

AUXILIARY EGO TIPS

Auxiliary Ego Tips. Auxiliary egos are persons who play the roles of "important others" in the problem situations presented by the protagonist (central character) in his psychodrama. Auxiliaries also may "double" for the protagonist at the request of the director. As such, the auxiliary becomes a sensitive shadow who observes and communicates the spoken and unspoken feelings of the protagonist. The following training tips are directed to students in training to be therapeutic assistants.

Warming Up The Auxiliary to the Role. It is the director's responsibility to warm-up each participant to the role he is playing. This may be done in a variety of ways which include such maneuvers as having the protagonist give a character sketch of the person whose role is being enacted, getting the protagonist into a quick role reversal so he can show rather than tell what the role is like; having the protagonist "double" each role by standing behind each auxiliary or auxiliary chair; having the protagonist play all the roles (monodrama) for awhile; the director playing the auxiliary role himself for awhile to demonstrate what he wants.

Warming Up to the Auxiliary Role. If the director fails to warm you up sufficiently to the role, let him know directly ("I don't feel I know this role") or indirectly (hand signal or some other non-verbal signal). But give the process time, and create your own warmup by assuming the role even as you walk up to the stage. In fact, the professional auxiliary will have been picking up clues from each group member about the persons in his social atom all along. Your training in improvisations with its emphasis on using every available bit of information, will make it possible for you to get a role started. You will develop your own type of warming up to a role. Rely on your own creativity to advance the role as more information gets to you. You must add flesh and blood to the skeletal role. Be bold; the director or protagonist will straighten you out as you go along.

Building Characterization. As you build a role you are playing as auxiliary, don't be a cardboard figure. Select various physical mannerisms, tones of voice and rhythms that seem to fit. Be as quick to drop them when they aren't working for you as you

were to invent them. Don't be deadpan with your arms hanging to your sides unless the role requires it. Move about so that your body as well as your face can express the mood, attitude, and physical qualities of the role you are playing. Make the stage space your own even as you share the focus with the protagonist. Make gradual shifts in your characterization, if it is appropriate, whether directed to do so or not. You will often hear "That's exactly how he (she) is"; that's fine. If otherwise, the director can then say to the protagonist "reverse roles and show us how he (she) is." How you use real and imagined objects during enactments will reflect the character you are building.

Be Quick to Shift How You Portray a Role. Having brought what you can to the role, incorporating clues from the protagonist, director and your own initial conceptions, be quick to shift how you are playing the role. As the enactment continues, the alert auxiliary will transform his role in the light of new information. We spend training group time doing transformation exercises, so that the transformation process can become second nature. Be sensitive to director's comments. As auxiliary, you are an extension of his ego as well as the protagonist's. He is always communicating to you even when he directs his remarks to the protagonist, audience or cosmos. If he throws you a line, you should not only repeat it with feeling, but take it as a further description of your role. You can also pick up a wealth of new information during each role reversal with the protagonist. Incorporate his new material into your role immediately. Don't throw anything away. What the protagonist leaves out can be as valuable as what he includes. It may be the missing link in your characterization. Finally when you reverse back, repeat the last line immediately even as you cross back to your original position.

Never Stop Learning. Continuing education is a crucial part of working in psychodrama. Even after you become a much sought after, hot shot psychodramatist or certified director, you will still be learning how to be a better auxiliary ego. Auxiliary work is the heart of effective psychodrama. Too many persons attempt to jump right into directing, short circuiting the discipline of auxiliary work, and their effectiveness as director suffers. Other working in isolation and failing to keep their hand in auxiliary work, loose touch with basic psychodrama issues. The psychodramatist

is a forever student of theater arts and especially its most elemental function, acting. His most valuable tool is himself and his role playing skills. To keep in shape he needs to take every opportunity to play roles, to have his auxiliary work criticized and to be his own best critic. He must be continually driven by a need to probe the confusions and anxieties of his own living experience as well as those of others. His is an eternal philosophical quest that probes the nature of human nature in all its facets. He will, therefore, be impelled to protagonize often and to immerse himself in all the liberal arts especially great literature, philosophy and psychology. He will translate the rhetoric of the great schools of thought into the reality of psychodramatic enactment.

