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## **Dramatic Release of Stress**

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### **Preface**

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One of the greatest challenges faced in today's classroom is how to deal with stress. Most course work is geared toward the basics and does not provide for varying learning levels, and must be approached as such: it also does not provide for the emotional well being of the student or teacher. Dealing with stress in the classroom is very important for the teacher and student. Stress level is a major factor in a student's cognitive learning ability. It also can be the cause of a student being a discipline problem that disrupts an entire class. The emotional well being of the student is directly intertwined with stress levels. So, students' learning potential and manageability are often correlated with a student's stress level. How can a teacher help, or even find, a student's emotions? The obvious solution is to spend time with each individual student, and the teacher who might like to cry, "There isn't enough time." How can a teacher find a way to zero in on problems that are generating stress and, without prying, help the student within the time frame of school? Problems may be easily detected or they may be well hidden. Let's face it, all adolescents have a certain amount of stress simply because of basic changes taking place physically and mentally. Even the adolescent who is not emotionally in grave distress needs attention. During the adjustment years, adolescents (ages 11-16) seem to suffer an extreme surfeit of emotionalism. This may be solely due to physical and sexual maturation changes taking place <sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, adolescents face many other invading factors in their lives: drugs, sex, AIDS, social acceptance, divorce, abuse, parental conflicts and death being just a few. These are the larger, more apparent stressors for adolescents, but unending self discovery often makes daily life very stressful for most adolescents. <sup>4</sup>

Obviously, students' life stressors and their abilities to cope with them will vary from time to time and from one student to another. The problem of stress must be dealt with if students/teachers are to begin to learn/teach more successfully. The stress that adolescents experience can cause a great emotional block and resistance to the learning process. It is impossible to feed new information into an already fully logged computer disc and a student cannot be fed information if he/she is fully logged with life stress.

For simplicity, a universal approach must be taken in designing an educational structure to help this situation. This unit will provide an easy way to begin to deal with some of the stress that occupies the adolescent's mind.

First, let's be clear about what stress is and what recent research offers to deal with this problem. Stress is a

created state or tension occurring in response to demands and pressures that come from the outside and the inside. It causes bodily as well as mental changes. Some bodily responses in dealing with stress pertain to hormone levels, high blood pressure and the lymphatic system. Stress has also been correlated with poor sleep patterns; either not being able to sleep restfully or the manifestation of increased sleep time. Most of these changes would not be readily visible to the teacher. Stress is usually most apparent during major life events. How might a teacher recognize stress? Early signs can vary and sometimes no signs are apparent.

Some of the mental signs of personal stress are: <sup>2</sup>

1. Lack of ability to think rationally. (A student is bumped accidentally by another student and a fight ensues)
2. Aggression and irritability that is manifested in a displaced manner. (Uncontrollable profanity directed at authority)
3. Drawing away from a relationship. Isolation.
4. An all around inability to relax.

There are, of course, many other identifying factors but these factors are extremely noticeable in the adolescents of today, and lead us to the conclusion that almost all of our adolescents suffer from early signs of personal stress. If stress of this sort is not dealt with, depression, mental confusion and irrational behavior may ensue. Some of the adolescents in today's classrooms have already reached a level of extreme stress. While the aforementioned signs of excess stress are more visible, other pertinent reactions such as low job/school interest, unwillingness to accept responsibility and failure at ordinary daily tasks also exact a toll. <sup>4</sup>

The result of adolescent stress is a classroom full of students unable to focus on anything. The teacher teaches to a room of chaos or a room of zombies. Listening and daily tasks suddenly become foreign to the students. The teacher begins to feel as though he/she is beating his/her head against a brick wall. The teacher becomes stressful because he/she can't get enough work done in a classroom full of stressed students.

What do experts say will help? The most current answers deal with behavior therapy, cognitive therapy, cognitive-behavior therapy, distraction, physical activity, imagery, humor, escape time and relaxation techniques. Most of these are complicated and not readily available to all teachers, many of whom are already feeling an overload in the classroom.

This unit will borrow from all the current findings, combine them with drama, and take a form that can be easily used in the classroom to help students cope with stress. It will supply a light in the darkest part of the tunnel. It will produce laughter, tears, and hope. The unit will only need one hour of classroom time a week.

