

Some experientially obtained points about nurturing the sense of safety and security

Toshiharu Kasai

I have been leading several different, but consistently, body-oriented psychotherapeutic workshops since I met Carl Rogers in Japan in 1983, and by including Butoh dance exercises after 1988 when I started performing Butoh as Itto Morita. In 1999, I started having dance therapy programs at mental clinics by combining Butoh exercises with dance therapeutic approaches.

One of my conclusions about body-oriented psychotherapeutic approach is that it is deterministically important to create and nurture the sense of safety and security among the workshop participants during each session. I wrote about this in my 1999 paper as “relaxation stage”, and my understanding about the necessity of safety and security has been reinforced a lot and developed since then.

Here are some experiential findings and remarks I have obtained in my workshops.

- 1) It is necessary to gradually transit to the lying position from a standing position, or to a sitting position. *The floor should be comfortable enough to lie down like a Japanese tatami (straw) mat. (We prepare “a blanket for happiness” for them to cover themselves, grasp, or warm. My Butoh partner, Mika, dance therapist, puts the blanket so gently on them that some are moved to tears.)
- 2) In order to make participants to lie down on the back peacefully, the warm relationship among participants and the leader(s) should be realized beforehand, because the lying position can be one of the most vulnerable postures.
- 3) The leader should show the lying, rolling movements to the participants first before asking them to do so. It is necessary for the leader to try to remain physically and socially low. The gap between the standing leader and the lying members might be perceived negatively in terms of power or might elicit unconscious negative reactions.
- 4) Playful but physically substantial exercises should come first in each session to nurture the warm and playful atmosphere among members and leader(s) where any strict movements or postures are not forced. (Movement patterns or postures are shown precisely to give members necessary information about what is suggested. Any different movements/ postures of members should be seen as “new creative Butoh dance”.)

*Any movements that are not regarded as dance can be parts of Butoh performance.

Authentic Butoh should be performed in altered states of consciousness.

- 5) Playful exercises should be the warming-up movements physically and socially.
- 6) During the playful physical exercises, the members are becoming somewhat tired, and it is the time to start “slowing down the body-time”. The leaders’ talking speed and tone, movements, reactions should gradually become slower to change the flow of time while switching from the pleasant movement mode to the peaceful relaxation mode. (Butoh performers train for “painfully slow movements”; a kind of time distortion seen in hypnotherapy.)
- 7) There are several basic exercises and massages when lying for various purposes. (From calm and peaceful ones to twitching, convulsive, and strong ones for internal confrontation.)

[\[ARM-STANDING EXERCISE\]](#)

- 8) After this stage, a couple of playful and pleasant exercises (physical and social warming-up) should be introduced to make members to come back to the normal body-time and daily social relationship.

*Participants are allowed to take a rest at any time or decline any movements/ postures although the leader offers. It is very important to have the warm relationship with the resting participants not only for them but also for other moving members.