



## Role-play

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According to Wikipedia **Role-playing** refers to the changing of one's behaviour to assume a role, either unconsciously to fill a social role, or consciously to act out an adopted role.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roleplaying>, accessed 10 July 2009

In Co-Counselling “Role-play” is used in various **session contracts**. Depending on what is agreed roles can be played by either the Client, Counsellor or both. What is meant with ‘role’ can vary widely from freedom to improvise to very limited and specific behaviour, for example the other person improvises the mother’s behaviour, or they are given very specific words and actions to follow.

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### Life Situations and Role-Play

Using role-play in a co-counselling session can be useful when

1. You would like to find out why you behave yourself in a certain way in a certain situation.
2. People do something that triggers a strong emotional response, paralysis or rigid behaviour in you.
3. You want to develop new and creative ways of dealing with old situations.
4. You want to come to terms with people who are dead or otherwise absent.

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### Role-Play by the Client

The following roles may be played by the client:

- A behaviour you don’t like about yourself or someone else
  - The role you played or saw playing in a certain situation
  - The role of the person you find difficult to deal with
- A behaviour you find difficult to enact yourself:
  - A formal role in your life or life cycle: obedient partner etc
  - A way of behaving that is not seen as ‘normal’ or ‘civilised’
  - Practising new behaviours you are not familiar yet: telling someone politely to mind their own business
  - Exploring new potential responses to a certain situation
- A person who has died who is otherwise absent:  
(sometimes also called **reverse role-play**)
  - Imagining how it feels to be the other person, and it's sometimes surprising what insights come up as I talk back to me.

- Externalising Inner thoughts, dilemmas or parts of your personality:
  - Expressing the voice in your head that interferes with you getting on with your life joyfully and freely.
  - Enacting the different sides of your personality or the dilemma, each in their own time.
  - Switching your brain into a creative mode: for exploring new potential response to a certain situation, or creating new ways of thinking about a certain situation.

These new responses or ways of thinking don't need to be real or definitive. Exploring real and unrealistic responses opens up the brain to creativity and to a much more functional response in an actual situation.

This type of role-play can be best done with a counsellor playing a limited role as well. See [Procedures with Role-play for Client and Counsellor](#)

## **Reverse Role-Play**

There are two meanings of Reverse Role-play.

1. As Client playing the role of the other person to explore how it feels to be in that role and to develop more insight into that person's thinking or behaviours. Also reverse-playing can serve the purpose of coming to terms with that (absent or deceased) person.
2. The client instructs the counsellor to play the roles in order to explore and/or develop their own response. The counsellor plays than the role as instructed.

## **Role-Play by the Counsellor**

The client feeds the words, behaviours and mood to the Counsellor:

- The Counsellor plays this back to the Client. The difference with role-play in daily life is that the Counsellor only repeats what has been required, but does not develop the role further
- The Counsellor plays this back to the Client and develops it further in the spirit of the instructions until the Client stops it.

Role-play by the Counsellor provides the client with the opportunity

- to discharge held-in emotions,
- to develop new thoughts about what is happening and
- to explore new coping behaviours with the behaviour role-played by the Counsellor.
- to come to terms with the person represented by the Counsellor.

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## Procedures using Role-Play by Client and Counsellor

Role-play can happen also by client and counsellor together in a Co-Counselling procedure.

- Role-Play, a procedure developed in the Münster approach
- Pain-to-Power, a procedure developed in the CornuCopia approach.

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## Using Cushions, Chairs or Hands in Role-Play

Especially when people have an inner 'knot' it helps the brain to process this when the inner 'knot' is externalised and made visual and spatial. This underlies the effectiveness of role-play: its physical and special expression facilitates separation between the various 'roles' knotted together.

For instance when the client instructs the counsellor to play a certain role, this role doesn't need to play itself anymore inside the person anymore. This in turn helps to focus on how to process and deal with that externalised role.

Externalising inner voices, different parts of your personality, behaviour conflicts etc T can also be optimised by sitting on different chairs, standing on different cushions and switching positions when switching role.

Another ways is to have a dialogue between your hands.

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## Dancing and Role-Play

The Client explores the feelings and emotions by witnessing how their body would like to move with or without music.

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**See also in CoCoPedia:**

[Client In Charge](#)

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