Moreno's Concept of Auxiliary Ego. Moreno originally saw the auxiliary ego as an extension of the person in much the same way that a mother is an extension of the child or vice versa. Mother, in fact, is the auxiliary ego of the child and ideally does only for the child what cannot be done by the child himself, allowing the child to become more and more independent and autonomous. The good patient-therapist relationship parallels the good parent-child relationship. Moreno used to assign an auxiliary to a patient and this aide would be with the patient all through the day. When it came to a session time, the auxiliary ego would act just as if he were the patient. If Moreno would ask John, the patient, "Are you ready to work?" John, the auxiliary, might answer, "Yes, I'm ready to work." This use of the auxiliary is only used rarely now. The auxiliary ego now is seen as anyone who is an actor in the drama and who can become an extension of both the ego of the protagonist and the director.

Role Play for Different Directors. On your road to becoming a psychodramatist it would be to your benefit to experience as many different directors and directorial styles as you can. You are like the musician whose learning benefits from playing in different orchestras under different directors. You become aware of the several different ways of interpreting the same theme. Take every opportunity you have to be protagonist or to play an auxiliary role. As protagonist for several directors you can acquire an appreciation for the impact that the director's personality has on your productiveness. As auxiliary, you are the bridge between the director and the protagonist and, as such, must adjust your pace

and tone to that of the director. The more experience you have fitting into various directorial patterns in a variety of settings, the more apt you are to develop a directorial style that is uniquely your own. The better institutes will make this possible for you, or better yet, get experiences at several conventions, workshops, or institutes.

Moments of Difficulty. The director who is training his staff has his own moments of difficulty in directing a session and should be willing to discuss these with his staff. He should also be able to spot areas of difficulty experienced by his therapeutic assistants or other staff directors and spend training group time to work them through. Therapeutic assistants, in their turns, should be alert to their own difficulties and request training time to work them through. A lot can be learned by role playing in the training session moments of difficulty that have been experienced in the patient or growth groups.

Repeat the Director's Line. If the director momentarily doubles your role as auxiliary and feeds in a line, repeat the line immediately. It is often a clue as to the direction he wants the scene to take or an important clue for you in building your characterization.

Stay in Role. An auxiliary must stay in role at all times. Get in role as soon as you set foot on the stage and don't get out of role until you leave the stage. Even if the action has been stopped or changed by the director or even when you are not directly involved in the action, keep in role. A good technique for keeping in role while not involved in action is to assume a preoccupation that is in keeping with the role that you are playing. For example, if you are the mother of a protagonist who has several siblings you might, while not in action, start thinking about groceries, ironing, dinner, etc. Advanced therapeutic assistants learn the art of total occupation (physical) together with the protagonist when needed, while maintaining at the same time a preoccupation of thought. Instead of being preoccupied with a personal thought you could (while the protagonist is talking or while you are less involved in the action) become preoccupied with an object, such as an imaginary picture on the wall or the scene outside the windows. Your action should not take the focus away from the protagonist. Your

preoccupation should not shut you off from the others. Even though you are preoccupied, you may still be together in an activity. If a protagonist begins talking to you as if you were you and not the role you are playing, don't break role, but keep responding as if you were the person whose role you are playing. Even if you want to ask the director something, do it in the role of the character you are playing. As auxiliary, begin talking in your role as soon as you move on to the stage. When you role reverse, always repeat the last line that was spoken by the protagonist. When you are in a role reversal, pick up from the protagonist (who is now in the role you are playing as auxiliary) all of the verbal and non-verbal information he reveals, so that you can build your characterization. Use the important clues as soon as possible when you reverse back. If you are directed to leave the stage, keep in role as you move back into the audience, and justify your exit even if it's simply something like, "I'm going over to Jack's house for a while."

Keeping in role not only creates a stage reality and gives life to the character you are playing, but it also sets a good example for the protagonist who himself needs to stay in role if he is to get the most from his psychodrama. Use anything or everything available to create and maintain your characterization. Don't throw anything away. This heightens the reality for the protagonist and intensifies the relationship between you.

Accommodate that feeling. A director may say to the auxiliary, "Accommodate that feeling." The auxiliary is then immediately required to do something that will be helpful to the protagonist.

