

# Coffee Break with Marcia Karp

# 50 IAGP years

50 years and beyond  
group competency for  
a world in conflict

## How was first encounter with IAGP? How long have you been a member of IAGP?

My first encounter was at a forerunner to the IAGP It was in 1968, Vienna when Moreno organized a meeting of group psychotherapists. There were many from around the world, who came to learn from each other. After that, my first encounter of the IAGP was in Zagreb. I was so enthusiastic and wanted to be involved in people learning aspects of group work from each other.

## In all these years in IAGP, what kept you motivated to be a member of IAGP?

A sense of belonging to a similar task and making friends to complete worthwhile projects in challenging times. Promoting group psychotherapy has been a focus.

## What is your main theoretical approach? Why do you feel closer to this approach?

Psychodrama is my main work. I enjoy meeting people in action. You get to know them by what they do and not by what they say. Humour is important to the work. It gives perspective. People who can laugh together often can cry together.

## How was your first encounter with psychodrama?

It was by accident. Moreno used to say that the best things in life happen by accident. I was studying speech pathology in a library at the University of Wisconsin. Above my head was the book Psychodrama Vol. 1. As a young clinician, I was working with stutterers in groups. I asked my professor if I could incorporate simple role reversal with my clients. For example, one young man became his assertive grandmother and shouted, "Get off the grass!". He had no speech hesitation at all. Fluency was established in the role of another. My fascination grew.

The first time I saw psychodrama was watching Jim Sacks, PH.D, a Moreno disciple, direct at the Psychodrama Institute, 78th and Broadway in New York City. I was amazed. It was like walking around in someone's mind. The theatre was a place for anyone in the public sphere to work out personal or social issues. Moreno called it the "Theatre of Mercy" or the "Theatre to Heal Men's Minds".

Each night of the week, there was a different trained director. The Morenos directed Friday nights. On rare occasions, there was 200 people and a second room upstairs for another audience. More usually between 8-50 people in the audience. In 1966, I became one of those directors.

**"I like to keep the group active, related to the action and involved. Seeing the healing process of group members sharing their personal stories can create a feeling of safety. Moreno said we are all inflicted with normosis, or the struggle to be 'normal'."**



## IAGP Member of the Week

**Marcia Karp, United Kingdom**

*She was at a forerunner to the IAGP in 1968 in Vienna.*

Trainer, Educator and Practitioner of Psychodrama (T.E.P.)

Diploma awarded by The American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy.

Registered: United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapists (U.K.C.P.)

She was Honorary President of the British Psychodrama Association for 11 years.

She was on the Board of the International Association of Group Psychotherapists for 6 years.

She is a Fellow of the American Association of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama.

She has a Directorship Certificate from the Beacon Academy, Beacon New York, Trainers, J.L. and Zerka Moreno.

She is a founding member of the Federation Of European and Mediterranean Psychodrama Training Organizations,

She is the recipient of the J. L. Moreno Lifetime Achievement Award of the ASGPP and Recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the BPA.

e-mail: [info@marciakarp.org](mailto:info@marciakarp.org)



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**How long have you been practicing as a psychodramatist?**

I've been practicing 57 years.

**What would you say have been the most significant developments within the field of psychodrama since your interest in this area began?**

Taking this group method into the global sphere through further development of psychodrama and sociodrama, the emergence of TELE'Drama, and involving younger mental health professionals.

**I know that you were a student of J. L. Moreno. What was his main characteristics as a psychodrama leader?**

Moreno created a feeling that the room had its arms around you. Nothing was too big or too problematic. JL was a naive observer, like a child. He was curious and excited by the unknown material of the protagonist. He was respectful and non-judgemental. Having grown up with the atrocities of war, he said, "Every therapeutic procedure should have no less a goal than world peace."



**What did effect you most in the teachings of J. L. Moreno?**

Surplus reality had a great effect. It isn't what happened to us that we can change but we can effect what life hasn't yet given. For example, if the protagonist never had the opportunity to say goodbye to a dying parent, they can enact it, releasing feelings that have been caught in a cobweb of unexpressed emotion. Role reversal, the engine that drives the psychodrama of relationships, is a simple technique that can be applied in any relationship.

