at how we can "walk through the body" to get to "the soul in action". For this I will draw experience from Nathan Dorra who is a psychodramatist and yoga instructor, and who has experience in using the two methods together. Potentially this research will lead me to an outline of a psychodrama group combining yoga and psychodrama.

I will note the reference when I use a direct quote, and when I have a concrete source. Some of my writings are based on my total understanding of the relevant topics, and then I cannot refer to a concrete author, book or page. But you will find all the literature I've used for this thesis in the bibliography in the back.

I will define some words when I find it necessary as I go along, and you can find a list

of definitions in the back of the paper as well. The terms that are defined there is marked with a \* the first time I use them.

#### **4. Short about psychodrama - Moreno, origin, history, purpose, psychodrama today**

Psychodrama - translated into soul in action - is a therapeutic method that was developed by Jacob Levy Moreno (1889 - 1974). He lived in Vienna at first, but brought the method with him to USA, where he founded the psychodrama treatment center; Beacon Hill, north of New York in 1936. His widow, Zerka Moreno, who also contributed a lot to develop the method and to organize his written material, is still active in New York today.

Moreno also developed role theory, sociometry\*, the social atom\*, the theory of spontaneity and creativity with the cultural conserve\*, to mention some parts of his comprehensive philosophical system. He furthermore played an important role in the development of group psychotherapy worldwide - as psychodrama was the first form of group psychotherapy. The forerunner was the Spontaneity theatre, a street theatre that made improvisations from problems the audience came up with. This theatre was also inspired by children's role-play.

In psychodrama the audience got to play the parts, and this is where the therapeutic element comes in. The protagonist\*, which is the main character, gets to play out his lived or unlived life on the scene with the group members as his audience and co-actors. At the same time it is the topic of the group because the group has chosen the protagonist based on his theme.

*"The purpose of the psychodrama is the individual's right to present and defend her experience of her own reality."* (Røine 1992:43). Moreno was critiqued for this, for abetting patients' delusions, but he believed that for seriously disturbed patients this permission-giving was especially important. It was often the first step towards making contact, and Moreno believed in the meaningful encounter\*, also between patient and therapist. In fact he believed no therapeutic process was possible without it. (Fox 2008:xv). And he was less interested in transference\* than therapists before him. Moreno was not a conventional one.

Role-reversal\* is an important part of psychodrama. The leader will ask the protagonist to change role with her auxiliary ego\* at a critical part in the dialogue. She has to repeat the words she "gave" to the other, and that will give her a new perspective on things.

Moreno was inspired by Socrates, and he saw himself as a midwife - the teacher who helps people reach the knowledge within themselves. So that we could always be moving

forward and develop ourselves, and not only reproduce. He truly believed every man is his own creator. That also means that he creates his own suffering.

In all of Moreno's methods there was an emphasis on acting and action. Moreno stated that "Man is a role player," and he had the idea of the multi-role personality. By this he meant the individual that has the flexibility to act the right way at the right time because of his large role repertoire. (Fox 2008:xiii). Moreno also believed that everyone have limitless capacity to be creative and spontaneous. The goal of the psychodrama is for the group members to develop their ability to be spontaneous, - through catharsis\*, which means releasing repressed emotions, and through developing their role repertoire - where the drama and the theatre itself is the most powerful element.

Psychodrama may mainly be used for therapy, but it's techniques has application in many different contexts like; business, education, training, and in any kind of organizational work. Moreno's underlying aim was expansion of consciousness, and he was not only concerned with individuals, as his epic opening sentence from *Who shall survive?* proves: "*A truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of mankind.*" (Moreno 1953:3). This indicates that psychodrama doesn't only belong in therapy. And maybe it is starting to spread:

*"Today the art, science and craft of the professional practice of psychodrama are flourishing worldwide. There are more certified psychodramatists and more published books than at any other time in history. Psychodrama in all its many forms is used not only in mental health and psychotherapy but also in education, training, criminal justice, business, government, religion and the arts."* (Buchanan 2006:xvi, Foreword, *The Quintessential Zerka*).

It might be true that there are more certified psychodramatists and more published books than before, but unfortunately it would be an exaggeration to say that psychodrama is flourishing in Norway. I would rather say it struggles with suspiciousness and fear from the academia and the masses. I don't know why this is, but our institute (Moreno Instituttet) doesn't have enough students, groups are being cancelled, and right now (April 2014) there are some critical writings about psychodrama in the media.

Still there is psychodrama going on in hospitals and other institutions; for example half-way houses. I was happy to find out that they actually have a psychodrama group under the auspices of DPS (District Psychiatric Center) in my own little commune; Moss. In the treatment of substance abuse. Also, according to some active psychodrama therapists I have talked to, it seems like it's easier to get people to come to monodrama\* and couples therapy.

### 3. Short about yoga - origin, history, development, yoga today

The exact origin of yoga is uncertain, but there are traces of yoga in many ancient Sanskrit text, some of the traces go back for 5000 years or more. The reading and placing of the *Rig-Veda*, which is the oldest written text in any Indo-European language, suggests that people were doing yoga as early as 3000 B.C. in an ancient but mature civilization in India. (Bryant 2009:xx/xxi). The *Rig-Veda*, which contains a series of hymns that are "in praise of higher powers", is also the fountainhead of Hinduism. Yoga was connected to the ritual life of ancient Indians, and revolved around making sacrifice and trying to join the material world with the world of the spirit. For that to happen the practitioners had to be able to focus their minds for a long period of time, and this exercise is the root of yoga. Some yogis\* were graced with a vision from their meditation.

From the many texts I would also like to mention the *Bhagavad Gitâ* (Lord's Song), which was composed around 500 B.C. Its message being something like: "To be alive is to be active, we must fight evil and also go behind the grip of the ego." These early (Vedic and Pre-classical) yoga teachings aim to develop techniques for achieving deep meditation through which yogis could transcend the body and mind, besides discovering their own true nature. The body and mind was seen as a unit.

The classical eightfold Yoga taught by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sutras*, a Sanskrit text with 195 statements dealing with the challenges of being human, was probably written around the second century A.D. Patañjali wanted yoga to bring out the separation between matter and spirit, as he understood the spirit could only be pure separated from the body. This is not the typical view of yoga.

The Post-Classical yoga again affirmed the ultimate unit of everything. In fact, *union* is maybe the most common interpretation of the word yoga today. But yoga is also referring to a *method of discipline*: "*Yoga is a timeless pragmatic science evolved over thousands of years dealing with the physical, moral, mental and spiritual well-being of man as a whole.*" (Iyengar 1979:13).

A person who practices yoga is a yogi(n) or a yogini\*. People often associate yoga with the postures (asanas\*) that make up the physical activity of the exercise, but yoga is a lot more than that. We can say that yoga is a spiritual practice where self-enlightenment and the transcendence of the ego is the ultimate goal. If you ask around; what is the purpose of yoga, I bet you will get many answers. Some would say; to find God, and some would say; to get fit. If you inquire the 23 year old Olympic gold winner in Snowboard 2014, Jamie Anderson, she would say: "I feel yoga has helped me with everything in my life. Especially my



snowboarding; between the strength, flexibility, balance and meditation aspects of yoga, it has helped me in so many ways!" (D'Angelo Friedman 2014).

The *Yoga Sutras* still provide the framework upon which yoga is practiced today, with its eight limbs of yoga; moral restraints, purification by discipline, posture, breath control, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation, and super-consciousness. (Iyengar 1979:21). Today we often talk about five limbs; Proper relaxation, proper exercise, proper breathing, proper diet, and positive thinking and meditation. The *Yoga Sutras* do provide the framework, but it was first a few centuries later that yogis began to probe the hidden potential of the body, and started to create a system of practices designed to rejuvenate the body and prolong its life. The body became a temple.

The history of modern, western yoga began when Swami (Master) Vivekananda entered the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. He was one of the very first, but definitely not the last guru to emigrate from the East to the West. Today everyone has heard of yoga, with millions of Americans practicing asanas in some form. The different directions and variations of the teachings are too numerous to mention. I would still like to mention one; Sadie Nardini, being my personal favorite and inspiration. She teaches what she calls Core Strength Vinyasa Yoga, and she has focus on building the asanas up through tree stages; foundation, core, and expression.

