

Article type:
Editorial

Department of Cognitive Neuroscience, Institute for
Cognitive Science Studies, Tehran, Iran.

Corresponding author email address:
aliashrafimorteza@gmail.com



Article history:

Received 18 Jul 2025
Revised 23 Aug 2025
Accepted 18 Sep 2025
Published online 01 Nov 2025

How to cite this article:

Aliashrafi, M. (2025). Hypnodrama: Integrating Depth, Embodiment, and Spontaneity in Psychotherapy. *International Journal of Body, Mind and Culture*, 12(8), 1-3.



© 2025 the authors. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

Hypnodrama: Integrating Depth, Embodiment, and Spontaneity in Psychotherapy

Morteza. Aliashrafi

ABSTRACT

This editorial introduces hypnodrama as an integrative therapeutic approach that combines hypnosis with psychodrama to facilitate deep psychological exploration and healing. Drawing on contemporary understandings of embodiment, it emphasizes how enacted, bodily expression allows clients to access and transform implicit emotional and somatic memories rather than relying solely on verbal insight. The paper highlights spontaneity and role-playing as central mechanisms through which clients encounter different parts of the self in relation to others, supported by the group as a mirroring and containing environment. Within a hypnotic state, protagonists can more safely and vividly engage with traumatic memories, inner-child states, and symbolic or metaphorical experiences, aligning with Moreno's notion of surplus reality. Hypnodrama is presented as particularly useful in trauma work and complex emotional difficulties, where it may reduce the risk of retraumatization while deepening access to unconscious material. The article concludes by underscoring the promise of hypnodrama and calling for more empirical research, clearer clinical guidelines, and broader training to support its ethical and effective use.

Keywords: Hypnodrama, Psychodrama, Hypnosis, Embodiment, Spontaneity, Surplus Reality, Trauma Therapy.

Introduction

Hypnodrama is a therapeutic modality that synergistically integrates hypnosis and psychodrama to facilitate profound psychological exploration and healing. Psychodrama, employing role-playing and enactment, allows individuals to externalize and examine emotional and relational dynamics (Orkibi et al., 2023). Hypnosis, inducing a focused state of heightened suggestibility, enhances access to subconscious memories and emotions. By combining these techniques, hypnodrama enables clients to re-experience and process past or present situations within a controlled environment, overcoming emotional resistance and fostering deeper insight. This approach, involving the enactment of experiences under hypnosis, aims to deepen therapeutic engagement, enabling a more effective exploration of subconscious conflicts and traumatic experiences, ultimately promoting psychological well-being (Wang et al., 2024).

Embodiment in the Therapeutic Space

In the current landscape of psychotherapy, the concept of *embodiment* has gained increasing attention, emphasizing the inseparable connection between mind and body in emotional processing. In psychodrama, this embodiment naturally occurs as clients enact and physically express inner experiences rather than merely verbalizing them. Hypnodrama amplifies this embodied dimension by integrating hypnosis, allowing participants to access deeper psychophysiological states and to transform implicit bodily memories into conscious therapeutic insight. Through this process, the body becomes not only a vessel of expression but also an instrument of healing, bridging the conscious and unconscious layers of the self (Dokter, 2016).

Spontaneity, Roles, and Encounter

One of the central principles in psychodrama—and therefore in hypnodrama—is *spontaneity*. The therapeutic process depends on allowing the protagonist to act and respond spontaneously rather than being pushed or directed by the therapist or group. Spontaneity cultivates creativity and authenticity, enabling participants to access new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Each role we play in life—such as friend, colleague, parent, or child—emerges from specific contexts of time and space. In the psychodramatic stage, these roles are enacted in the here

and now, allowing individuals to embody their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in a genuine, integrated manner (Giacomucci & Marquit, 2020).

