

First Name

Max

Last Name

Karlin

Email

karlin.max@gmail.com

Affiliation

ET school (STUDENTS only)

Affiliation Name

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

Affiliation Country

United Kingdom

Main Themes

Which techniques for existential therapy?

Keywords

Psychodrama, Embodied Practice, Role Reversal, Surplus Reality, I–Thou Relationship, Experiential Methods, Action-Based Techniques

Title

Embodied Encounters: Integrating Existential Therapy and Psychodrama

Abstract for

Workshop

Abstract

This workshop explores the merging of existential therapy principles with psychodrama's action-based methods, demonstrating how brief "enactments" can deepen clients' awareness of freedom, responsibility, and meaning. Drawing on Martin Buber's (1923) notion of authentic encounter (the "I-Thou" relationship) and J. L. Moreno's (1946:1985) psychodramatic techniques, we highlight how embodied role reversals, future-projection scenes, and "surplus reality" can effectively address what Sartre (1943) called our capacity to "choose ourselves" in the face of life's givens.

Existential therapy attends to clients' struggles with temporality, relationality and isolation, freedom, choice and responsibility, anxiety, mortality, paradoxes and polarities, and the search for personal meaning; however, purely verbal interventions may unintentionally reinforce intellectualisation or avoidance. Psychodrama, by contrast, situates participants in vivid enactments of real or imagined life situations. In doing so, it helps unfreeze clients' habitual narratives, grants fresh insight into relational patterns, and facilitates a moment-to-moment "being-in-action." Building on the concept of "practical-activating" the future (Lorin, 2007), we show how dramatising new possibilities counteracts "practical-inert" fixations on the past.

This 45-minute workshop will feature a condensed demonstration of existential psychodrama. Participants will observe and, if comfortable, engage in a brief, focused scene illustrating how existential concerns (e.g., choice, mortality, and authenticity) can be powerfully encountered through role exchanges, doubling, and embodied dialogue. A group reflection will follow to integrate these experiential insights and outline key ethical and clinical considerations. My aim is to provide practitioners and trainees with immediately applicable techniques that enrich existential therapy sessions, fostering a more holistic engagement with clients' emotional, cognitive, and embodied dimensions.

Max Karlin is a psychologist, counsellor, and trainee existential therapist who works with clients face-to-face and online under supervision in Riga, Latvia and in the UK. Currently completing his penultimate year at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC) and Middlesex University in Psychotherapy Studies (Msc). Trained in psychodrama under Oded Nave (Kivunim - Institute for Psychodrama and Group Work The School for Analytic Psychodrama, Israel), he brings action perspective to his existential approach. Drawing on over two decades of entrepreneurial and commercial experience, Max brings a pragmatic understanding of high-pressure environments and the inner struggles they generate. A founder and co-editor of the Journal of Integrative Psychotherapy and Systemic Analysis, associate member of FETE and a student member of The Society for Existential Analysis (SEA).

User ID

Max Karlin