***"The director must be the most spontaneous member of the group. It then is infectious for other members. The director should be open to what the protagonist needs, at the point of the drama. Sometimes people do the drama they want before they're ready to do the drama they need. The real director can be the protagonist and the director assists them."***

**Can you tell us creativity and spontaneity? What a psychodrama leader can do to increase creativity and spontaneity in the groups?**

Firstly, leave anxiety at the door. Speak to it and let it go. We know that high anxiety reduces creativity and spontaneity. Let the protagonist and the group help you make decisions.

For protagonists, people are more spontaneous in the role of another. Ask the group to introduce themselves from another role. Have them stay in the RR position, in the drama, much longer than usual and get their feedback. Have the protagonist approach the scene like an innocent child would.



IAGP Member of the Week  
*Marcia Karp, United Kingdom*

She has Co-edited "Psychodrama: Inspiration and Technique," P. Holmes and M. Karp, Routledge, London/New York, 1992, published in Portuguese, Hebrew, Spanish, and other languages; "Psychodrama Since Moreno", co-edited by P. Holmes, M. Karp and M. Watson, Routledge, London/New York, 1994 and "The Handbook of Psychodrama", co-edited by M. Karp, P. Holmes and K. Tavon, Routledge/Taylor Francis Group, London/New York, 1998 recently published in Greek, Russian, in translation currently in Japanese, and other languages.

She has written a chapter: Psychodrama of Rape and Torture: A Sixteen -Year Follow-up Case Study, in "Psychodrama with Trauma Survivors- Acting Out Your Pain", Edited by P. Kellermann and K. Hudgins, Jessica Kingley Publisher, London/Philadelphia, 2000.

She wrote, "Introduction to Psychodrama" published in the IAGP Forum Publication, The British Counselling Journal, The British Social Work Journal, and a further version in "The Handbook of Psychodrama", Karp, Holmes, co-ed. Routledge, London N.Y., 1998, pp.3-13.

She has contributed, "Discussion on Directing between Anne Anceline Schutzenberger and Marcia Karp, in "Psychodrama Training-European Review," edited by P. Fontaine, FEPTO Publications, 1989 Leuven, Belgium.

e-mail: [info@marciakarp.org](mailto:info@marciakarp.org)



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YOUNG  
PROFESSIONALS'  
SECTION

NİLÜFER DEMİRHAN

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**What would you say are the most common issues you have encountered in the groups you lead?**

People often say or feel that they just want to be themselves and true to themselves. Relationship issues, whether with concepts or with people are the core of the work.

**You have been working in different cultures. Can you tell us how the culture is effecting the group process?**

There are certain givens in each culture to be respected. Some cultures don't allow touch in public, some cultures have the male or female more dominant. In the East, silence is referred to as the 'golden silence'. It allows participants to profoundly take in what is being expressed. It is wise for the director to observe and incorporate these differences.

**We are experiencing difficult situations in the world. What do you think that human beings need in this period? How we, as professionals, can help people in these difficult years?**

I think that's why Moreno focused on role reversal.



**What did your experience with psychodrama teach you about human beings?**

I once asked Moreno how he could understand so many different cultures. He said, " We have many relationship dyads in common; parent-child, employee-employer, husband-wife-single person, neighbour etc. These create shared and common connections.

**If you think about one particular psychodrama session that has affected you the most, what can you say it taught or said to you?**

Moreno directed me in a dream. I learned that by reversing roles with participants in the dream, I could discover the real meaning of what they said and felt, from their point of view .

**If you role reverse with Moreno now, what would Moreno tell IAGP members?**

Learn from each other.

**What is your suggestion or message for young professionals?**

Enjoy the group. Trust the method. Ask the group for help.



IAGP Member of the Week

*Marcia Karp, United Kingdom*

She works for the East London National Health Service with Personality Disorder and Borderline individuals.

She has a private practice in Brentford, West London where she sees individuals and groups for psychotherapy. and supervision.

She travels the world training people and groups in Psychodrama.

Marcia is currently involved with ongoing training programs in Moscow, Kiev, Geneva, Athens and Spain.

TV Documentary

Psychodrama on the new Europe  
Publishing date: 16/12/2010

Broadcasting of the video Documentary 'Diversity is a story to tell: experiences of video therapy and psychodrama on the new Europe' in the countries of the PHD2 consortium. The video documentary reports the activities carried out in the laboratories realized in all the partner countries and the experiences of the two years of the project. The documentary is being broadcasted on the TVs of the partner countries.