

DvT METHOD IN A NUTSHELL

Though what follows contradicts what I will say here, DvT isn't all that complicated. To sum it up, the DvT Method is *to play*. As the 1659 proverb tells us: "*All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.*" The problem is that after childhood (and for some people even during childhood), it seems that people have difficulty, or resist, playing. So much so that even though play is an innate human urge and ability, people keep discovering its value every few decades. In the field of psychology, one of the very few ideas that has been proven over and over by research is the value of play in the cognitive, emotional, social, and moral development of human beings. Despite the overwhelming empirical support, play continues to have to be defended, not unlike evolution or the actual age of the Earth.

Let me first try to put the method into one sentence:

"In DvT, the player works in the present moment, through the recursive cycle of noticing, feeling, animating, and expressing, based on observation of the player's energetic and physical behaviors in response to the approach of another person, in a way that makes contact with them without harm to either party."

DvT method consists of four essential qualities: *via negativa*, physicality, playfulness, and spontaneity, which are derived from selected elements of Grotowski's poor theatre, physical theatre and dance therapy, improvisation and clowning, and existentialist forms of psychotherapy (such as Client-Centered Psychotherapy, Focusing, and Gestalt therapy).

Via Negativa. Grotowski's method of removing the unnecessary elements of theatre to get to the bare essence of human performance - presence, encounter, and

the body - is a foundation of DvT. We work in empty rooms with no props or sets or costumes or scarves or puppets or clay or masks, only people. DvT is essentially, people. We undo and transform stories and roles and narratives and meanings and propositions and even histories and identities, all of which are exuberantly played with. Unlike theatre where the roles of actor and spectator are relatively fixed, DvT plays with these roles too, regularly switching back and forth between the player and playor. If someone observing DvT exclaimed, “Is there nothing sacred?,” we would play with that statement too! The via negativa leads inevitably to the players playing with the act of performance itself, evoking a kind of singularity of joy. In DvT, there is no outside from which to ground a perspective: all is at play....come and join the dance!

Physicality. The method involves both motion and touch, that is, the process places the players’ bodies at the center of the action, as in the natural acts of children. The method works towards embodying the imagination and animating the body, entangling subjective and objective states that life mysteriously keeps trying to pull apart. To move your body is to make a choice - which is freedom - that has consequences which come back to your body through the actions-choices-freedom of the Other, a process that can be wonderful or terrifying but, alas, is our situation. DvT is training, is preparation, is practice, for being here.

Spontaneity. The method relies on immediacy and spontaneity. DvT has no set of exercises, no plan, no set format. The playor sets the play in motion and then reacts to the behaviors of the players to shape their next action, in a recursive process lasting perhaps 3-5 seconds and often much less. The playor keeps their attention on the players, particularly on expressions of their energies, shapes, variations, timing, and flow – much more than their roles, stories, or scenes. This part of the method has developed since the beginning, as we have discovered interesting entities such as leakage, notwaves, x’i boundaries, t’ spaces, thths and

vasts. In order to achieve this level of observation, the playor participates in the play, fully. One cannot base your actions on someone else's present moment, you have to be in it too. This state of radical transparency and accessibility of the playor, *whose freedom is the intervention*, departs from the standard role of the therapist whose inertness, receptivity, and consistency form the therapeutic container of the client. DvT is not a way to make a person spontaneous, it is a situation of spontaneity that both playor and players are thrown into.

Playfulness. Carl Rogers was serious. Existentialists were very serious. Grotowski was very, very serious. DvT is not so serious. Well, perhaps that is not right: DvT is serious about existence, about presence. But it is not serious about all the things people think about existence, themselves (particularly themselves), and the world. People are by and large out of their minds. This is why we recognize something familiar when we are entertained by a clown. DvT method embraces fun. Reversals. Surprises. Irony. Compared to many other forms of therapy, which are based on the literary tradition of tragedy (think Freud, Moreno), DvT is based on the literary tradition of comedy, including improvisation, clowning, puns, and slapstick. In tragedy, things begin well but end badly; in comedy, they go badly but end up back where they started. Supported by the awareness of the prime discrepancy, DvT players turn whatever is being enacted into the performative frame, acting "as if it were true" even when it is true. This is what is meant when we say DvT is "acting imaginatively under truthful circumstances." DvT method is a process of continuous dramatization, used as the tool to pull apart and open up the knots people tie themselves into in their constructed lives. The entire action in the DvT playspace is framed within a comedic parentheses: (*Maybe!*). The purpose is not to joke about or negate important, real issues; the point is to loosen up overly repeating, familiar ideas about self and world to allow

what is truly important and real to assert itself authentically in embodied and conscious action.

This is DvT in a Nutshell (or two).