In Norway yoga is relatively not nearly as big an industry as in the USA. And in my modest experience with a small handful of yoga teachers here in Norway I have felt that they have too much focus on describing outer alignment and not enough focus on setting the platform and getting in contact with the core. This could be a coincidence, but for me it will be important to always have the individuality of the practitioner at mind.

If you want the ultimate traditional feeling of yoga you might want to go to India. Like Sadhvi Saraswati, who took a new name and emigrated from USA to India 17 years ago said in Aftenposten 1/3-2014: *"To study yoga in Europe might be like studying for an exam in a dorm which has parties in both rooms next door."*

The 14th Dalai Lama can be mentioned as one of the truly great yogis of the modern world. He demonstrates that the principles of yoga can be brought in to a busy, daily life and also into politics. When asked about what surprised him most about humanity he answered:

*"Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."*

Can the problem of today be more to the point or more beautifully put than that? This is why we need yoga, and this is probably why more and more people discover it. Yoga definitely is blooming worldwide. By blending psychodrama and yoga, it might possibly also be a good way to draw more people to the psychodrama scene here in Norway.

## **5. Agreements and possible discrepancies between the philosophical systems of psychodrama and yoga**

Since I started doing yoga I have brought it with me to the psychodrama stage as a group member (as I bring it with me everywhere), and the thought of bringing it with me as a group leader is steadily maturing. I am still a novice in yoga, with two years of practicing and hundred hours of teacher training (with Sadie Nardini in New York). But knowing about psychodrama and knowing about yoga, they unavoidably started to mix in my head. Maybe because the two methods both bring out something that I feel is often lacking in our world today; something deep, true, and authentic. I want to know if this bridge feeling can be defended. So let's take a look at some of the most important ideas and concepts in psychodrama and yoga.

I'm also hoping to find signs that yoga can add something to psychodrama. Signs that will make it worth to bring this further. Hopefully, eventually into a full live psychodrama group - healing people of today.

### **5.1. Do you want to expand?**

Let's start with the obvious; **transformation**. It is clear that by doing both yoga and psychodrama we are looking for change. But change from what? What is the problem to be solved? And where do we want to go?

I think a lot of people feel suffocated from the materialistic orientation of the modern, western world. We desperately feel the need for some fresh air. Desperation is a good motivator for change, but it can rapidly lead us in the opposite direction from where we are. And that is not necessarily what we want. Ultimately what we need is **balance**.

Finding balance can be a struggle. We are so busy and there is a lot of pressure both from the society and from within. We are exhausted most of the time, and when we finally have some time off we find it hard to unwind. If we can agree that pain killers and trashy TV are escapisms and not lasting solutions, then we apparently need *something else*. But what? Well, to be able to change we first have to recognize *where* the change is needed.

Moreno had the goal to **build people's awareness of their situation** to make them

create the society they wanted. In first volume he talked about man being pacified by technical forces, and he wanted us to fight this war against machines, cultural conserves and robots with what he called the creative revolution.

*".. This strategy is the practice of the creative act, man as an instrument of creation changing his products continuously... If a fraction of one-thousandth of the energy which mankind has wasted in the conception and development of machine-like devices would be used for the improvement of our cultural capacity during the moment of creation itself, mankind would enter into a new age of culture, a type of culture which would not have to fear any possible increase of machinery, nor the robot races of the future. Man will have escaped without giving up anything that machine civilization has produced, into a Garden of Eden." (Moreno 1985:46).*

Further he says that the "survival of the fittest" will be replaced with the "survival of the creator", and that every man must fight this war within himself. (ibid). So, according to Moreno we need to be creative to survive. In psychodrama we gain the spontaneity we need to be creative, by warming up to action.

Patañjali defined yoga as "the stilling of all thoughts" (controlling of thought patterns) so that you can "abide your (or your souls) own true nature". We achieve this when we master the balance between sthira\* (structure, stability) and sukha\* (freedom, ease) in yoga. This is also about **expanding consciousness**. Conger too, is talking about an inner dialogue: *"... the therapist need to see the client in his or her uniqueness, and facilitate a deepening dialogue with the inner self. It is this inner self that understands the meaning and direction of our health and illness."* (1994:xvii).

I translate this to; if the protagonist can have a dialogue with her **authentic, inner self**, she will understand the meaning of her *dis*-eases. Then I believe she also eventually will know what to do to make it better. It is an important factor in psychodrama, that the answers lie within the protagonist herself and not with the therapist. In yoga too we find the answers within ourselves, even if we operate in a different way.

Both psychodrama and yoga can be used as a tool to develop greater insight about ourselves and the world around us. Psychodrama through role reversal, encounter, catharsis and spontaneity training, - group and action related methods, which I will come back to. And yoga through more introverted methods, like meditation and practicing asana. But it is true for both that they will help you expand your consciousness, help you peel off your false self and find your inner voice. And then you will see where change is needed and ultimately you can use that knowledge to find balance in your life.

## 5.2. Letting go

**Catharsis** is the purification we get from releasing our authentic, naked emotions and feelings. From childhood many of us have learned to hold these feelings back. In psychodrama catharsis is normally reached when the protagonist is asked to act out his problem in the second stage of the drama. Sometimes the protagonist has great resistance and the group leader push and provokes the protagonist to act so he can get his catharsis, sometimes it doesn't happen.

To Moreno catharsis was connected to spontaneity. If a person doesn't have enough spontaneity to master her life's situations she will experience disequilibrium, and the more disequilibrium the more need for catharsis. This disequilibrium can also come from the separation between body and mind. We may be intellectually ready to act, while the body is not. But: *"In the course of overcoming the disequilibrium between the somatic and the mental processes, larger and larger portions of the organism are brought into play, pathological tensions and barriers are swept away, and a catharsis takes place."* (Moreno 1975:58).

The term catharsis originally comes from Aristotle and the release the spectators got from watching the Greek tragedies. But in psychodrama we are talking about private tragedies.

*"These private tragedies may be caused by various disequilibrating experiences, one source of which may be the body. They may be caused by the relationship of the body to the mind, or that of the mind to the body, and result in an inadequacy of performance at the moment... It is almost a miracle that an individual can achieve and maintain any degree of balance and man has continually been in search of devices which will enable him to attain or increase his equilibrium."* (Moreno 1975:52).

With the drama Moreno had found the perfect media for catharsis to take place. Because whatever the problem is, it can be acted out realistically on stage, without any change being necessary in the external situation.

When we practice yoga it is not uncommon that unpleasant emotions and painful memories comes to the surface. This is the feeling of pain being released and is a form of catharsis. In yoga this is normally not addressed any further. *"Yoga is fundamentally an educational process which frequently has therapeutic outcomes. We are not therapists."* (Kaminoff 2014:10).

Sometimes a group member can get full catharsis from warming up. Then as a therapist I have to recognize this. I can ask the group member if she is ok with what took place in front of the group, if she wants to share something with the group, or if there is something else she needs. Other group members might also need space for reaction after having witnessed a catharsis.

Often when we work with the body the organic reactions it brings forth have few words, but a short sharing\* is possible if the group needs something to come together after the catharsis.

I have to make sure not to push a group member who already have enough to digest into being protagonist in a drama, because this can be an overkill. If I have group members who had reactions, but not full catharsis in the warming up, they might be good candidates for being a protagonist.

**Breathing** is an important component in both psychodrama and yoga. Most of us have learned to hold our breath to control our emotions, and this causes a lot of tension in our bodies. In psychodrama you often hear phrases like: "Are you breathing?" and "Keep breathing!" And in yoga breathing is the first thing you have to learn. And you always have to keep learning to breath.

*"What makes the breath such a potent teacher of yoga? Breathing has the dual nature of being both voluntary and autonomic, which is why the breath illuminates the eternal inquiry about what we can control or change and what we cannot." (Kaminoff/Matthews 2012:x).*

Breathing exercises in yoga is highly effective to help us break through blockages and get embodied. To let go and be present to what is. To be in the **here and now**.