The unit borders on dramatic therapy with the difference being in its exclusively creative approach. Dramatic therapy would be presented as a definite tool to identify a problem and work it through. It would demand a willing participant, one who would agree that help and therapy is needed. The student in trouble may not realize that the need for help exists or might refuse it. The teacher will need to recognize the troubled student and provide as much help as possible.

The basic requirements for the teacher are not difficult, as they primarily consist of common sense tempered with compassion and warmth. The most important things to remember while using the unit are to remain calm and to be supportive through the initial phases of the unit. Students should be encouraged to decide for themselves what is safe to reveal under the tent of performing and should be offered other areas for possible stress release, if indicated, through teacher guidance. The unit is constructed in three phases.

## Preparing the Teacher for the “Fire”

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In order to help the teacher procure better results, there are several pieces of knowledge, concepts and basic criteria that the teacher should be aware of:

- For the unit to work successfully there must be a letting down of regular classroom walls during the hour spent on the unit each week. The students need to be allowed the freedom, while on stage, to use profanity, sexual comments and outbursts when necessary. When students confront the teacher with questions concerning these freedoms, students seem to respond best when phrases like, “Use your own best judgement” and “Make sure you use common sense,” are used by the teacher. The teacher will need to walk a thin line of monitoring this freedom and allowing it at the same time. Full creative freedom for the student is essential for the unit to operate on its best level. The teacher is the best judge of creativity versus unwarranted behavior displayed by a student. Although you must be aware that even obnoxious behavior or strong displays are signals of a student's mental well being.

More often than not when a person is placed in front of people for any type of performance, their own vulnerability will keep their behavior in check.

- As a class, the students must be briefed on their role as a supportive audience. They won't talk to the performer on stage, but they will “act” as still and quiet as possible. Laughing and clapping in support are acceptable. Each student needs to play the role of paying attention (the first attempt at good acting).

- The teacher should not expect immediate results with this unit. The students will test to see if they will be allowed complete freedom of expression. A student may present a written work containing strong language or content and ask if it is acceptable. If the teacher allows the student to make the decision of performing it in front of the class, rather than imposing restrictions, “the wind is usually taken out of their sails” and the student performs another piece. The students will also test to see if the teacher cares about each student as a person. When a student reveals personal information, he/she will look for acknowledgement from the teacher, and sometimes warmth. It may be advisable to show some simple form of physical affirmation such as a pat on the back or a hug as a simple way of showing concern for the student.

The teacher's best reaction to any kind of testing is as little negative reaction as possible. As an example, a young male student chose to do a monologue about his encounter with a prostitute. He was hoping to create a shock effect on the part of the teacher, but instead was praised for his courage and originality. If there is a serious problem of a completely distasteful presentation, try to make gentle suggestions towards possible new choices.

The teacher needs to be a friend and a guide during this hour. The testing of the teacher is “being put through the fire.” If the teacher can make it through this fire somewhat calmly, then he/she is fifty percent of the way to a better classroom atmosphere for all. If the teacher is feeling abused, try talking with the students about the way “it feels.” The students have hearts, sometimes they just need to be prompted.

The nature of the unit is one that could be viewed much like group therapy. The unit should not be presented to the student as a form of therapy, it should be presented in its pure creative form. The creative work will produce results on its own merit. The teacher will be very much like a coach for the students. Because of the nature of the unit and the nature of dramatic performing, there will be some awkwardness. This awkward feeling is due to the vulnerable nature of the work. Once the ice has been broken the threat and fearfulness becomes lessened and enjoyment ensues.

