



TELE-tronic 

APRIL / MAY 2021 // VOLUME 10. NO. 2

Photo credit: Alexa Edelist

Zoom and the Possibility of Working with Role Taking

TT Srinath

Many of the techniques that I may choose to employ to dialogue through creative action methods do not translate so effectively to the virtual platform. However I have joyfully discovered that role taking and role reversal are exceptions to this. I was recently invited to facilitate a group of aspiring volunteers, who wished to offer their time in working with children at an institute that works with dyslexia. We met, myself and the eight participants, on Zoom in gallery view, meaning we could see and hear one-another.

To warm up the group I played a song from a well-known film to enable those present to experience the feelings arising, followed by a group sharing. I then requested two volunteers for an exercise. I asked the first to select a poem she was familiar with, ideally one recalled from childhood. After establishing that both volunteers knew the poem I asked one of them to recite it to the other, first as she may do so to an adult, then to a teenager and then to a child. I then invited the pair to swap roles and repeat the exercise.

When the role reversal was complete, I invited each volunteer to first share how they experienced themselves in the roles they had taken on and then from an 'I' position of how they were impacted. Both volunteers shared that they had needed to alter their tone of voice, gestures and body posture when directing the poem to the different age groups, and noticed that they felt most comfortable, spontaneous and creative when reciting the poem to a child. The most difficult part of the exercise was reciting to an adult and, when they shared from the 'I' perspective, both understood that a core belief prevails when they are in adult company, that the other is judging them. For the cost of sharing honest feelings with adults is sometimes misconstrued and misunderstood.

I close with a fitting quote from the Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran writes in one of his pieces, "A caravan of thinking can never access the oasis of feelings". We limit our ability to remain spontaneous when in adult company, for perhaps we imagine we are being constantly scrutinized and viewed through the prism of judgment.

(The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@gmail.com)