### **5.3. Bodily knowledge**

It can happen that a specific asana will bring back the same memory again and again, without the practitioner knowing why. Like Nathan Dorra quotes one of his clients in his article *Yoga and Psychodrama*: "Every time I'm lifting my upper body (cobra) it remind me of my brother. Till this exercise I hardly thought of him at all!" This shows that yoga can easily open up to themes we can work with psychodramatically. In the right time this could be a gateway to a full psychodrama about the relationship to the brother. Further Dorra says: *"This kind of reaction supported the idea that the body is a store house that contains heaps of imprinting emotions and memories. Those could easily come out if we learn to observe and listen carefully to the somatic soliloquy."* (1998:26).

Conger also talks about looking for signs from the body. *"There is for each of us a characteristic posture, a body signature, which identifies us. The individual signature distinguishes itself from "character" by representing not only armoring, but also an aspect of our core nature."* (1994:45).

We can say that character is what we fill in to hide our shadows. Lowen describes character as our more or less functional identity. And he says that our armoring lies in our character.

Armoring refers to all the chronic, muscular tension in the body, and it's called armor because it is there to protect us from painful and threatening emotional experiences from ourselves and others. (1994:13).

To me the quote from Conger above means that if I learn to look carefully enough I might see pieces of both the false and the true self of a group member only by looking at his posture. Obviously I have to be very aware of the signs unconsciously sent from the group members bodies, if I'm going to use yoga as a warm-up to psychodrama. I also have to learn to differentiate between armoring and core nature, and how these are expressed.

#### **5.4. Let's dig a little deeper!**

I cannot talk about psychodrama theory without bringing in the concept of **roles**. Moreno was occupied by roles. He pointed out that we embody roles in all venues of life, and that we all have a certain set of roles that characterizes our behavior. The culture we live in also has a certain set of roles, which it imposes on its members. This can be more or less successful for the individual and for the society. (Moreno 1961:68). With all the roles we are expected to master simultaneously today it certainly creates a lot of pressure. This pressure again creates anxiety and imbalance in our lives.

Moreno parted our roles into three dimensions. One dimension is the social roles, for example the school teacher, the mother, etc. Social roles are roles which we easily perform and have brought to order and control. Then there are psychodramatic roles, which are roles that are undeveloped or not quite adapted, and that causes us to create fantasies in our lives. We will for example take someone else's behavior personal when it has nothing to do with us.

On the deepest level we find the **psychosomatic roles**. These are roles that developed on a very early stage in an individual's life. Primarily as a result of her relationship with the *first extension of self* \*(normally the mother). These roles express the physiological dimension, like eating, sleeping and sex, and are the roles that are least available and hardest to change. The patterns of interaction between mother and infant can produce constellations that may seem impossible to understand or break later in life, as Røine sees it. (1992:53). But still, if we can peel off the intellect and break through the defense mechanism the body will remember.

Psychosomatic roles are the roles we can find in the body like armoring. Medard Boss (1903-1990) was a Swiss psychiatrist who looked for the connections between psyche and

soma. He searched to find if there was a direct link between a neurosis and the organ the neurosis showed itself through, and he saw that psychic blockings could manifest in the body. This happens when the individual somehow is robbed for the opportunity to express himself in his environment. In worst case this would become what Boss called repressed life-melodies. If the individual once stopped what he was doing in fear, and his anxiety or insecurity was so great that he never had the courage to try the same thing again, we can say that his life melody died or at least weakened. (Røine 1992:53/236).

The psychosomatic roles are hard to reach, also through regular psychodramatic warm up. It is logical that since these blockages have manifested in the body, they can be easier reached through the body. Blockages is a known term in yoga. You can meet blockages in any asana. Most of us will be able to feel rigidities in our body when we move. It feels like something is stopping the movement or keeping the movement from being free. The whole point of yoga is to remove these obstacles.

Patañjali, among many others, writes that we achieve yoga by identifying and removing the kleshas (afflictions) from our system. Again I have to mention the breath, as it is one of the most effective tools for breaking through rigidities. "*...the practice of unrestraining the breath can be seen as synonymous with the identification and release of the bodily tensions that obstruct the expression of our system intrinsic equilibrium.*" (Kaminoff/Matthews 2012:21).

*"Intrinsic equilibrium refers to several important mechanisms that combine to make the human torso a self-supporting structure."* (Kaminoff/Matthews 2012:20). They are talking about all the masses and tissues in our bodies and how they are connected. When this system is working as it should without blockages we are very flexible. So if I do yoga and make sure to keep removing obstacles from my system so that the energies can flow freely; I become like a soft ball that bounces back to its most ideal form after being pushed and pulled.

I have tried to show that it is a good idea to use yoga to reach the psychosomatic layer, or for warming the protagonist and the group up for going to this deeper level in the acting stage. We can reach this layer when we work to loosen up rigidities in our bodies. And as a bonus we will get both physically and mentally healthier, and more flexible, at the same time. These are important values that yoga can add to psychodrama. I will look at this more closely later.

Moreno believed that individuals had a natural urge to embody more roles and to access more variety within the same role. He believed we have those more developed roles latent within us, just waiting to become active. Related to what Moreno said about disequilibrium creating

need for catharsis, it is my interpretation that the more roles we learn to master, the less anxiety, and the less need for catharsis.

In psychodrama we work with mastering and developing roles through its different action methods and especially through the method of rehearsal for life\*; when we simulate a future situation and practice what to say and how to act. In yoga we develop roles and learn to master roles through meditation, listening within, gaining control of the body, gaining strength and ease, which releases anxiety and brings peace and balance.

I also believe that both yoga and psychodrama, through finding our inner voice, can help us to sort out and let go of the roles that we don't need or want, but that we only perform because someone we know or the culture imposes it on us. This is also a way to release pressure and gain peace, which is called catharsis by reduction (Moreno 1975:55).

### **5.5. Sthira sukha**

Moreno believed that man has an unlimited capacity for spontaneous and creative action. (Moreno 1975:43). The moment an individual is in contact with his spontaneity his creativity will follow. Then he can produce cultural conserve, for example a work of art. But once the product is finished there will be no spontaneity left in it.

According to Moreno spontaneity can be taught. Psychodrama is meant for us to get in contact with our spontaneity, so that we can be creative. Spontaneity comes from the Latin word *sponte* which means *of free will*. One of Moreno's most quoted definitions of spontaneity is: "*Spontaneity propels the individual towards an adequate response to a new situation or a new response to an old situation.*" (Moreno 1953:42).

This means we are not just going on autopilot. When we act spontaneous it will be different every time, because no situation is exactly the same. Sometimes spontaneity is faultily confused with impulsiveness and action. But to be spontaneous means to act according to what the situation demands. Therefore it can be just as spontaneous to take a rest, when that is what you need. To act impulsive means to act on a whim without criticism, and that can be quite destructive. If the action is adequate or not will be based on chance and therefore impulsiveness is very different from spontaneity.

With psychodrama we can expand our role repertoire and our choices will be more free because we will have a bigger tool box, and a better chance to act in a new way. But the spontaneity has to be structured. Eva Røine used to say in her teachings, that spontaneity plus structure is creativity, while spontaneity minus structure is chaos. (Verdú 1997:12).

Psychodrama provides the structure we need to be spontaneous with its three stages;



the warming up, the acting out and the sharing. All the stages are equally important. Within those frames anything can happen, but the structure is always there.

How can we compare this to yoga? One of the most mentioned yoga sutras of Patañjali goes: "Sthira Sukham asanam". (Bryant 2009:283). Meaning; "steady, comfortable pose". Sthira meaning firm, strong, active, and also referring to vigilance; the ability to pay attention and be present. Which again means a fully engaged body and a focused mind. This is the first thing you have to achieve before you can reach sukha.

Sukha translates to soft, joyful, easy, comfortable, and relaxed. This is the opposite of discomfort or pain. The meaning of sukha is also touching the principles of non-violence and self-acceptance. We nurture ourselves by doing something that feels good. But remember, you have to attain sthira first. If you can master and integrate these complimentary poles, sthira and sukha - you will find inner peace and harmony - on the mat and in your life.

Sthira in yoga can be compared to the structure in psychodrama. In psychodrama we also have to focus on sthira first. We have to follow the structures to reach spontaneity. And when we are spontaneous we act with ease (sukha).