## Phase I: Relaxation

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Relaxation techniques are used frequently in an actor's world. The actor needs such a process to deal with performance nerves, audition nerves and to help free imagination, emotion and inner instincts. The actor believes daily experience gives him/her tools for performing. The use of relaxation exercises helps the actor slow down from daily activity and tension, thus enabling the actor to center in on emotions and gain control of them for use or to discard unnecessary binding stress. Relaxation puts the actor in a position of control rather than being controlled by stressful feelings. This effect is desirable because the actor has another life (the characters or performers) to deal with on stage, and imagination and concentration are required to enhance the character with new daily experiences. Distraction caused by daily life causes problems for the actor, such as loss of lines, lack of cooperation with other actors and personal sense of failure. Being relaxed helps the actor more readily work successfully. Relaxation is used for bodily awareness. Nervous tension is a problem that the actor needs to be aware of. Nervous tension is a result of nerves and stress. Through relaxation the actor can become bodily aware of tension and the problems it creates. One example of a problem brought on by tension is nervous tension movement such as uncontrollable wringing of the hands when performing for a group of people. Other examples are being bodily stiff or the inability to move when performing. Once the actor is more aware of tension and its effects, the behavior can be deleted or it can be used for character enhancement. The actor now has a choice. When the actor actively chooses performance behavior, rather than being controlled by nervous tension, then the actor is in control rather than the tension controlling him/her. The actor can choose to wring the hands to show nervousness or appear stiff to portray shyness. The power of choice has been created through awareness. Awareness has been created through relaxation exercises.

The first and most crucial relaxation exercise consists of an imaginary trip. The students begin by lying flat on their backs and focusing on their breathing. The student should count silently to ten while inhaling and exhaling. (The teacher can count to ten out loud a few times to set the pace for the class.) This type of breathing enables the student to slow down mentally and physically. The teacher should talk in a basic tone, with a slow rhythm, guiding the students verbally through the tensing up and releasing of tension throughout the body. The teacher may begin with the toes progressing upward or the top of the head progressing down. An example would be: "Students tense your toes, breath, relax your toes."\*(See Lesson Plan) After guiding the students through this process the next step is to guide the student through an imaginary trip. Explain to the students that the trip is in the mind only and minimal movement is acceptable but extensive movement will disrupt the relaxed state. An imaginary trip is included in the lesson plan. The muscle relaxation technique can also be used without the imaginary trip after the completion of the exercise 2 or 3 times.

The use of this exercise should be explained to the students as a tool to use when developing their monologues or when working on characters. It is also a tool to help gain control of nervousness. The simple act of breathing slowly and with great awareness can give the student control again in a moment that lacks control. The teacher can use the exercise to help students begin to make choices in life. The old count to ten with breathing and then thinking will help the student learn to behave more rationally in irrational times.

The length of time devoted to the relaxation portion of the unit can vary. After the completion of the first technique two or three times as a class the students will be prepared for Phase II and Phase III. Mastery of relaxation could take a lifetime, so the teacher may want to return to this phase even after having moved forward into Phases II and III. It is the beginning of the unit, but should not be left behind when the students have gone through the phase.

Even the student who does not master this exercise will still reap some of its benefits. The idea is that without the pressure of actually going through therapy, the student will learn, slowly but surely, to transfer the control offered to help them as performers into control of everyday life situations. Just as the actor assesses unwanted behavior in a developed character, the students can begin to recognize unwanted behavior in their own lives and start to find ways to make new choices in situations where previously they may have reacted without forethought. Relaxation helps the imagination, strengthens the performer, puts ideas into perspective, and is the stepping stone to performing in life as well as on stage.

## **Lesson Plan I: Relaxation with Imaginary Trip**

***Objective Students will learn to actively take part in relaxing themselves physically and mentally. Students will learn to become aware of specific thought processes through relaxation exercises.***

***Materials Needed Mats or towels (optional for students to lie on)***

### ***Procedures***

1. Explain to students they will be doing a relaxation exercise. It will help them act (on stage) and exercise their imagination.
2. Have students lie flat on their backs with legs flat or knees bent. (their option)
3. Tell students to close their eyes and that no looking around or talking should be done during the relaxation exercise.  
Have students focus on their breathing by saying something like:  
"Focus on nothing but breathing, feel the air going in, feel the air coming out. Concentrate on the sound of your breathing, notice if you are taking slow or rapid breaths. Try to release all the thoughts from your mind while exhaling."
- \*5. Tell students to continue to be aware of their breathing and to listen to the directions given by the teacher.  
Now the teacher will begin giving directives to the student for body relaxation. Example lead in: "Now I will guide you through relaxing the entire body. Tense your toes, breathe in, release the air and tension in your toes. Tense your feet, breathe in, release the air and tension in your feet." As students and teacher become more familiar the guiding can be simplified to: "Tense (guide word) and breathe and release. Using these guide words, toes, feet, ankles, calves, thighs, buttock, pelvis, lower back, upper back, shoulders, neck, chin, lips, face, scalp, entire head, students are lead through complete muscle relaxation.  
Tell students to continue to breathe and be aware of any body tension being released. Tell students to do this on their own while following in their minds the imaginary trip. Example Imaginary Trip: As you are lying on the floor, suddenly you realize it is sand beneath you not a floor. Then you realize the sun is on you and you are hot, very hot. The sand you are lying in is warm and the sound of the water is in the background. The heat is almost unbearable, you try to move and cannot. (Now give students a few moments to absorb this much.)
- 7.

