



DRAMA THERAPY IN CORRECTIONS/FORENSICS SETTINGS

WHAT IS DRAMA THERAPY?

Drama therapy is the systematic and intentional use of drama/theatre processes and products to achieve the therapeutic goals of symptom relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth. Drama therapy is an active, experiential approach that facilitates the client's ability to tell his/her story, solve problems, set goals, express feelings appropriately, achieve catharsis, extend the depth and breadth of inner experience, improve interpersonal skills and relationships, and strengthen the ability to perform personal life roles while increasing flexibility between roles.

The direct application of Drama Therapy in correctional settings can be limited. Far more theater programs exist and in many cases, the work, although not administered by a drama therapist, transforms from being strictly performative focused to therapeutic.

HOW DOES DRAMA THERAPY MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR PERSONS IN CORRECTIONAL AND FORENSICS SETTINGS?

Drama Therapy allows the incarcerated to communicate feelings appropriately, both verbally and physically. DT encourages them to use their imagination, to think outside of the box, to experiment with words and ideas written by others or by themselves. DT teaches and models listening skills, how engage and sustain non threatening communication. DT teaches skills to understand another person's point of view, to analyze a fictional character, how they feel, think, and what they may want. In this process, the individual learns to listen and to understand oneself and their peers. DT teaches the importance and benefits of process oriented programs. DT teaches spontaneity and flexibility between the various roles they play, to recognize the importance of this flexibility, and the need to exercise them at appropriate times. As a result, the following occur:

- A healthy positive self image increases. Most incarcerated feel as if they have lost their identity. They are identified by numbers, are discouraged to express their point of view, are told when to eat, sleep, when to communicate with others, and have leisure time.
- Healthy and trusting relationships between instructors/facilitators and peers.
- Empathy is increased.
- Violence is decreased among participants with peers and security staff.
- Resistance to other therapists is lowered because DT has allowed expression.

- The individual work ethic increases especially in programs where DT is part of a process leading to a performance.
- Participants pursue other self-help or education programs offered inside facilities as confidence is gained.
- Individuals acknowledge the consequences of their action which lead them to incarceration.
- Self awareness of their past, present and future and their ability to communicate this at their parole board hearing is sharpened.
- The need for forgiveness from their victims, families, society and themselves increases.

IN WHAT SPECIFIC SETTINGS DO DRAMA THERAPISTS WORK WITH THOSE IN FORENSICS/CORRECTIONS?

Forensic:

Acute Psychiatric Unit - Adolescents

Long Term Psychiatric Unit - Adults

Corrections

Psychiatric Unit, Maximum Security State Prison - Male adults
General Population, Maximum Security State Prison - Male adults

WHERE CAN ONE FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DRAMA THERAPY IN THE FORENSICS/CORRECTIONS SETTING?

LITERATURE (ABBREVIATED LISTING)

Bergman, John & Hewish, Saul. Challenging Experience

Liebman, Marian, ed. Arts Approaches to Conflict Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Moller, Lorraine A Day in the Life of a Prison Theatre Program TDR: The Drama Review - Volume 47, Number 1 (T 177), Spring 2003, pp. 49-73

Mulder, Randy The Origins and Development of Drama Therapy in Corrections New York University, unpublished graduate thesis (rm794@nyu.edu)

Thompson, James, ed. Prison Theatre Practices and Perspectives, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

WEBSITES

Drama Therapy in Criminal Justice
www.geesetheatre.com

Rehabilitation Through the Arts (Theater in Prison Program) p-c-i.org/rta

Shakespeare Behind Bars
www.kyshakes.org

Actors' Shakespeare Project, Inc.
www.actorsshakespeareproject.org

The National Association for Drama Therapy
www.nadt.org

AUDIO/VISUAL

National Public Radio: Singing (and Acting) at Sing Sing
www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4661515

Chicago Public Radio: Prison Performing Arts: Hamlet
<http://207.70.82.73/pages/descriptions/02/218.html>

Documentary: Shakespeare Behind Bars (Directed by Hank Rogerson) Released 2005

WHAT IS THE NADT?

The National Association for Drama Therapy is a non-profit association incorporated in 1979 to establish and uphold high standards of professional competence and ethics among drama therapists; to develop criteria for training and registration; to sponsor publications and conferences; and to promote the profession of drama therapy through information and advocacy.

WHERE CAN ONE FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DRAMA THERAPY IN GENERAL?

NADT
44365 Premier Plaza, Suite 220
Ashburn, VA 20147
Email for general questions: answers@nadt.org
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