Before we go into a drama we physically and mentally have to form a connection to the ground, and move from there. This is equally important for the leader and the group. As a leader you have to make sure you are grounded, so that you can be present and aware. Awareness is an important factor for being a therapist, to have tele\* with your protagonist. I like to ground myself with doing yoga before I meet the group. After you have confirmed that you as a leader are grounded, you have to make sure the group members are grounded. Grounding exercises is often the first thing we do to warm the group up if they are not in their bodies. Because if they are not in their bodies they cannot be present. If they are not present, you cannot make them feel. And if they can't get in the feeling there will be no catharsis. Therefore it is necessary that the group members, and especially the protagonist, are grounded before entering the second stage in the drama.

That should make yoga well equipped to warm up to psychodrama. Because yoga is all about grounding as the first thing to do. And the good news is that once you have attended sthira, the qualities of alertness and easiness becomes available. It is a combination of effort and release. Much like when you follow the structures of psychodrama, then spontaneity can and will most likely follow.

Again we see that there is compatibility between the two philosophies, and it seems

that yoga with luck can add something to the psychodrama process. Maybe especially in the first stage, the warming up.

### **5.6. Group and action verses meditation and asana**

As already mentioned psychodrama is based on groups and action methods. Moreno has a concept called "action insight"\* and that means you can get the spontaneous insight from acting that you cannot get from only understanding something intellectually. In my personal experience one can also get "action insight" from doing yoga. I have certainly had aha experiences in asanas, when something just feels different and I can relate it to a situation in my life at the time.

From early on Moreno was interested in **the encounter**. The encounter is an important part of psychodrama and any group therapy. There is a lot of value in a true meeting; when I look at you doing something brave, I might also dare to take the next step. Further the yoga breath can be used in encounters, for example if we work in pairs. I can challenge the group members to breathe and look into each other's eyes, and then examine about: What happens? How does it feel? Is it easier or harder to stay in this meeting when you keep breathing?

Much healing can be gained from being seen and heard, and knowledge can be gained from putting yourself in, and looking at yourself from, - another person's perspective. We do this when we **reverse roles** in psychodrama. Furthermore Moreno called the group members **therapeutic agents**\* for each other. He believed that if you put people with similar problems in groups together, they would be able to help each other heal, by being each other's witnesses, and by supporting each other. All mentioned above makes the group setting utterly important in psychodrama.

This approach; seeing yourself through the other and being dependent on the group is probably one of the biggest leaps from psychodrama to yoga. In yoga you have to look inside yourself for answers, without outer help or mirroring. You don't get Moreno's encounters, changing of perspective or therapeutic agents from a normal yoga class, or from being alone on your mat at home. But I don't see a contradiction here, because even if the methods are different, the aim is the same. And:

By attending yoga teacher training in New York, I *did* get the same feeling I get from being in a psychodrama group. And the feeling of speaking a therapeutic language. We were sharing problems and experiences, drawing from each other, building each other up. We searched for our true, inner self and there were a lot of encounters. The subtext was something like: "We are Goddesses' working in a union to change the world, we are doing good, and by

making ourselves better we are making the world better at the same time." So in some yoga settings you can actually get a form of group therapy. In this case we were certainly acting as therapeutic agents for each other.

### **5.7 The spiritual aspect**

Moreno's practices and methods are based on a philosophy of service, courage, and compassion. He said:

*"My new religion was a religion of being, of self-perfection. It was a religion of helping and healing, for helping was more important than talking. It was a religion of silence. It was a religion of doing a thing for its own sake, unrewarded, unrecognized. It was a religion of anonymity." (Moreno, year unknown:217).*

Moreno believed that we all have God within us, and that we all have the opportunity to be co-creators in the eternal creation of this world. (Borge 2011:66). *"Man is a cosmic man, not only a social man or an individual man."* (Moreno 1969:10). In psychodrama we create our own reality through our action on stage, and in this setting God will appear.

Traditionally yoga was also meant for getting in contact with God through meditation, and God also here referring to our highest self. *"The yogi does not look heaven-ward to find God for he knows that He is within, being known as the Antaratma (the Inner Self)."* (Iyengar 1979:41).

It seems like the highest goal of both psychodrama and yoga is to find the God within so that we can be the best version of ourselves, which is our true self. Maybe spirituality doesn't have to be as mystical as some people try to make it.

*"Many people, in the grip of intense spiritual longing, have attempted to separate themselves from the physical world, only to discover that spiritual progress depends on transformation through embodiment. You can lift spiritually with more ease when you stand firmly on the ground. Somatic recovery leads to wholeness and the simplicity of embodied life." (Conger 1994:xxii).*

The word spiritual comes from the Latin *spiritus*, "...meaning breath, the animating, sensitive, or vital principle of the individual". (Kaminoff/Matthews 2012:x). So maybe we are all spiritual beings, because we are breathing. Because we are alive in a body. Even when we try hard not to be by holding our breaths. And by separating ourselves from our bodies. Like we are afraid to live. Me for one, I want to live, and I want to live in my body. Now, let's get a bit more practical about it.

## **6. How and why to use yoga as a warm up for psychodrama?**

### **6.1. What is asana?**

Asana means seat or camp, and can refer to a way of sitting, a yoga posture, a place or a situation. Traditionally the word is linked to a seated position, or a posture or series of postures that are meant to prepare the body for seated meditation. From a more expanded understanding asana can be defined as the foundation from which we act in daily life. Our presence. *"By practicing them (asanas) one develops agility, balance, endurance and great vitality... But their real importance lies in the way they train and discipline the mind."* (Iyengar 1979:40).

When we practice asana we enter a posture and hold it for a period of time, or we can move through the asanas in flow, with the aim to be fully present and experience all the sensations that occur in the body and the mind. But: *"Yoga is not about doing the asanas; it's about undoing what's in the way of the asanas."* (Kaminoff 2014:10).

I will write about a few asanas I might want to use with psychodrama, how I will instruct them, and what to look for in the group members. I will mainly work with asanas, coordinated to breath, and possibly meditation for closure of a group.

### **6.2. General benefits from yoga**

We have learned that mental constructs often become physical. It manifests in the body as tension. And when there is tension for example in the diaphragm there also will be lack of breath, and there will be lack of communication within the body's systems. Yoga is a form of finding these obstacles to our freedom and removing them, and breathing is an important part of this. *"What yoga can teach us is that everything essential we need for our health and happiness is already present in our systems. We merely need to identify and resolve some of the obstacles that obstruct those natural forces from operating."* (Kaminoff/Matthews 2012:xi).

When we take personal responsibility for developing resiliency we can break old habits. Therefore yoga is a great way to take care of our physical as well as mental health, and by this also take responsibility for our lives. Like Moreno, among other existentialists, meant was a fundamental thing to do.

To sum it up; yoga relaxes the body and the mind, improves our resilience to *dis*-eases (we are at ease), increases our energy level, and genuinely makes us happy.

### 6.3. Benefits related to warming up to psychodrama

Let's just first determine the intention of warming up, and some of the tools we normally use to warm up to psychodrama:

*"The warming up process of the subject to psychodramatic portrayal is stimulated by numerous techniques, only a few of which are mentioned here: self presentation, soliloquy, projection, interpolation of resistance, reversal of roles, double ego, mirror, auxiliary world, realization, and psycho-chemical techniques. The aim of these sundry techniques is not to turn the subjects into actors, but rather to stir them up to be on the stage what they are, more deeply and explicitly than they appear to be in life." (Moreno 1953:83).*

And now let's see what Dorra, who have experience with using yoga and psychodrama together says:

*"I have found that yoga enrich the psychodramatic process by adding important elements which receive legitimacy and support from a nondependent source, namely; the body.... emphasizing on somatization through the practice of yoga direct links are formed to the fundamental stagnation clearly evident in our body... I like to name these direct links "psychodramatic mines." (1998:23).*

Here Dorra is talking about measurable components like the volume of breath, concentration, coping with pain, stability, etc. (ibid). All of these says a lot about the state of the group member, and can be used as a gateway to psychodrama. My intention with using yoga as a warm up will be to bring bodily knowledge to the surface and to warm up to spontaneity. There evidently are lots of benefits regarding yoga and from connecting yoga to psychodrama, some which are already mentioned. Let's look at them more systematically:

We already established that **grounding** exercises is a good way to start to get a group warm, and a good warm up directly before a psychodrama. It is necessary to get the group, and especially the protagonist, grounded before we move to second stage.