\*Finally, you are able to move and slowly you make your way to the water to cool off. What color is your water? Blue, green, blue/green. Is it clear or dark? You look around and realize you are on an island. What type of trees does your island have? Palm, oak, etc. . . . Are there animals? What sounds do you hear? Do you hear birds, wild animals, bugs, wind, etc. . . . You see a raft over by the shore and you get into it. What color is it? Is it made of logs, wood or rubber? You get into the raft and lie down and begin to float. Feel the water underneath you. What does it feel like? Is it soothing or unsettling? You are very tired so you lie serenely on your raft. Suddenly you realize you are lying on the floor again.

- Tell students to take their time getting up and make sure all are awake
8. as some may have fallen asleep. Evaluation should begin immediately with the students grouped together.

\*See essay portion for further clarification or information.

### **Evaluation**

Group Discussion.

Were you able to feel relaxed and focus on the imaginary trip?

Did your mind wander?

What did your island look like?

Did you decide why you were there?

How do you feel right now?...More relaxed, the same, a little different?

What color was your raft and what was it made of?

Students should show some proficiency the first time they attempt this exercise. After a few times look for increased ability. The island trip can be used again, expanded on or new trips may be developed. Make sure new trips are of some sort of relaxed nature at the onset.

## Phase II, Personal Monologues

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Personal monologues are the centerpiece of this program. Explain to the students that a monologue is a piece to be performed alone. These pieces are to be chosen works, improvised or written, then performed by the student. The only criteria for developing monologues are that the student should have strong emotions towards what is chosen and feel comfortable or capable of performing the piece for the class. The pieces do not need to be memorized but they may be. The students should be encouraged to be creative with real life situations; changing outcomes and changing names of the persons involved in written and improvised monologues are helpful guiding tools. Give them class time to work on writing and deciding what they would like to do. The teacher can use the time to answer questions regarding ideas and to work with individual students. The suggested time for writing and preparing a monologue is three to five one hour sessions. At this point the teacher should not sit behind the desk, but should reach out to the students. When the students have been briefed on the freedoms given within this unit, they will more readily respond when given time to deal with the teacher on a personal level. After the teacher feels that the students have all been given a chance to work on some type of idea and has spoken with many of them, it will be time to begin calling on students to perform their Personal Monologues. Each student will display a different area of proficiency when performing. Many will display apprehension. Students may suddenly lose ideas they worked on. The teacher only needs to take a few moments to go over the ideas again with the student. If the student still does not seem ready, the teacher can allow the student to perform the piece to the teacher on stage. Another method that can be used with the frightened student is a distracting action, an example of which would be to give a student the task of tearing up a piece of paper into tiny pieces while performing the monologue. This relaxation exercise, or silently counting to ten and breathing will also help in this situation. Students can begin by taking a breath, counting silently, exhaling and taking a breath again when necessary. This exercise gleaned from the relaxation phase can be used while performing. If a student chooses to read the piece, try to get her/him to look up when speaking. It is best if all students are advised to choose a focal point above the audience members' heads. Looking at the audience may unnerve the student and should usually be avoided. The basic actor would begin to work past this problem but for our purposes it is not necessary. The student needs to project the voice and feelings; finding key lines to repeat and emphasize. This type of work, along with allowing an opportunity for a repeat performance, will help insure that the student feels he/she has been heard and been given a chance to fully express themselves.

