

Effectiveness of Role Play in College Mental Health Education

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Abstract. Role play is one kind of experimental teaching method commonly used in courses of mental health education, as purposes to recognize role characteristics and behaviors to self correction, in the act of experiencing through certain individual roles. Based on mental health education curriculum, five techniques as pantomime, monologue, empty chair, role exchange, psychodrama and role debate were used via role play. It's implemented suited measures to correspond different topics, as three procedures for play preparation, role play and evaluation. It has been proved to achieve excellent teaching effect.

Brief Introduction

Role play is a method to play some specific roles in specific situations, enabling one to perceive the role's psychological states, represent the role language and reveal the role behavior, so as to achieve the embodiment of psychological behaviors of the role. It can maximize the substitution of target group, helping symbolize role behavior in the eyes of performers and observers, and finally solidify the existing knowledge and experience related to the role. The most commonly used role play techniques include pantomime, monologue, empty chair, role exchange, duplicato acting, psychodrama, role debate and magic shop, etc al. Procedures are divided into play preparation (ie theme setting, role assignment, scene layout, and atmosphere activation), role play (ie role behaviors, mental states and postures), and evaluation (ie content analysis, role assessments, problem solving and improvement). It can inspire individuals to participate in course teaching.

As an extraordinary constitute of health, psychological health gains quite lots of attentions from the public. The Ministry of Education released a document titled "Standard Requirements for Mental Health Education Curriculum for Colleges" (Education and Political Department [2011] No.5). It pointed out: "To promote the scientific construction of health education, further strengthen the main role of classroom teaching in psychological health education, as to improve the level of students' psychological health." For the mental health education curriculum teaching has always been one of the main camps. It has become a major challenge to use the appropriate method into classroom teaching for college mental health education presently. Role play is one kind of experiential teaching, with the core of which is to expose the individual to other situation, express the role's psychology and behavior, so as to promote the individual's cognition of the related social role. In order to improve the timeliness of the course and arouse the enthusiasm and initiative of the students, we creatively used the role play method in the course of mental health education for college students, and had achieved excellent results.

The Application of Role Play

Pantomime and Monologue Performance

These are two kinds of obvious different expressions, for the former is more like silent films,

relying on exposed behaviors and expressions to convey intrinsic thinking. It's required to put forward a subject or a situation by the guidance, but only to use body or facial expressions without words. The implicit expression can focus students well, so that the individual pays more attention to human behavior reaction rather than other spoken language forms. It causes more thoughts as questions like "Are the behaviors appropriate" and "How to handle the situations effectively", resulting in more corrections for themselves. It's adopted in chapters like interpersonal relationship. By setting up a scene for the first meeting, teachers let the students perform different forms including praise, hate, arrogance, fear and so on. It can be seen students can well know each other from the body language attitude, thus timely correct self-behaviors.

Contrarily, monologue is a linguistic manifestation of self-talk, expressing one's inner experience through the variability of language. In heterosexual intercourse chapter, some students think sexual intercourse will seriously affect the academic achievement so choose not too much contact with the opposite sex. Oppositely, other students hold attitudes "collocation of men and women, work no tired", believing that love can make people enhance responsibility, seek the learning partner to fight alongside, experience more emotional experience, moreover learning achievement improved but not fall. In view of the two different attitudes towards love, we required students to perform different voices of students via spoken languages, thus vividly show the hidden desire deep in the hearts of characters. Students can analyze the character of individuals rationally and also adjust themselves. In conclusion, role play help one set up the correct principle of heterosexual communication to be in reasonable distance, which is the main criterion of heterosexual communication.

Empty Chair

It's a kind of imaginative role play method. By introducing chairs, students are involved into designated situations to show the situational states and behaviors. Commonly it includes 2 or more chairs in applying empty chair technique, as one chair for the client and the other to be required for the supposed contextual person, expressing situational behaviors through the interactions between themselves. For example, in the subject of interpersonal conflict, students sit in chairs, dialogue with another sitting empty chair for conflicting characters imagined in mind to manifest conflict among individuals. After a round of play, the two sides exchange positions, and the students sit to the empty chair position to answer the questions in the presence of conflict person. By exchanging roles of "self-others", individual realizes the client and the specific object, and further understand the psychological behaviors.