Sadly to say, I have experience as a leader, as a group member and as a protagonist, where grounding was overlooked or not addressed enough. As a leader you lose your awareness, it can be difficult to get a protagonist, you lose the group members to boredom, and you can't bring your protagonist to catharsis. There will be no heat. No juice.

So which yoga grounding exercises can we use to escape this, and how do we instruct them? Basically every yoga exercise is grounding, if it is taught the right way. What we have to remember is that we need foundation first to gain lightness, structure to gain spontaneity. Therefore it is important to teach *from the ground up*. We have to take the time to describe how to meet the ground with whatever body part that is connected to earth. Whether it is one foot, both hands, knees, bottom or the whole body. We have to instruct to press those body parts to the ground, to feel the connection. This attentiveness to our roots will help cultivate

awareness and build strength. When you press your feet to the ground with a slight bend in your knees, you can instantly feel the strength building up through the calves and the inner thighs. And from that you can encourage the group members to get in contact with the core. And from being in contact with the core, they can navigate to a place of ease or sukha, into their full expression - to their individual level.

By teaching from the ground up, everybody have the chance to feel what is right for them in their bodies, and this is important because no body is alike. Instead of imposing rigid rules for alignment, we help the group members to develop respect for their bodies and themselves. For example, instead of saying; put your foot down in a thirty degree angle, we can say; put your foot down in a natural angel for you. This embodiment gained from listening to the body is a clear advantage yoga can give to psychodrama group members.

When expression comes from being grounded and from the core, and not from an superficial description of alignment, we can start to explore and feel liberation in every pose, regardless of individual abilities. Teaching in this order will also be a way to install hope in the group members. And when we have established this way of moving and building an asana we can easier be spontaneous and present. On the mat, on stage, and in life.

*"On a somatic level, to be embodied means to break through the character armor and establish a clear, energetic flow, to connect the split off pieces so we are whole and in contact with ourselves and others." (Conger 1994:195).*

Being present and being in contact is basically the same. Yoga is all about being embodied and present **here and now**, and this we have learned is also a good premise for going into a psychodrama. Yoga as a warm up can **create awareness** both in the group members and in the leader. And as a leader I get to look at the group members bodies and read signs from them as they do the exercises. The body cannot hide their wounds and resistance as good as their words. Some may also make useful comments along the way, which I can pick up later. Another thing is that by starting with yoga and focusing on the breath combined with movement, we start the unlearning of bad habits right away. *"When you learn a new way of breathing and moving, by definition, you are unlearning your old way of breathing and moving." (Kaminoff 2014:10).*

Along the way we can use the presence and the awareness we are creating to **link the body to the self**. The body can tell us a lot about where we are in life, by how we control it and how we relate to it, if we learn to listen. And by doing yoga as a warm up the group members will most likely come closer to their feelings.

Our life situation is imprinted in our bodies. As our history is imprinted in our bodies. I can help the group members withdraw this knowledge by asking the right questions. It might be something like: Where is your strength? Where are you gripping? What stories are you creating about yourself and others? Are you empowering or disempowering yourself? You will know if you are disempowering yourself because of the anxiety you will feel. Etc.

By reflecting on their practice, they can learn more not only about themselves but also about the world we live in. Because our practice is mirroring our lives with all its aspects. Afterwards I can ask them to share these answers for example in a protagonist ring, and then we can bring it into a psychodrama.

Personally I have very good experience with listening to my body while practicing asana. When I'm on the mat I know where I am mentally and emotionally. If I can't find my balance on the mat, I know I'm off balance somewhere in my life. And when I work to find balance on the mat, I normally know what to do to find balance in my life. In that way yoga is my compass, because it tells me what I have to work on, and if I dare I can go straight to the fire, just like we sometimes do in psychodrama.

We have already learned that we can **easier access deeper psychosomatic levels** by using yoga or other bodily exercises. Because the body remembers things that our minds might not. I'm not saying we always want to go deep. And there is a lot of knowledge to be drawn from the body that doesn't necessarily touch what Conger refers to as "the black box of early childhood". But let's take a closer look at the connection between psyche and soma, and the development of body therapy. To see if there is something to be drawn from that, and to establish the difference between yoga and other body therapies.

We have found that our bodies holds our wounds, our longings and all that is repressed, and that it must be possible to access these feelings somewhere in the body. But how can we read and have a conversation with the body to access its hidden information? And is it also the other way around, that if we loosen up rigidities in the body it will affect our emotional life? To answer this I think we need to start by looking at how these rigidities got there in the first place, and why we are often not aware of them.

*"Neurotic anxiety stems from an internal conflict between an energetic movement in the body and an unconscious control or block set up to limit or stop that movement. These blocks are the chronic muscular tensions mostly in the striated or voluntary musculature which is normally under ego control. Conscious ego control is lost when the tension in a set of muscles becomes chronic. This does not mean that control is surrendered but that the control itself has become unconscious. Unconscious ego control is like a watchman or a guard over whom the ego or personality has lost authority. It functions as an independent entity in the personality and gains power in direct proportion to the*

*amount of chronic body tension. Charge, discharge, flow and movement are the life of the body which this guard must restrain and limit in the interest of survival." (Lowen 1994:219).*

How many of us have or have had chronic rigidities in our bodies? Stiff backs or knees, constricted hips or throats..? It seems like we once put up these blocks because we had to, or at least thought we had to, restrain ourselves. How can we now then move past this guard, get our catharsis, and get the juices flowing again?

William Reich started to investigate character, genitality and body armoring in the 1920s. He studied the effect muscular contractions had on energetic flow, and invented techniques to develop kinesthetic awareness\* and access suppressed emotional states. (Conger 1994:xvi).

There have been two paths in body therapy. The first has been to identify and confront defense structures in the body, called character or armoring, and to unblock the body and release the energy. The second path has been to dissolve the dysfunction by supportive attention. (Conger 1994:xvii).

Reich, being a true student of Freud, thought that all neurosis came from the damming up of libidinal energy and that psychic conflict alone would not cause illness. He found that repressed instinct was made tolerable by armoring, when the body holds the muscles chronically contracted, and that the body was able to release energy when it experienced a full, sexual orgasm.

Many practitioners have later moderated and expanded the knowledge and techniques of body therapy. We have learned that armoring is not only caused by repressed sexual feeling, but also by trauma and holding back because of unmet emotional needs. And rigidity can certainly be released without being connected to sexual feeling. What bioenergetics today call the orgasm reflex\*, refers to vibrations in the body, and is not the same as a sexual orgasm. (Lowen 1994:249). Lowen was one who contributed to develop Reich' ideas and create techniques to disrupt body armor and release repressed emotion. *"This emphasis on the body includes sexuality, which is one of its basic functions. But it also includes the even more basic functions of breathing, moving, feeling and self-expression."* (Lowen 1994:43).

Conger is talking about five principals of contact; grounding, good boundaries, unrestricted breathing, access to emotion and intention. Which I think sums it up elegantly. We truly need access to those five to be fully present here and now, which according to Conger is to be in contact. (1994:56).

Examples of bioenergetic exercises can be to encourage the client to reach out his arms, and to stretch and make sucking noises with his lips, while lying down. As if he is a small child



reaching out for his mother. This will obviously provoke strong feelings of longing, - longing being the aim for the exercise - or strong armoring against such feelings. Body therapists may also massage the client or make movements for the client and encourage the client to passively follow the movement.

These are strong exercises that most likely will provoke strong feelings. To do this I think you have to know the client very well, there have to be a high consciousness about transference, and it might be better to work one on one, and over time. Bioenergetic exercises often try to provoke feelings around a specific theme. This can be a problem because you might evoke something in the client that is not really ready to be addressed. There could also be a temptation in the therapist to push to hard forward or to hold back because of his own fears.