When beginning the performance of the monologue, it will probably be advisable to choose a student to go first who is likely to excel. Then give something extra to the student who does well in front of the group and be prepared to give the student actions to go with the piece. An example of something extra would be: A student does a piece on the death of someone, suggest they do the monologue again and improvise a conversation with the spirit of the person. An example of added action would be physically reenacting the event described. \*(See Lesson Plan) If students who excel are resistant to extras try not to push them. If any student is unable to perform, have them write down and turn in what they would like to do.

During this phase, compassion and warmth, supportive statements and positive feedback from the teacher should be used. It may be necessary for the teacher to work with one student for the entire hour. The teacher should also have information on hand to direct students to extra help if necessary; such as books on presentations, experienced people, other students who have met with success.

This phase will also give the teacher some clues into what the student is like emotionally. The beauty of this phase is that it becomes a time of stepping out of the basic day to day doldrums. Whether a student does



something silly or serious, as the emotions flow, everyone's stress becomes lessened. There is no secret to why it works. It is simply wonderful to have the chance to express oneself. The personal monologues will help the teacher and student get to know one another. Personal Monologues can be done as long as the teacher chooses.

## **Lesson Plan II: Personal Monologue**

***Objective The student will learn to express themselves creatively through a monologue, speak in front of an audience as well as learning to be a good audience to others.***

***Materials Needed Space provided for a stage area, a chair***

### ***Procedures***

1. Give students an explanation of monologue, and that it will be performed by them alone in front of the class. \*Allow students time to prepare a personal monologue of their choice. (written or improvised)
2. \*Meet with students for several one hour sessions and work with individuals to help them formulate and feel comfortable with the subject chosen as well as the personal monologue itself.  
Explain to the students that being an audience is as important as being a performer. Classrooms that do
3. not naturally respond to being a good audience can be given letter and/or conduct grades for being an audience member.
4. Set a chair up on 'stage' (real or created) and choose a student to perform their personal monologue.  
\*See essay portion for suggestions in dealing with problems.
5. Have a student perform their monologue and when finished give him/her additions and/or new ideas and the opportunity to perform again with these additional suggestions.

Examples: Action movement that fit the story: Miming a sporting game or event. Action movements that fit the character or a distraction for the nervous performer like pacing, jumping or skipping.

6. \*Close out student work on the monologue when deemed necessary. Have the audience applaud.
7. Give student personal words of affirmation.

"I really liked \_\_\_\_\_"

"It was funny when \_\_\_\_\_"

"I could really empathize with \_\_\_\_\_"

### ***Evaluation***

Was student successful at choosing a monologue?

Did the student perform monologue?

Was the audience supportive?

***Optional Letter grades may be used if the teacher feels they are helpful. Talent and effort should be balanced for letter grades.***

Excerpts from Monologues actually written and performed by students . . .



“Has someone really close to you ever died? Well it’s happened to me. Two people within two months. First it was my Grandmother. Not only was she my Grandmother but she was my best friend. She gave me everything I needed . . . food, clothes, money and shelter. She was always there for me and always took care of me. But then things changed. I had to start taking care of her. The doctors said that she had cancer. After 3 weeks, she passed away.

Then, my Grandfather. He got really sick the day before my Grandmother died. He was admitted into the hospital. After two long months in the hospital bed, he died.

I really didn’t know what I was gonna do. I mean my friends were there for me, they were really supportive. But, I mean do you know how it feels lying awake at night and crying. I mean first you’re guilty cause you didn’t even get to say goodbye then you keep asking, ‘Why God, why this person?’ I mean you always think they’re gonna be there for you and they’re gonna see you graduate high school. But, as the months passed I realized that even though that person passes on their memory will be there forever.”

“Have you ever really been in love? Well, I have, and it’s really shocking because I’m not the type of person to fall in love, and all my friends know that. They were really shocked when I poured my heart out to them and cried on their shoulders.

