

Body of Emotions – Rasaboxes Technique in Drama Therapy and Emotional Intelligence

This presentation will examine the application of Richard Schechner's work in the past 20 years –the Rasaboxes technique - to the fields of therapy and emotional intelligence.

Presentation will focus on the value of the work as a model that reintegrates bodily sensations and the immediate experience of emotions into therapeutic work and construction of meaning. It will look at how Rasaboxes' core concepts, originating from the ancient text of Natyasastra and adapted to western theatre, find support in modern research of the psychology and physiology of emotions and in modern approaches of experiential psychotherapy.

The Rasaboxes work intends to train the actor to become an "athlete of emotions" by using the physical articulation of emotion expression to help induce, regulate, understand, master and convey emotion experience. It lies at the intersection between bottom up and top down processes (that is, between the neuro-physiology perception of experience as composed of skeleton-muscular activity, neural networks, functions of the viscera etc. and the spiritual-philosophical-insightful level of experiencing and working with emotions). This intersection is also the place of clinical therapeutic work that incorporates all components of human experience – sensory-somatic, affective and reflective-rational. Hence, applying Rasaboxes to therapy challenges the Cartesian split between soma and psyche that traditional approaches hold. Its adaptation to drama therapy offers a process that originates from the body, focuses on emotions and incorporates role and story in an attempt to foster a balanced emotional-reflective system.

This presentation will look at how the concepts of rasa and bhava are strongly supported by current research. We will look at how this model is used in therapy work with different populations, and demonstrate how it has been adapted and integrated into other training techniques to teach Emotional Intelligence skills.

About the Author

Dana Arie: Dana is an Israeli drama therapist. She holds a BA from Tel Aviv University in Psychology and Theatre, and is a recent graduate of the New York University, Drama therapy Master's program. She became acquainted with the Rasaboxes work during her studies at NYU and since then worked closely with Prof. Schechner and other scholars to explore therapeutic and reformative possibilities of the work. She has used this model with different populations suffering from chronic mental illness, PTSD and homelessness. Dana recently returned to Israel and is working with children on the autistic spectrum with emphasis on developing skills for emotional awareness and emotion regulation.

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Berit Nowicki: Berit graduated from Carnegie Mellon with a bachelor of humanities and arts in Psychology and Theatrical Directing. She continued her interdisciplinary research at the New York University in the Graduate Gallatin School of Individualized Study and is expected to graduate in September 2010 with a degree in Emotion Research and Physical Theater Studies. She is interested in the healing power of the arts and has developed a technique based on Richard Schechner's Rasaboxes actor training to teach emotional intelligence skills in the workplace and interpersonal relationships. Berit has been certified at Yale University to administer and interpret the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT).

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