

“When the Woman Stands Tall” ; A Workshop Model for Consciousness Raising and Its Feedback Study

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「女が生きるとき」ワークショップ・モデルとフィードバック研究

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Abstract

The author organized a workshop titled as “When the woman stands tall” at the 16th Conference for the Japanese Association for Humanistic Psychology. This article describes how it developed, operated, and the results. Also a feedback study through the PMR questionnaire was conducted and an interview which was administered a year later was reported, followed by discussion and some speculation.

Key words : women, consciousness raising, workshop model, group psychotherapy

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抄 録

本稿は、日本人間性心理学会第16回大会準備委員会より依頼された女性のための臨床心理学の立場からのワークショップ・モデルについてである。それは、著者が日頃より蓄積してきた知見をもとに構築されたもので、女性の精神病理、構築の動機、モデルの呈示、結果、そして1年後に実施されたフィードバック研究、考察からなっている。

キーワード : 女性、意識向上、ワークショップ・モデル、グループ心理療法

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Introduction

The author organized a workshop for women in September, 1998, which the author was asked to do so by the Japanese Association for Humanistic Psychology. The name of the workshop was "When the woman stands tall." Many women in Japan, young and old, seem to enjoy freedom from housekeeping duties living in the nuclear family. Likewise, freedom in education, and freedom in male and female relationships are more common, although the economic situation at the present is weak to a certain degree, which limits our affluence.

However, many women express that they don't know what to choose for their lives including career, what to do for themselves, where to go next from here. Therefore, as a phenomena, in teenage girls, we have over 40% of junior-high, and high school girls being involved in prostitution-like business for money, such as call girl business by using cellular phones. These girls are nothing but merchandise goods selling sex and are not respected as human beings, hence, they have very low self-esteem. These businesses are often handled and exploited by street gangs and lead to juvenile delinquency such as group bullying, stealing, thinner inhaling, and impurely-motivated sex.

On the other hand, working women are suffering from job fatigue and stress that is heavy due to hard work or computer-related businesses where no mistakes are allowed. In addition, sexual harassment is becoming visible by law suits. This indicates that there are numerous sexual harassment cases which are not reported explicitly. Therefore, heavy job stress exists for working women.

In homes, most mothers often experience that their children are not easy to raise and discipline, and sometimes their children don't want to attend school or become withdrawn. We have more than 130,000 "non-attending" pupils.

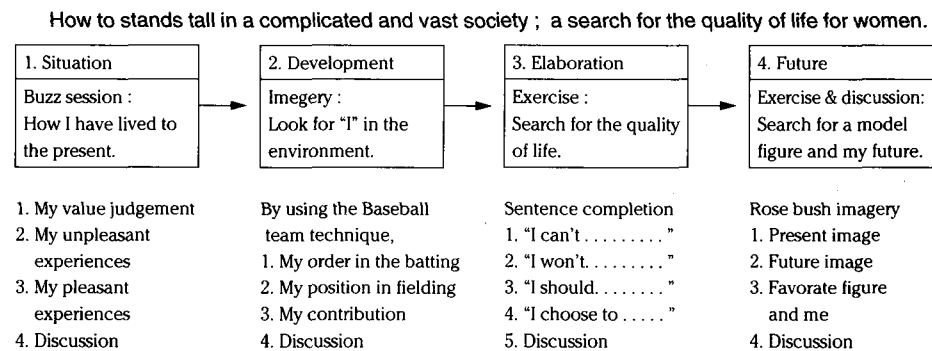
The women themselves including the mothers do not seem to develop their identity and self-confidence because they have been so accustomed to be naive and obedient toward the male-dominant society, no matter how unpleasant and stressful it may be. They think they have to say "Yes" even when they wanted to say "No." In addition, they, consciously or unconsciously, tend to have fear and uneasy feelings in their depths. Hence, they rarely face themselves and they don't know their authentic selves.

