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### The Healing Power of the Arts - Drama Therapy and the Use of Theatre in the Treatment of Trauma

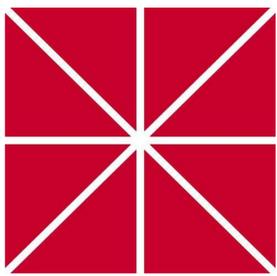
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# The Healing Power of the Arts: Drama Therapy and the Use of Theatre in the Treatment of Trauma

Brooklyn Snyder - Chapman University Department of Theatre

## THESIS

Trauma can reshape its victim's lives, both cognitively and physically, impeding their sense of self, ability to trust, engagement, and many other seemingly ordinary aspects of day to day life that those unaffected by trauma take for granted. As more research about the ways in which trauma alters cognitive and physical functioning emerges, new and innovative treatment methods are also being brought to light, including the healing power found in the arts, in particular, theater. Using theatrical tools acts as a treatment option for trauma victims, allowing individuals to reconnect with their bodies and their minds, gaining new perspectives on their experiences and coming to terms with their holistic self.



Countless veterans and their families deal with the aftermath of combat

Van Der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Books, 2015

## METHODOLOGY

Beginning with the biological aspect of trauma, I investigate neuroscience, developmental psychopathology, and interpersonal neurobiology, to understand how trauma rewires the brain. This lends to why theatre acts as an effective treatment tool, helping those with trauma come to terms with their experiences while simultaneously regaining a sense of unity within their bodies. I analyze empirical evidence exploring the benefits of drama therapy and highlight recent programs, including the Possibility Project, Shakespeare in the Courts, and Urban Improv.

## SO WHAT?

Both the theatre community and the field of psychology recognize the detrimental effects of trauma, and how the arts can act as a mechanism for healing. However, there is still a disconnect isolating drama therapy from these larger fields. Drama Therapy, as seen in both clinical settings and artistic programs, has shown to be beneficial to people living with trauma. By building a connection the worlds of theatre and psychology through the practice of drama therapy on a larger scale, we will be able to offer more effective treatment to individuals in need. Only by integrating drama therapy successfully across theatre and psychology will we be able to move this treatment method into mainstream therapy.