I believe both yoga and bioenergetics can open wounds on the psychosomatic level, but the aim of doing yoga isn't equally precise.

In psychodrama we might also ask the protagonist to do a movement, make it stronger or weaker to see what happens, and also interview about what this movement means to the protagonist - but normally only after we have seen the protagonist do the movement involuntarily himself. So one could say that we let the themes come more naturally to the surface in the group members - in psychodrama, and also in yoga - than in bioenergetic therapy.

I don't want to aim to pick at exact wounds, but rather stay open to see what themes will arise in the group members during the asanas, and what they choose to bring forth when they meet their blockages. Receive the bonuses that will come from bringing in the bodily aspect of yoga, and learn to transfer that to a drama. In other words I will try not to control the themes, but I still have to keep a high consciousness about what the asanas I choose to use can bring forward, and learn to read the different responses.

I can draw a lot from the experience of body therapists; their aim to loosen rigidity, their reading of the body, and the correlations between the psyche and the soma; meaning the correspondence from the mental issues to the different body parts. This connection is an important clue in reading the body, and it will be there without ever being verbalized. Like sometimes when I meet an obstacle in an asana, and I intuitively know which problem in my life at the time it is related to. We use this interaction in psychodrama too. If I for example see a protagonist pressing his lips together, I would most likely ask him something like; what is it you don't want to say?

It is no doubt that yoga, like bioenergetic exercises, loosens rigidity in body structure. In fact I will guess that some of the exercises in bioenergetics are inspired by yoga, since Lowen was well aware of yoga when he developed bioenergetics. He mentions yoga more than once in his *Bioenergetics*. And yoga existed long before Reich, Lowen or Moreno was born.

Grounding and breathing are the cornerstones of not only yoga and bioenergetics, but also of psychodrama. There is for sure a lot of similarities between the three. It's less important who was first, or who inspired who. I think they all have found some truth, and that these truths resemble each other because they are all touching some universal laws.

When we do yoga we are trying to be **embodied**. Being *at home* in our bodies.

*"Embodiment calls for subtle refinements of bodily movement and coordination. Severe trauma prevents basic functioning and leaves a gap where experiential knowledge should be. Character fills in gaps and structures our disembodiment. The body in recovery addresses the failures of development as well as character structure."* (Conger 1994:196).

I want the body in recovery. And I want to use the body as a gateway to the soul, to psychodramatic work. I believe movement can make people go where language can't. Through the body we might also reach "the black box of early childhood", where we perhaps find repressed memories. If that is what we want. But even if the insight can come in a flash, it will often still be a long way to go.

*"Even when the psychological structures of defense have been understood and adjusted psychologically, the body often continues to hold the old patterns knowing no way to let go of old rigidities. Bodywork helps the client release the rigid holding that psychologically he or she had now outgrown."* (Conger 1994:32/33).

Sometimes we are well aware of what is wrong, but we are still not able to change our action pattern or loosen our rigidities. Our intellectual understanding of a problem is not enough to make the change. We may need "action insight" from a psychodrama, or possibly bodily action insight from doing asanas. Even if we have had catharsis in a psychodrama, it will still be a good idea to physically work through obstacles in the coordinating body part, to help establish a new role.

Often we have to go through the spontaneity - creativity wheel a few times before a role gets stable. Sometimes it never will. (Schacht 2007:37). At some point we understand that our behavior is not gaining us, and we start to change, but then we go back to our old ways. I believe that yoga and psychodrama combined is a good match for keeping us on the right track, because we can switch back and forth between body and soul. Warming up to

soulwork with the body, and going back to the body to anchor what we have learned. **The advantage goes both ways.** This is also a good argument for using yoga for anchoring a protagonist, and for closing a group. More about that soon.

I'm hoping that the "taste" of yoga I can give to psychodrama group members will inspire them to heal the body along with the soul. My ultimate goal would be to propel the group members to a **holistic approach** to their own health. If they don't have that already.

#### **6.4. What do I have to take under consideration in general?**

I have to consider the mental and physical health of the group members. But in fact, with the right instructions, almost everybody can practice yoga. *"If a person is breathing, can move their body, and can focus their attention, they can practice yoga."* (Kaminoff 2014:10).

That being said, I have to be aware of the possible polarization that can arise from the self-consciousness if someone in the group have severe health problems. I don't only have to make sure that they move safely, but also that they *feel* safe enough. And I have to be aware enough to separate physical difficulties from resistance.

In my introduction I mentioned that I feel there is not enough focus on the protagonist's potential of building physical strength or her physical potential of healing in psychodrama groups. It's like we are afraid to touch it. And I can see why. This is truly a difficult subject. Because; how can I as a therapist address for example overweight without shaming the group member (who is probably shamed from this before)? It might not even be in my place, because it can seem like it goes against the rule that we try to avoid giving each other advice in psychodrama. That is true, but it's also true that we to some degree always manipulate. And it might still be possible to address physical issues if I use a questioning approach. Sometimes it might be in place to lead the protagonist's attention to a sore topic. I think that will be better than allowing it to be the elephant in the room. But every protagonist and every situation is unique, so there is no definitive for this. I have to evaluate every situation to see if it's better to reassure the protagonist or to inspire change.

I want to emphasis that this approach eventually will be in addition to the soulwork we normally do in psychodrama. I want to keep the whole human in mind all the time in my work, and be open to also take physical questions under consideration, because I believe that the body and the soul are equally important, and that the soul cannot truly be healthy without us being at home in our bodies. For some group members it might even be easier to address physical problems first. And according to yoga philosophy, one cannot achieve much mentally without taking care of one's vehicle. Besides, there truly is no separation.

*"Where does the body end and the mind begin? Where does the mind end and the spirit begin? They cannot be divided as they are inter-related and but different aspects of the same all-pervading divine consciousness." (Iyengar 1979:41).*

My aim will be to learn to read peoples bodies, learn the verbalization to teach the asanas in a safe way, and the words to encourage the group members to listen inwards and connect to their authentic self. And if I can also motivate them to regular practice, maybe by giving them some asanas to do at home, it will help this processes to be ongoing. Further I have to learn how to differentiate the false self from the core nature, and to evaluate if it will be a good idea to be confrontational or supportive. And also how to channel the difficulties the group members meet in the asanas to the psychodramatic process.

We can say that both yoga and psychodrama are process oriented. They are both actualizing learning *to be in the process*. In yoga we want to learn to control our bodies, but control in yoga means "the release of the burdens of illusions". Moreno also wants us to be in control, but to him it doesn't mean best possible adaption, on the contrary. He wants us to act adequately from a big tool box, to be creative and keep developing. To do that we have to be willing to go through the pain of transformation. I would say that pain and control, in both yoga and psychodrama - is representing development.

## **6.5. Yoga and psychodrama group**

The fact that we can get to the deeper layers through the body speaks for long term groups and not just for one night (or one weekend). Even though there will also be some advantages from working with first timers; then you can catch the immediate, spontaneous body response to the exercise. (Dorra 1998:23). Below I will present a few examples of singular asanas and breathing exercises to be used directly as a warm up to second stage, the acting out. The premise here being that the group members are already warmed up to each other.

## **6.6. Some examples of asanas I can use, how to instruct them, and what to look for**

### **6.6.1. Core breath/The golden flame breath**

**Instructions:** This breath can be used in every pose, and it should be the first priority if you want to dissolve tension. Make it a dedication to stay with this breathing technique for as much of the time that you can during the practice.

Start in easy seat and roll the sit bones wide so you get a solid, wide foundation. Press the thighbones wider. Rest your hands on your knees and relax the hip flexors, so the hip creasers also can relax. Sit up nice and tall, close your eyes or soften your gaze.

Start breathing in and out through your nose. Imagine that you have a flame located just under your navel, inside the low belly. As you inhale imagine that the flame turns downward. Allow the balloon of your abdominal organs to drop down into the base of the pelvis, widening the pelvis bones, warming the hip joints and the sacrum. As you exhale, squeeze from the base of the pelvic floor, and higher; from the muscles inside the pelvis. Hug these two layers in the pelvic diaphragm in and up. The flame points upwards, warmth moves up the spine, clearing away anything you need to get rid of. Inhale, flame down. Exhale, flame up, and the breath flows up and out.