The women such as the ones described above tend to become over protective or too pushy to their children, whereby they interfere with their children to have a chance to feel and choose. Consequently the children hesitate to attend classes when something is unpleasant for them. Meanwhile some of the women are sometimes involved in alcohol or child abuse. On the other hand the career women seem to be lonely because of the fact that they are busy and have no time to relate to others in terms of emotional and personal transactions both in homes and offices. They are overwhelmed and almost burnt out to catch up on what

is developing in technology, for instance, the information technology in the office. Therefore the lonely women have a strong desire to be loved by someone. But no one responds to them. So they keep working hard so that someone can notice them and love them. This results in losing their own chance to touch their true selves. It leads to a depressed state or eating disorder. And often they lose perspective, not understanding what is happening around them. They become selfish and defensive. This is a vicious circle.

All in all, women in Japan seem to be in crises. Then, the author has developed a model that has been applied in the workshop aiming at how to approach the crisis described above. It is called a "woman's consciousness raising model." This is not a politically oriented, but rather a psychologically oriented model. The model is shown below. And the procedure and instruction in detail for the model are explained elsewhere (Kurato, 1999).

Workshop Model : Methodology



Result 1

The results are mostly favorable. Among the 21 participants at the workshop of the Japanese Association for Humanistic Psychology, 19 participants wrote "Very informative" on the evaluation sheet and 2 were "Quite informative." These were on 5 point scale. There was no negative feedback.

The main feedbacks the participants wrote were as follows ; 1. "Chance to look back at myself, my way of living, and my way of relating with people." 2. "Empowered by expressing how I lived and shared my values with others." 3. "Encouraged by doing exercises and discussions, becoming aware of my values and searching for my way." 4. "Respected my existence no matter how miserable I have lived to the present and restored my self-esteem." 5. "Getting acquainted with others while participating the group is my treasure."

Result 2

A feedback study was carried out a year later to know how the workshop influenced the participants in their home situation. The study was administered by the interview method.

The interviewer was the author. Twelve out of 21 responded to the interview. The author spent about an hour and half for each interview. There were some who were in remote cities and the interview was by means of telephone.

The interview was based on the following questions ;

Question 1. How well you were satisfied with your motivation to participate in the workshop.

Question 2. What was the awareness or learning, if any, you came to notice during the workshop a year ago?

Question 3. How influential was the awareness or learning, if any, to your life after attending the workshop?

Question 4. Any other comments or feedback about the workshop.

Some of the results of the interview were as follows ;

Case 1. Ms. A,

A graduate student, a mother of two children, and hoping to be a certified clinical psychologist.

Question 1. How well satisfied.

She was firstly interested in the theme of the workshop and came. She enjoyed the workshop thoroughly and was satisfied with the workshop.

Question 2. Awareness or learning.

Stage 1. (Situation)

She could disclose that she lost her mother and had been feeling lonely since then, she couldn't talk about it with anyone around her. She felt so because she thought she was a grown-up and grown-ups should never talk about such things. She was so relieved by being able to talk about her feelings. She felt warm by having been accepted by the other participants. Then, she became able to listen to what others were saying about their experiences and emotions along with them. When one participant disclosed that she was divorced, Ms. A was reaching out to her and she herself felt good about that. She understood the difficulty she was experiencing during the process of divorce.

Stage 2. (Development)

She was involved in a psychological game in which the author introduced the "Baseball game (Kurato, 1978)." It was a game in which participants were encouraged to look at themselves in their environments by using a baseball technique. Ms. A realized and reaffirmed, through the baseball game, that she was a "catcher" before she became a graduate student. Before becoming a graduate student, she felt there was something wrong about herself, hiding her desire to do something. So she decided to study more. Therefore, she thought back if

she hadn't become a graduate student, which was her desire, she might well have been a "catcher" receiving a ball for her husband for her whole life. Since she could look at herself through the baseball game, she became confident that her choice was right to become a graduate student. She is now more active in her home and life and feels that her role is now a "pitcher".

Stage 3. (Elaboration)

Through sentence completion she became able to realize that she was doing all right by becoming honest with herself and responding to her own will and choice.

Stage 4. (Future)

Through the "Rose bush imagery (Steavens, 1974)," although she was a little rose growing steadily, she was doing her own thing with her individuality, going her way of life. It was felt so by hearing other participants saying their own things. Each had a unique way of living and that was quite all right with her.

Question 3. Influence to the home situation.