Now this is how it all started. It was about 2 weeks before Valentines Day when this certain person who never even looked at me started noticing me and saying ‘Hi!’ when he passed me in the halls. Then he started calling me. Well I thought he was just being nice. I never knew what I was in for. One thing led to another and we started going out. I wasn’t sure how much I liked him. I knew I liked him a lot but I has no idea it was love. It finally hit me on Valentines Day when he didn’t even call me. I was really upset, cried all day. I kept the crying to myself, I didn’t let anyone know it effected me. The next night he ditched me. I got dumped. Yeah, I guess you can say he played me. After that we didn’t talk. Well actually I didn’t talk to him for about two months. I went out with a few people that didn’t really mean much to me to try to take my mind off him and to help me forget him. But I knew no matter what, I still wasn’t over him. I wanted to kill myself, I was so miserable, until April vacation! He called me, I said ‘Wait a minute, this has to be a joke, you’re actually talking to me?’ We talked for an real long time and then just out of the blue he asked me out. I didn’t understand why, but I didn’t care at the moment because I was happy and going out with him! This relationship was going pretty good, well that’s what I thought. On our one week anniversary he called me up (himself) and said ‘I don’t think we should go out anymore, but he wants to stay friends’. Well I just said O.K. and hung up and cried for days. That is the worst thing to say, and he said it. I couldn’t believe what he was putting me through. I couldn’t even look at him, my eyes would get all glassy, but I refused to cry in front of him. I kept on saying to myself ... ‘He isn’t worth it’, but I knew in my heart it really was. Recently he started talking to me again, just when I was trying to get over him. Now I love him even more. I try to get over him, but I just can’t help myself. He tells me he likes me but I don’t believe him and I don’t want to because I really don’t feel like getting hurt again. He told me he would ask me out, but his best friend likes me. That was like a knife going through my heart. In a way I wanted to believe him but I couldn’t. Sometimes I say to myself . . . ‘Why do I love him? Why am I wasting my time on someone I don’t have a chance with? Why me?’

I guess I don’t really have a choice. There is one thing I know, and that’s he is my first true love and even if I never get him back I will never forget him.”

## Phase III, Enrichment

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Phase III is basically a time for the teacher to relax. It is included to provide the classroom with a place in which to move into for expansion of their personal monologues. Activities used in Phase III can be used intermittently during Phases I and II. *Scene Work* is any written work that can be performed by two or more people. It can be derived from the list of plays in this unit's resource book, or, it can be written by the students, the teacher or both. Scene work should concentrate on listening skills of the performers involved to better improve their success at working together. The use of subject matter that the student finds interesting is usually the most successful.

*Role Play* is similar to scene work but it is specifically used for working on standing in another person's shoes. A common use of role play is to allow students to solve daily problems on stage. Problems with parents, teachers and one another are possible options. Role play can be very helpful in dealing with conflict situations.

*Improvitational Work* can be fun or a way to tackle serious issues. It is a great way to play while performing. It is work using thoughts from off the top of one's head. There are many improvisational games. One is called the one word story. Each student is allowed to use one word with the next student adding a word and together the words are to form some sort of story. Another improvisation game is "draw the idea from the hat." Different ideas for scenes are put into a hat and drawn by groups of 2 to 3 people. The students then must perform a scene using the idea. Listening and cooperating are focal points for improvisational work. Other improvisational games can be found in theater books, some of which will be included on the unit teacher resource book list.

*Character Development* is yet another area of enrichment. Character development can be done through the study of character within a play or through real people and their personalities. When deriving a character profile from a play, traits can be determined from context clues and/or personal interpretation. This project may be done by individuals or as a group. When using everyday people; observing and the use of stereotypes are fun. The key to developing a well rounded character is using one's own life experiences and expanding them with observations and imagination. \*(See Lesson Plan)

All of the suggestions of further enrichment in Phase III are easily found in books that deal with theater. Using the strengths of stressful emotional release found in Phase I and II in combination with other areas of drama, stress can be released in new and innovative ways. The teacher can create a system that works for his or her classroom.

### **Lesson Plan III: Improvisation Work, Role Play, Scene Work, Characters**

***Objectives*** Students will learn to work from instinct and think quickly.

***Materials*** Paper and pen (optional)

***Procedures*** The following is a basic outline for improvisational work.

1. Participants are chosen.  
Initially, working with smaller groups is easiest.
2. Ideas are chosen. Conflict situations are usually the simplest to work with.  
Parent/child conflicts

Boy/girl conflicts

Friendship conflicts, etc. . . .

3. Short discussion among performers (teacher may also participate) about how the improvisation will go.

4. Put the scene on stage.

If necessary, the teacher can ask students to find way to end the scene.