**What to look for:** I have to look for holding and gripping from the outer body; shoulders, lower back, and head. Look for collapses in the spine, and be aware of the belly not pouching out. The breath should support the spine. Look for strengths and recourses.

### **6.6.2. Easy seat/Seated cat cow**

**Instructions:** Sit like a chief with your legs bent in front of you, but don't cross them. Ground your wide sit bones to the earth. See if you can feel a wave of length move through the belly up the spine. Rest your hands on your knees.

Inhale, lean yourself forward, let the breath pour all the way down to the root of the pelvis, and let the pelvis expand. Exhale, squeeze from the root up and out, as you round your back, pull your shoulder blades away from each other and your shoulders away from your pelvis. Inhale, lean forward, let the chest and front body open. Exhale, curl the tailbone, squeeze the breath up and open the back of your heart and upper back. Inhale, exhale, keep going. Try to seek out those places where you might have resistance, and work to dissolve tension by breathing into it. Hold there for a few breaths. Make your individual adjustments. Maybe you want to go out of this front and back motion and make circles, or do an improvised asana? Maybe stretch an arm out somewhere? Remove your tension in your own way. You are here to seek out the obstacles in your body and dissolve them. There is no right or wrong just more or less constructive towards your goal.

Remember to continue the golden sun breath in the center of your body. Giving you the inner body massage, the heat, the support it takes to be able to let the outer body tension go. End: On your next inhale, come back to center. Try to feel if something has changed during the asana?

### **6.6.3. More asanas I can use**

Childs pose (resting pose), Padahatasana (a standing posture of bending forward), Kapalabhati breath (breathing exercise where you "shrink" the stomach), Warrior one with lions breath (a standing posture where you breath out what no longer serves you). All asanas that works with the psoas muscle; it is the muscle you use to curl up in fetal position and there is normally a lot of density here. Savasana (the final resting pose). The list is actually endless. I generally have to consider the group, the setting, and the time limit when I choose what asanas to use.

### **6.7. Important general instructions**

- Grounding, for example in standing poses; ground the tree points of the foot; the heel, the ball of the big toe, and the ball of the pinky toe. Press the points to the ground and feel the strength moving up through the calves and the inner thighs. Separate you toes.
- Remember the core breath
- Take it to your level but not longer
- Get in contact with the core before you move into full expression
- Endure for transformation, if you have to move away, then move and come back to the asana
- If you feel pain, try to find out if it is a good or a bad pain, and if it is a good pain, try to endure.
- Bent knees, arms, rounded back
- When to breathe in and when to breathe out
- Counter-pose - something opposite of the movement you just did

### **6.8. Possible instructions**

- Seek out the places where you might have some resistance, hold there for a couple of breaths
- Do the asana/flow/breathing at your own pace
- Stay longer on the difficult side, the side that needs it more
- Where are you gripping? What is holding you back? What are you afraid of?
- Improvised asana - a free, improvised asana to go out of the pose in the body parts where you feel tension
- What do you need in this asana? Adjustments? Building it up again?
- Are you happy in this asana?
- Make a wave or back of to go deeper

- Closer/wider stance
- Breathe through your mouth if your heart rate is too high for nosebreathing

### **6.9. What do I have to look for in general?**

I have to see if somebody is gripping in their asana; if their arms and legs are taking over, and they are not using their core strength. If the heart is open but the lower back is gripping to make it happen then it is not good. I have to look at the stance. If it is too open there will be no flexibility left. If a group member is too open, she cannot contain herself. Musculature can also be underused and too soft, not only constricted, so I also have to look for collapses and weaknesses. Generally I have to regard the group members and try to be aware of, and address if needed, what is going on with them. It can be something physical but it can also be emotional resistance that needs to be addressed. I also want to encourage their strengths and resources. I need to pick up as much as I can of their nonverbal communication. And ultimately look for character and core nature in the group members.

### **7. Anchoring a protagonist with yoga/Closing a group with meditation**

At the end of a drama it is important to make the protagonist ready to face the world again. This is especially important if the drama has moved in the psychosomatic dimension. The protagonist may have opened some deep wounds, and I don't want to send him into the world in this vulnerable condition.

As it was important to ground the protagonist before going into action, it is equally important to make sure he is grounded afterwards. This is where yoga comes in again. I think standing poses will normally work best at the closing stage, because in sitting or laying positions the protagonist might feel too vulnerable. I can instruct him to ground the feet by pressing the three balls of the feet to the ground. I can adjust his stance, and tell him to bend his knees. If he wants to he can make an expression with his arms. And then I can examine if he feels the gravitation. If he is present in the here and now. And if he is prepared to end the drama here. The way he responds to this will tell me if he needs more work or if he is ready to go to the last part, which is the sharing. Where the protagonist again becomes part of the group, and receives the groups support.

I think the grounding exercises will have more than one function. When we use time on this the protagonist have a chance to integrate the new bodily, emotional or intellectual knowledge he has gained in the drama. This is really important, because like we have looked at above, intellectual understanding of a problem, or even catharsis, might not be enough to

change an action pattern. It takes time and practice to establish a new role, and if we don't take the time to integrate the new insight it might possibly be forgotten as soon as the protagonist is out in the streets again.

*"It is not enough to become aware of one's previously disowned feelings, misunderstandings or denied attitudes which emerge with the catharsis of abreaction; one must further discover some hope that there are ways for effectively dealing with life's challenges. The restoration of morale implicit in this task is called the catharsis of integration. Integration includes a) developing some sense of mastery over the problem, b) receiving group support and c) preparing to re-engage the realistic challenges of the outside world."* (Blatner 1996:95).

We have talked about preparing the protagonist for the world, and in the sharing he will receive support from the group. But before this we have to try to give him hope and make him feel that he can master the problem at hand. How? If we can actually influence the protagonist to do something new, to start moving in a new direction, that might spark him. Sometimes the protagonist has done something new in the drama, but if he hasn't it can be a good idea to do this in the closing stage. We can use the group to practice. Trying to stimulate him to do something in the group that he might later do in the outside world.

On some occasions it might be possible to use yoga for planting a sense of achievement in the closing stage. For example by asking the protagonist to do one of the exercises from the warm up; either one that raised resistance, or one that gave the feeling of strength and ease, and that possibly was the gateway to the drama. But I have to consider carefully if this is the right thing to do, because I don't want to open the wound again. What I want is for the protagonist to feel that something has changed for the better. And for him to get in contact with his strength and his joy.

A breathing exercise might be a good idea. Then he can hopefully feel that he is breathing deeper and freer than before. I can encourage him to breath and look at the group at the same time, and inquire him: Can you practice this breathing at home? You are looking at the group now and breathing, what happens to the group when you breathe like this? Is there someone in your life you can practice this breathing with? This might give him inspiration to keep transforming. It is also possible to work similarly with a standing exercise, asking questions like: Does it feel different than before? Are you more or less dizzy now? Is the resistance smaller or bigger? How is the balance?

So yoga can be used to start to establish a new role and install hope in this stage of the drama, but it has to be done with considerable awareness. Another option is to use exercises from the warm up along the way in the drama to integrate catharsis and to ground the protagonist. Sometimes anchoring will be a big part of the drama itself.



To repeat exercises that we started with, at the end of a weekend, can also with luck be done in the whole group. That way they can all feel the development that has taken place, and this will give them hope and inspiration. Dorra is talking about closing a group with yoga or meditation(1998:28). I can picture bringing Savasana (the final resting pose) and meditation from yoga to a psychodrama group. If I have a group that is working deep and over time, it would be nice to end some days in laying position. Then I will instruct the group members to make themselves comfortable lying on their backs, and talk them through a meditation. This will additionally show them some relaxation techniques that they can use at home. And it will help them integrate what happened during the weekend, align their bodies, and make them ready to face the world again. In my verbalizing I will try to make them grateful to themselves for the work they have done, and that they are willing to transform. The last minutes will be in total silence.

Meditation in easy seat or a chair will be an option if I find the group members to vulnerable for laying down.