Act Hunger Precedes Activity/Dialogue. When psychodramatists talk of act hunger and its fulfillment or completion, they generally speak in terms of the protagonist's drive or motivation. The auxiliary ego in creating his role must realize that the important other he portrays also has inner reactions that create and justify his overt activity and talk. The AE can recognize the appropriate inner reaction from clues given by the protagonist during his warm-up or role reversal or by the side-coaching of the director. By identifying the appropriate feeling tone and physicalizing it (making it visible or expressing it), the AE has the necessary matrix within which to act and speak. Let the words and activities

fit the interaction if you want to create a character that is believable.

Blocks to Awareness. (Gestalt) The psychodramatist should be able to identify certain expressive styles which keep the protagonist from becoming fully open to the psychodramatic experience. These include: (1) introjection; (2) projection; (3) retroflection; (4) deflection; (5) confluence. Without these resistances or blocks to awareness, the protagonist can throw himself into the drama with appetite, confidence and even daring. The protagonist will generally display his techniques for blocking awareness almost immediately. It is not the task of the psychodramatist to overcome the blocks, but merely to identify them and to allow them full expression so that the protagonist can have a growing awareness of what he is doing. In training group we might ask the students to role play to the 9th degree the stereotypes of these contact barrier's so that they will be able to incorporate elements of these traits when role playing or doubling. In doing this, the student actor must realize that he is playing the stereotype, and that this does injustice to the richness of personality. Role playing is, after all, only role playing. The introjector invests his energy into passively incorporating what the environment provides. A projector disowns aspects of himself describing them to the environment. The retroflector abandons any attempt to influence his environment by becoming a separate and self sufficient unit. The deflector engages his environment on a hit or miss basis, while the confluencer just goes along with the trends.

Role Playing the Introjector. The student actor creates a characterization during an improvization that makes it clear to the audience that he is quite content in taking things as he finds them. It becomes obvious that he has become what he is by adopting wholesale the values and behaviors of his important others without ever integrating them to his own uniqueness. He is full of bromides and platitudes. You can tell by voice quality, verbal content, gesture and posture style that he is strictly status quo. He has a hand-me-down sense of right and wrong which he acts out in a that's-how-it-is manner. The role should be played to the hilt so that the characterization is a caricature of introjection. By purposely and consciously playing the introjector, the student

will be better able to identify introjection in others and in himself. By better understanding the energy that it takes to maintain this stand, you will be more ready to encourage the rebellion that it takes to undo introjection.

Role Playing the Projector. The student actor consciously portrays the behavior of a person who projects. He should act out the less pathological manifestations of projectivity found in every day life. Thus he will not distort reality in the serious way of a paranoid, but will merely suggest that he is a person who fails to recognize his own short-comings, describing them instead to others. He is selectively aware of those traits in others that he most wants to disown in himself. His too rigid sense of identity and suspiciousness should be over-played. It should be made obvious that underneath he would very much like to behave in the ways he so vehemently condemns in others. This could be seen in the asides that he makes or in his dried speech by way of things that he alludes to but doesn't deal with. We should see his indignation at minor short-comings in others, and feel his conviction that most people are for him or against him.

Role Playing the Retroflector. The student actor role plays the retroflector who turns back against himself what he would like to do to someone else, or does to himself what he would like someone else to do to him. The portrayal will reveal a tense person with a stiff upper lip who pampers himself on the one hand and is full of self condemnation on the other. His message to the world is "Since nobody pays much attention to me, I'll have to be good to myself." There is also an air of resignation. Like Hamlet, the basic conflict is between action and inaction: "thus the native hue of resolution is sickled o'er with the pale cast of thought." The postures, gestures and movements show that the retroflector is in a holding action, devoting much of his energy to immobilizing some feared impulse. His jaw may be stiff and immobilize; he may cross his arms to hold himself back, sit stiffly in a chair or show any number of muscular expressions of over self control.

Role Playing the Deflector. The student actor has to build a characterization of the deflector, who is an expert at avoiding direct contact with another person. He has all kinds of maneuvers to take the heat off the actual contact. As described by Polster:

“The heat is taken off by circumlocution, by excessive language, laughing off what one says, by not looking at the person one is talking to, by being abstract rather than specific, by not getting the point, by coming up with bad examples or none at all, by politeness instead of directness, by stereotyped language instead of original language, by substituting mild emotions for intense ones, by talking about the past while the present is more relevant, by talking about rather than talking to, and by shrugging off the importance of what one has just said. All of these deflections make life watered down. Action is off target; it is weaker and less effective.”