

Dramatherapy Certificate Course

A Summary and Analysis of Samutthāna's Dramatherapy Certificate Course by Ravindra Ranasinha, Course Director

Samutthana - the King's College London Resource Centre for Trauma, Displacement and Mental Health - launched Sri Lanka's first ever professional Drama therapy course on the 28th of October, 2014. It was a 6 month course with sessions conducted every Tuesday at Samutthana and it concluded in March 2015.

Sri Lanka is at a stage, post-war and post-tsunami, where there are rather complex and disturbing social issues present in society leading to mental health problems which mainstream talk therapy alone cannot support. Drama Therapy has the capacity to address a wide range of issues ranging from interpersonal issues to low self esteem. It is designed to cultivate and utilise imagination, flexibility, and creativity in the individual and hence, Samutthana saw the need to educate and train people in the field of Drama Therapy so that they can work actively in the field of mental health, supporting those who require care and healing.

The sessions comprised of areas like improvisation, puppetry, playback theatre, CBT in Drama Therapy, Counselling Skills for Drama therapists etc. There was active participation at each session with some personal reflection and sharing added. It was a healthy mix of theoretical learning through readings and lectures and experiential learning through demonstration exercises in class. The sessions were filled with fun and laughter as the learning continued. There was also discussion about applying some of the skills learnt in the field of mental health as most of the participants were from professions such as medicine, education, counselling and psychology. This is what made the course unique, as it was not just a certificate programme, but a course where participants were equipped with skills to tackle situations they would encounter in their professional and personal lives. There was a great deal of personal growth that took place during the course and participants also had the opportunity to attend personal therapy sessions to enhance the overall experience of the course.

The six months the participants spent studying Drama Therapy turned them into a strong and cohesive group, and this gave the course leaders hope that they will work together in the future to improve mental health care in Sri Lanka. No course is complete without evaluation and feedback, and each participant of the Drama Therapy course was assessed through two practical tests and a written assignment. Each of them displayed excellence in their theoretical and practical understanding of this therapeutic modality and this was due to the passion they showed to study.

Many thanks to the great lecturers who provided their services when needed, with much enthusiasm and generosity. You made it happen!