## **8. Closure**

We are living in a quite brutal western culture where identity is tied to possessions and performance. Information and demands are constantly pounding at us from many channels. With the industrial and technical revolution going on for centuries we are now at a place where we spend more time looking into square devices than into each other's eyes. Man can seem replaceable. All this focus on abstracts must be doing something to our relationships with actual, living things. To our ability for true encounter. To our presence. And to our humanity.

This society is causing us to increasingly develop new lifestyle *dis*-eases, trying to tell us that something is wrong.

The pressure is causing pain, and it is so easy to withdraw from our bodies when we have pain. Many of us were raised to pull it together and hide our emotions. Turns out this was not a good idea after all. Like Lowen said; often the armor turns out being more crippling than the original problem. (1994:44).

It think that people of today are thirsting for authenticity, - for something real. And that the only way to attain this is by being at home in our bodies. By having a voice, separating the noise, saying yes, and saying no. We need to be in contact with our spirituality. Our breath. Our life force.

But with all the outer demands, how can we manage to hear and stay true to our inner voices, so we don't get sick in our body and souls?

I have tried to prove that psychodrama and yoga both are good methods to get in touch with our inner selves and our inner Gods. This higher self will guide us in our daily actions, and tell us what is right or wrong. When we are in contact with the authentic core in ourselves we can deliver it into the world. In all our relationships, in our jobs, and even into nature. And take full responsibility for our own lives as Moreno wanted us to do.

Who are the heroes of today? Is it the prince that conquers the world, takes on all tasks on his own, and bears it in silence? Or is it the common man that dares to show his humanity and vulnerability and share with his fellow man his deepest fears and insecurities? I think the latter. But this is something we have to learn. And we have to be willing to offer some illusions on the altar of transformation so that we can stay in the here and now, and be in contact with ourselves and others.

Moreno recognized that change can feel very threatening and difficult, and therefore we often stay in ruts to avoid crises we think we cannot handle. That's the reason he created the stage, a therapeutic situation where reality can be simulated, so that people can develop new techniques of living without risking serious consequence. (Moreno 1969:7). By practicing on the psychodrama stage we can develop our role repertoire and learn to be more spontaneous.

I wanted to know if yoga can add something valuable to the psychodrama process. And it shows that yoga can be useful in both the warming up and the closing stage, and in the drama itself too. Yoga will help us attain bodily knowledge and help us reach the psychosomatic level, so we might get deep catharsis. But I think the most important value in yoga lies in its grounding abilities. In short and long term. By that I mean being grounded before, in and after the drama. Besides helping us develop embodiment and kinesthetic awareness on a more permanent basis.

When we have betrayed our bodies yoga can lead us home again.

This embodiment will automatically lead to a more holistic approach to our health, because we are *in* our bodies and *not separated* from our bodies. Being embodied, means being integrated, which again means being whole. When we are embodied, life doesn't have to be a struggle, and we can move through our dilemmas with more ease. Like when you attain *sthira*;

sukha will be accessible. And when you follow the structure in psychodrama you gain spontaneity. The balance between effort and release being the key here.

*"The body can discern, to the finest degree, the difference between that which is supportive of life and that which is not." (Hawkins 2012:45).*

You can use the fine instrument that your body is and ask yourself: Are you happy in this asana? Are you at home in the seat that you are acting from? *Or are you living like a pressed flower?*

The kinesthetic awareness the group members develop will hopefully spark them to take care of their physical health as well. Which is also a way of taking care of our mental health. When you learn to listen to your body you can let the pain guide you to choose less hurtful directions for your life.

*"What is the point of living bent over if we need not do so? What does it mean spiritually and psychologically to be physically ungrounded, or walk with a pelvis that does not move, or talk from a head that seems suspended incongruously above the ground, the assisting body a stuffed bear? What recourse is there when our sexual life is unfulfilling? Quite marvelously a psychologically-oriented body therapy can help us." (Conger 1994:xxii).*

Yoga will have similar affects as bioenergetic exercises, but with a softer approach. I can draw a lot about reading the body from bioenergetic therapy, and Dorra's experience with yoga developing "psychodramatic mines" - creating direct links from yoga to psychodrama and back - sounds promising. I have also taken a few steps myself, trying to use yoga as a warm up to psychodrama, and for anchoring, - with positive response. My plan is to use this study to develop a full psychodrama group, infused with yoga.

## ***Definitions***

**Action insight** - The insight you get through action, it can often resemble an aha-experience, and it's different than insight you get only from talking about a problem and gaining intellectual understanding. Action insight is closely related to catharsis. It can be described as a cognitive release of an idea from the unconscious.

**Asana** - Sanskrit for seat or camp. Normally referring to a posture used when practicing yoga. In a wider sense it can be interpreted as the "seat" from which we act in our daily lives.

**Auxiliary ego** - In a psychodrama the protagonist need someone to play the roles of the people he brings to the stage. We call these helping roles for auxiliary egos. The task of the auxiliary ego is mainly to help present the protagonist's view of reality.

**Bioenergetics** - Bioenergetics are developed by Alexander Lowen and is based on the work of William Reich. Bioenergetics is a method of psychotherapy designed to restore the body to its natural freedom and spontaneity through a regimen of exercise. The foremost exponent of this method is to incorporate direct work on the body with the psychoanalytic process.

**Catharsis** - The purification that we get from releasing or true, naked emotions and feelings. Often reach through the acting stage of the drama. But we can also get catharsis from warming up and from bodywork. Catharsis can take many forms; crying, laughing, anger, screaming, aha-moments, etc.

**Cultural Conserve** - Is the finished product of creative work, for example a book or a painting. But the term can also be used about a situation that is "frozen" or in the past.

**Encounter** - The Encounter is referring to an unconditional meeting between souls. A meeting that is without prejudice or interpretations.

**First extension of self** - The first extension of self is referring to the main provider in the first part of our lives. Normally this will be the mother. This relationship will influence our deepest habits.

**Kinesthetic awareness** - A sensory skill that our body uses to know where it is in space. We will know how tense we are, how far our muscles are stretched, what positions the joints are in, etc, by nerve receptors sending messages to our brains. When we learn to read our bodies our kinesthetic awareness will increase.

**Monodrama** - When we work with psychodramatic methods with only one client.

**Orgasm reflex** - Some bioenergetic exercises will make you mimic movements that the body does involuntarily during a sexual orgasm, to attain vibration in the body - called orgasm reflex. The aim is to release bodily tension.

**Protagonist** - The main character in a psychodrama. The one who gets to act out his own and the groups theme, with the group as witnesses and co-actors.

**Rehearsal for life** - This is when we simulate a future situation and practice what to say and how to act.

**Role-reversal** - At a critical part of the drama the leader will ask the protagonist to change roles with his auxiliary ego. He will get to repeat the words he "gave" to the other, and this might change his perspective and give him new insight.

**Sharing** - Is the last part of the psychodrama, where the protagonist again becomes a part of the group and receives the groups support. The group members gets the chance to share what they have experienced during the drama.

**Social atom** - A social atom is an overview of which persons we have a relation to in each of our social roles.

**Sociometry** - Is the learning of the relations within a group. Sociometry is trying to examine what position the members of a group have in the group based on the choices the group members make regarding each other.

**Sthira** - Sanskrit for firm, stable, strong and active. Here referring to the grounding part of an asana.

**Sukha** - Sanskrit for soft, joyful, easy and comfortable. Here referring to the full expression of an asana. When we master the balance between the polarities sthira and sukha we will find inner peace and harmony.

**Tele** - Tele is a term in psychodrama that is similar to empathy. There have to be empathy both ways to be tele. When we have empathy and see each other clearly we have tele. And then we will also have a mutual understanding of the situation and of what is "going on between us".

**Therapeutic agents** - Moreno found that if you put people with similar problems in groups together they would be able to help each other heal by being each other's witnesses and by supporting each other. He called them therapeutic agents.

**Transference** - The term was introduced by Freud and it refers to something that happens in psychoanalysis; the client transfers experiences from childhood on his therapist and then the therapist makes use of this in the therapy. There will always be transference and counter-transference to some degree in any form of therapy, because we always put projections on each other. It will be useful to have a high consciousness of transference in any form of therapy, but maybe especially if we work with the body.

**Yogi/yogini** -A male or female practitioner of yoga.

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