In terms of "baseball game" learning, it has been a great influence on her daily life. Since she has become aware of her role as a "pitcher," she could play her role more clearly and more comfortably. In addition, she realized the need to balance her roles, sometimes playing "pitcher" and sometimes playing "catcher." She became aware through the workshop that she was all right to feel what she was feeling. She said she became alive or more human, and was able to enjoy what was happening "here and now." Before that, she thought she was not allowed to express what she was experiencing. She often became numb or lacking emotion by being fixed with the past and being anxious about the future.

Question 4. Any comments or feedbacks.

It was good to have women in different generations in the workshop, so that she could have a perspective in values and way of life.

Also for her, it was a fun experience to verbalize her feelings and opinions. She said she enjoyed them thoroughly. Also this feedback interview helped her to conceptualize her experience in and after the workshop.

Case 2. Ms. I,

School counselor.

Question 1. How well satisfied.

She came to attend to learn group work type intervention skills, so that she might be able to apply them to her work with pupils and teachers, or parents. She said she learned a lot of new things in terms of group intervention skills. Although she didn't expect it, she became re-

lieved that she disclosed her personal life, that is, her experience of the Great Earthquake in Kobe, when her house was totally destroyed and she had to move to another place. She could also touch upon her surgery for her stomach cancer.

Question 2. Awareness or learning.

Stage 1. (Situation)

She affirmed that there were gender roles, the woman was not necessarily weaker than the man, but had different roles, cooperating and sharing with the man to live together.

As an unpleasant experience, she talked about her difficulties and how miserable it was for her to encounter the Great Earthquake in Kobe.

Stage 2. (Development) & Stage 3. (Situation)

She rather kept silent at the 2nd and the 3rd stages as if she were accumulating her energy for the 4th stage.

Stage 4. (Future)

She touched on her experiences of loss ; one in the Great Earthquake, the other was in her surgery of stomach cancer. She lost her house and stomach, but she realized through agony that how to survive with catastrophe and tragedy would be more important and hence, meaningful for her.

To her, to support and share with each other and to say honestly whatever she has felt were the most important and meaningful.

Question 3. Influence to home situation.

Ever since she disclosed herself and about the Great Earthquake and surgery experiences in the workshop, she became at ease to verbalize. For instance, she talked about her personal experience of the earthquake in one class at the elementary school on the memorial day of the earthquake. Since then, kids came to her counseling room and offered to build a house for her in the sand play box. She was very pleased to see it and learned that kids could respond to her when she was honestly disclosing herself to the kids. She said it was the first time she ever talked to anyone with her feelings and honestly.

Question 4. Comments and feedback.

She said that it was nice to know that in the workshop, we were asked, at first, to write down whatever we felt or wanted to say, not to speak out in front of others. So an intervention skill she learned was to let the pupils to write it down before speaking out. Nevertheless, talking and sharing with other members in the workshop was encouraging in that there were other people in the world reaching out.

Discussion

The author only reported two cases out of twelve. Almost all participants the author interviewed were in favor of the workshop and were satisfied with the experiences they had. These experiences and learnings have influenced the participants' daily lives in their home situations. The author found this through the interviews with them. What was good about workshop :

- 1 . The structure of the workshop was good wherein each individual had time to look back how she had lived to the present, looked for herself in the environment, then searched for the quality of life, and tried to look for a future image. This structure with the process of 1) think individually, 2) write it down, and 3) share with each other, seemed to give participants a chance to become aware or raise consciousness of what they have been or who they are, and what they want to be. Especially, self-disclosure, verbalization, and sharing during the course of the workshop seemed most helpful.
- 2 . The quality of the participants.
Diversity in ages and professions, including graduate students, seemed to be helpful for the participants by giving them perspectives in life.
- 3 . Almost all participants in the interview mentioned about the therapist. According to them, the way the therapist related to the participants and the personality encouraged them to proceed in the process of the workshop. Especially self-disclosure of the difficult and unpleasant experiences that the therapist had, together with her sincerity, helped them to feel it was "ok" to open their hearts.
- 4 . Each participant became aware that each had a story of life to tell. When each told a story, and others responded and related, altogether it made a big story, like a little stream gradually becoming a river.

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