

Hands-On: Working Creatively with Implicit Memory in Trauma-Focused Dramatherapy

Jean-François Jacques

This experiential workshop aims at exploring the centrality of the body in the expression and working through of unresolved traumatic memories. It will explore ways of working somatically with psychological trauma in dramatherapy by focusing on one specific part of the body: the hands. In this workshop, hands and hand movements will be privileged to explore how trauma is imprinted in body memory, and how the body can also effectively assist its healing. As the psychoanalyst Darian Leader suggests, 'hands are sites of exchange' (2017, p.25) between different psychological states that can facilitate the integration of traumatic memory.

Research in the fields of trauma-related disorders and somatic psychology has shown the effects of traumatic experience on the body and the way in which traumatic memory is largely located in subcortical areas of the brain cut off from cognitive processing, conceptual thinking and meaning making. This type of memory is described as implicit or procedural in the sense that it is unintegrated with higher brain functions and therefore estranged from the traumatic narrative. Working with implicit memory that contains intense emotional and sensorimotor responses associated with the traumatic experience is an essential aspect of its resolution. This workshop will consider how the embodied and aesthetic foundations of the arts therapies provide a particular fertile ground to think about and work through implicit memory.

The implicit memory of the hand and its gesture will be explored by referring to a number of case studies that will illustrate particular forms of embodied intervention in trauma-focused dramatherapy. As well as being experiential, this workshop will invite participants to reflect on how embodied integration in the arts therapies can effectively assist psychic and memory integration.

Reference:

Leader, D. (2017). *Hands*. London: Penguin Books

Biography

Jean-François Jacques PhD is an independent dramatherapist, clinical supervisor, educator and researcher with more than 15 years' experience in the National Health Service and in private practice in the UK. His current areas of research focus on therapeutic theatre, trauma, shared meaning, aesthetics, embodiment, intersubjectivity, otherness and spectatorship. He is editorial board member of the *Dramatherapy* journal and the creative director of the Theatre of Lived Experience whose mission is to foster dialogue through performance. He is published in the field of dramatherapy and has presented at conferences in the UK and internationally.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Publications:

Jacques, J-F. (2020). Investigation into the Production of Meaning in Autobiographical Performance in Dramatherapy. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, Vol.69

Jacques, J-F. (2017). In Search of an Other: Otherness and Meaning in Performance. A Dramatherapy Perspective. In: Hougham, R., Pitruzzella, S. and Scoble, S. (eds.) *Cultural Landscapes in the Arts Therapies*. Plymouth: University of Plymouth Press

Jacques, J-F. (2017). A Relational Approach to Trauma, Memory, Mourning and Recognition through Death and the Maiden by Ariel Dorfman. In: Auestad, L. (ed.) *Shared Trauma, Silent Loss, Public and Private Mourning*. London: Karnac

Conference Presentations:

2019: 'Identification, Catharsis and Aesthetic Distance in the Performance of Lived Experience'. 15th International Arts Therapies Conference, ECArTE. Alcalá de Henares, Spain. September 2019

2018: 'Last Tapes: Performance as Reflective Practice in Dramatherapy Research'. Symposium on Practice as Research in the Performing Arts. University of Bedfordshire, Bedford. June 2018