

Playback Theatre: Improvisational Theatre for Social Healing

by Christopher Ellinger and Chloe Green

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ARLINGTON, Mass., USA -- As a young man I (Christopher) was painfully shy. At age 20 I discovered the healing power of theatre, by joining a pantomime company at my college. Ironically, this silent form of theatre helped me find my voice. This experience led happily not only to greater self-confidence and spark but also to having my first girl friend, community, and engagement in social change.

Sadly, after college, I put aside theatre for years, judging it as less important than public education and organizing. Twenty years later running a nonprofit program, I brought a theatre ensemble in at the end of our conference. It helped participants open up to tell their personal stories and to see the commonalities underlying our different experiences. The theatre was a form I had never heard of before, called "Playback Theatre." There was an emcee who listened attentively to each person who shared a story and then the actors immediately acted it out.

[SNIP – End of preview.]