As philosopher Martin Buber suggested, human beings encounter their true selves only through the presence of the Other. In psychodrama, auxiliary egos and the group function as mirrors that facilitate this *encounter*, helping each participant connect with hidden or fragmented parts of the self. Thus, role-playing in psychodrama is not mere acting—it is a profound journey toward self-discovery and authenticity. Within this experiential framework, emotional release (*catharsis*) occurs naturally as individuals reconnect with their inner truth through embodied and spontaneous expression (Giacomucci et al., 2022).

Therapeutic Applications and Clinical Depth of Hypnodrama

Hypnodrama—the integration of hypnosis with psychodrama—offers a uniquely powerful framework for therapeutic transformation. In cases where the protagonist has experienced severe trauma, the direct re-enactment of distressing memories in a conventional psychodrama may risk retraumatization. The hypnotic component of hypnodrama provides a protective and supportive container, helping the client maintain a sense of safety and relaxation while exploring difficult emotional material (Kellermann, 2000).

Through the hypnotic state, the protagonist gains easier access to inner parts of the self, such as the *inner child* or distinct *ego states*, which can then be expressed symbolically and compassionately within the psychodramatic enactment. Moreover, hypnodrama facilitates the experience of abstract or metaphorical sensations, aligning closely with Moreno's concept of *surplus reality*—a therapeutic space where imagination and reality merge to allow the exploration of deeper psychological truths (Greenberg, 1977).

By integrating these elements, hypnodrama not only supports emotional regulation and safety during trauma processing but also enriches the collective insight of both the protagonist and the group. Participants often report enhanced understanding of their inner dynamics and interpersonal relationships, as well as a sense of cohesion and empathy within the therapeutic community.

Conclusion and Future Directions

As psychotherapy continues to evolve toward more integrative and experiential approaches, hypnodrama stands as a compelling model that bridges imagination, embodiment, and the unconscious mind. It not only deepens emotional exploration but also promotes safety and creativity in processing complex inner experiences. In combining hypnosis and psychodrama, therapists are invited to engage both the symbolic and the somatic dimensions of human experience, guiding clients toward profound self-encounter and transformation.

Nevertheless, despite its promising clinical impact, hypnodrama remains underrepresented in empirical research and professional training. Future studies could explore its effectiveness across various populations,

particularly in trauma therapy, dissociative disorders, and psychosomatic conditions. Developing clear guidelines for ethical and competent practice will also be crucial to ensure both therapeutic depth and client safety.

Ultimately, hypnodrama reminds us that healing emerges not only from insight but from the courage to *enact* one's truth in a safe, imaginative space. By fostering spontaneity, embodiment, and empathic connection, it offers a pathway for both therapists and clients to rediscover the transformative potential of the creative mind.

References

- Dokter, D. (2016). Embodiment in dramatherapy. In *Routledge international handbook of dramatherapy* (pp. 115-124). Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315728537-14/embodiment-dramatherapy-ditty-dokter>
- Giacomucci, S., & Marquit, J. (2020). The effectiveness of trauma-focused psychodrama in the treatment of PTSD in inpatient substance abuse treatment. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 896.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00896>
- Giacomucci, S., Marquit, J., Walsh, K. M., & Saccarelli, R. (2022). A mixed-methods study on psychodrama treatment for PTSD and depression in inpatient substance use treatment: A comparison of outcomes pre-pandemic and during Covid-19. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 81*, 101971.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2022.101869>
- Greenberg, I. A. (1977). Group hypnotherapy and hypnodrama. (No Title). <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1971993809773847830>
- Kellermann, P., Hudgins, M. K., & Moreno, Z. (2000). Psychodrama with trauma survivors: Acting out your pain. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287571213_Psychodrama_with_Trauma_Survivors_Acting_out_your_pain
- Orkibi, H., Keisari, S., Sajnani, N. L., & de Witte, M. (2023). Effectiveness of drama-based therapies on mental health outcomes: A systematic review and meta-analysis of controlled studies. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/aca0000582>
- Wang, X., Ding, R., & Luo, R. (2024). Effectiveness of psychodrama on mental health outcomes based on Chinese samples: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled studies. *Cambridge Prisms: Global Mental Health, 11*, e116.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2024.20>