***Evaluation As the class discusses choices made on stage new or alternative choices can be discussed. Now the option to restage with new choices exists.***

## **Lesson Plan IV: Character Development**

***Objective Students will learn to observe the characteristics that create personalities in life and stage.***

***Materials Needed Any written play (optional)***

***Procedures*** This is just one of several basic observation lessons used to give insight into character development and the following can be transposed for usage in other ways.

1. Discussion: Personalities, What creates them? Voice, movement, nice, cool, villain, hero . . .

Have each student choose one person to observe for one week. The way they walk and talk. How do they

2. act when happy, angry, upset, nervous, etc. . . . Noting as many characteristics, physical and/or emotional, as possible.

3. Have students report their findings and emulate at least one thing observed.

4. Discuss these traits as building blocks for characters.

5. If using a play, after completing steps 1 through 4 have the class read the play and discuss possible traits of one or two characters and how they relate to the actual people observed.

## ***Evaluation***

Did student participate in the discussion? Was student able to observe characteristic traits? Was student able to transfer this knowledge to understanding characters in a play?

## **Synopsis**

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In closing, Phase I and II alone could be enough for the entire year, but enrichment areas are encouraged. As more choices are made on stage, and more emotions released, stress levels will decrease. The creative style versus the therapeutic presentation takes off the pressure of being psychoanalyzed and brings a new freedom of expression. As the teacher and student progress forward, learning more about one another by laughing and crying together, the classroom will reach new heights. The overloaded systems will be re-programmed and new information will be received. The student will learn to be better equipped for life performance. As the teacher sees student improvement their stress levels will decrease. The student and teacher can be hopeful and excited about an accessible answer to the problem of stress. Creativity will create a new classroom for all.

## Resource Books for Teachers

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- Albright, H.D. *Acting: The Creative Process, 3rd edition* . Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1980.
- Benedetti, Robert. *The Actor At Work: An Introduction to the Skills of Acting* . Englewood Cliff, NJ:Prentice-Hall, 1981.
- Cohen, Robert. *Acting Power: An Introduction to Acting* . Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield, 111978.
- Franklin, Miriam. *Rehearsal: The Principles and Practice of Acting for the Stage* . Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972.
- Lane, Yoti. *The Psychology of the Actor* . Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1960.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *Building A Character* . New York: Theatre Art Books, 1949.
- Chilver, Peter. *Improvised Drama* . London: B.T. Batsford, 1967.
- Martin, William and Vallins, Gordon. *Exploration Drama* . London: Evans, 1970-77.
- Pierini, Mary Paul Frances. *Creative Dramatics: A Guide for Educators* . New York: Herder & Herder, 1971.
- Barker, Clive. *Theatre Games* . London: Eyre Methuen, 1977.
- Eberle, Robert. *Games for Imagination Development* . Buffalo: DOK Publishers, 1971.
- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theatre: A Handbook of Teaching and Directing Techniques* . Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1963.
- Anjanaro, Altshuler. *Response to Drama* . Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.
- Barranger, M.S. *Theatre: A Way of Seeing* . Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1980.

## Scene & Monologue Resource Books for Students & Teachers

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- Durang, Christopher. *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* .
- Early, Michael and Keil, Philippa, Eds. *The Best Monologues of the 80's* . (Women)
- Early, Michael and Keil, Philippa, Eds. *The Best Monologues of the 80's* . (Men)
- Harling, Robert. *Steel Magnolias* .
- Henley, Beth. *Crimes of the Heart* .
- Howe, Tina. *Painting Churches* .
- Kaufman, George S. and MacGrath, Leveen. *Amicable Parting* .
- Nigro, Don. *Seascape With Sharks and Dancer* .

Noonan, John Ford. *A Coupla White Chicks Sitting Around Talking* .

Simon, Neil. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* .

Terkel, Studs. *Working* .

Wade, Kevin. *Key Exchange* .

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3. Hanson, Peter G. *Stress for Success: How to Make Stress on the Job Work for You* . 1st ed. New York: Springer Verlag, 1986.
4. Johnson, James H. *Life Events as Stressors in Childhood and Adolescence* . Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1986.
5. Kendall, Phillip C. (Eds.) *Advances in Cognitive Behavioral Research and Therapy* . Vol. 3, Florida: Academic Press, Inc., 1984.
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