Role Exchange

Similar to the empty chair, this is also a kind of teaching technique which is more frequently used in classroom teaching. The application of this method is extensive, and the role interaction is frequent, which can restore the social situation to the maximum extent, and make the psychological behavior of different individuals become concrete. Take school learning as an example, roles involve teachers, outstanding students, poor performance students and teaching staff etc al. We made role assignments to choose some students to play different social roles and behave characteristics of the corresponding role. Situations as different dealings with different students for teachers, and acceptance of students to teachers, it all can be reflected in the process of role play. In addition, as duplicato acting is another form of role play, which is similar to the method of imitation, it requires two different types of students perform together, one repeats psychological behavior of another, thus excellent and good behaviors are strengthened. Specifically, you can let poor performance students play certain habits of outstanding students, and then the former can form good study habits and build strong self-confidence.

Psychodrama

It is a way similar to drama performance, which subject chose by teachers and students from numbers of candidates to create a performance. The content of the show should be the mental health problems that students encounter and troubled by. The contents of Psychodrama are rich and diverse, as life adaptation, learning guidance, emotion regulation and interpersonal communication

are the common themes of psychological drama. Once the theme is established, division of labor begins to function: writing scripts in groups, assigning roles, rehearsing in groups, evaluating summaries, rehearse again, assessments and evaluations, etc al. So repeatedly, until finally performers play the mental behavior that can show the characters in specific situations. Participants can introspect the act of self and the behavior of the situation, so as to achieve the transition from externalization to internalization for experiencers performing and experiencing and observer observing. In order to strengthen the role play, it's instructed for students to role behavior evaluation by guidance after playing. It's suggested to relate situational psychological behavior to students' real psychological behavior, deepening their thought of corresponding situation, reflecting their own behaviors in the same scene, consolidating mental health knowledge, developing their psychological thought, and cultivating the correct treatment method of psychological problems. In interpersonal communication section, by setting a scene for the introverted individual interaction, we distributed monitor, teachers, roommates, parents, friends, community leaders and other roles. We can observe the interpersonal characteristics of introverted individual and influences of social surroundings to them. It's discussed of mental behavior of performers, analyzing and evaluating the traits and social networks of of clients after play, so as to stimulate the individual cognition and understanding of introvert interpersonal characteristics, also caused introvert to more introspect and constantly adjust self-behaviors.

Role Debate

This method used the debate as a mode, which students were divided into opposite two groups, two independent members stated their own opinions besides refute other views. Finally it's investigated which team described more logically and convincingly. Both sides sent their respectives to extract their own themes in the beginning of debate, contestants of both sides work to collect data, gather evidences supporting views, seek case bracing and practices effective for the statements. In considerations of more participations and involvements of student, the audience can be taken advantage as backups for each group in actual debate, ones to search information, provide arguments and evaluate their performance and debata issues at the end of the comment. Finally counselor summarized corresponding knowledge and debate synchronously, strengthened opinions related to this debate further. For sexual interaction, previous investigations found students puzzled seriously, we adopted role debate in the classroom teaching , with contents in sexual interaction (such as "should I find partner for people loving me or I love?"), dividing them into several small groups to debate for different points freely. Ultimately, we assessed appropriate modes to get along with each gender.

Summary

Role play technique puts emphasis on self-experience and awareness of others, the expressing certain social behavior characteristics through simulation, monologue, debate, drama performances and so on. It's more like a "implicit-explicit" manifestation pretending to be someone or something. The individuals express themselves, convey emotions, show empathies to else one in implicit methods. It showed significant effects on the perception of psychological behavior to their own and others. We employed role play in mental health education courses, participation grewed increasingly, activity improved, contents diversified risingly, which were undoubtedly a big boost to the classroom teaching reform with orderly and wonderful interaction between teachers and students. Moreover, in the subsequent extension and application, we can consider to segmented knowledges into pieces and adopt appropriate teach methods for corresponding knowledges.

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