

Spring 2010

Creativity in counseling: Breathe Life into Your Work an experiential workshop for the novice counselor

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Creativity in Counseling: Breathe Life into Your Work
An Experiential Workshop for the Novice Counselor
Tina M. Johnston

A research project submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY
In
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Educational Specialist
Department of Graduate Psychology

May 2010

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to those novice counselors who are aspiring to reacquaint themselves with their own creative resources. May you find great joy in your work as you learn to trust your intuition and use your soul gifts to help others.

Acknowledgements

To Jack Presbury: Thank you for being the dedicated, passionate, creative, wonderful, teacher and counselor that you are. You provided me with the secure supervisory attachment that I needed, as I practiced creative ways of being with my clients. My life has been deeply enriched by your wisdom, kindness, encouragement, and empathic understanding.

To Julia Clay: Thank you for being my trusted traveling companion. You tirelessly listened, brainstormed, and encouraged me as I formulated ideas for this project. Your support and humor have sustained me throughout my journey as a student and novice counselor!

To Michele Briggs and Sandy Hite: Thank you for taking on the task of being my committee members. I want to thank each of you for your guidance and support throughout my learning experience. Sandy, your enthusiasm for passing on the torch and teaching future school counselors is inspiring! Michele, you are an awesome supervisor with an uncanny ability to support, yet, challenge me.

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Abstract

Designed for use by novice counselors and other clinicians who would like to reawaken their creativity, this guide describes the need for creativity in counseling and presents the theories describing the creative process. It also includes a practical workshop with experiential exercises to reawaken creativity in the counselor and a pull out section with expressive arts activities that can be used in the counseling session.

Chapter One:

Creativity in Counseling

“It is the love of something, having so much love for something—whether a person, a word, an image, an idea, the land or humanity—that all that can be done with the overflow is to create. It is not a matter of wanting to, not a singular act of will: one solely must.”

Clarissa Pinkola Estes



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Creativity in the counseling setting is one of the most useful tools available to counselors. In counseling, we cannot rely on technical skill alone, but have to turn to inventiveness and creativity (Carson & Becker, 2003). The creative process requires exploring, experimenting, messing around with materials, being playful, and entering the unknown, which can cause apprehension (Rogers, 1993). To the novice counselor, it can be bewildering to step “outside of the box,” engage in the creative process, and try something new with a client. Yet counselors can make interventions exciting, interesting, and powerful by understanding the role of creativity in the counseling setting.

According to Hecker and Kottler (2002) neither creativity as a construct nor the role of creativity and creative thinking in mental health practice is commonly emphasized in counselor/clinical training programs. However, creativity is at the heart of the counseling process because it is a moment by moment experience. Hecker and Kottler (2002) assert that most counselors are not trained to tap into their own creativity and use it with clients, but, creativity is a skill that can be learned, fostered, and developed. They offer three assumptions: (a) creativity tends to beget creativity, (b) most counselors/therapists feel “stuck” in the counseling process with at least some clients some of the time, and (c) usually the problem of “stuckness” lies not with the clients, but with ourselves as clinicians. Counseling is a process in which the client and counselor can tap into their creativity, because creativity is typically born from frustration, or the need for a solution. “In the broadest sense, counseling is a creative enterprise within which the client and counselor combine resources to generate new ways of doing things, develop a different outlook, formulate alternate behaviors, begin a new life” (Frey, 1975, as quoted by Hecker & Kottler, 2003, p. 3). Creativity occurs when the client can leave the session with more choices than they had when they came into it (Rosenthal, 2002).

Rosenthal's (2002) interview with Samuel Gladding, suggested that long-lasting psychotherapy is creative in nature. Counselors use creativity when they help their clients think, feel, imagine, sense, experience, or behave differently. He stated that creativity requires courage along with clinical ability and an openness to possibility. Gladding said that in therapy and life, creativity comes with time, hard work, persistence, calculated risk taking, and often a sense of playfulness (Rosenthal, 2002).

The following creative approaches can be used in the counseling process to help clients produce more creative outcomes in their decision making (Benjamin, 1984, p. 3).

- *Futurization* is a tool to help people move away from what is currently happening and examine their situation from a futuristic point of view. This helps open their mind to divergent thinking and possibilities that they may not have been aware of.
- *Imagery* is used to help people imagine themselves in a situation and experience various outcomes. This provides an incubation period when ideas can have a chance to meld together in creative ways.
- *Suspended Judgment* helps people to postpone settling on a single answer but opens the mind to other possibilities and consideration of other ways to handle problems.
- *Multiple Options and Choices* help people to look at multiple options and have some backup plans.
- *Whole Person Resources* help people to combine logic and rationality with intuition in making decisions, pushing less for hard answers and providing more support for what if responses, for fantasizing, and for dreaming.

- *Modeling Creative Behavior* allows people to be independent, through letting them experience mistakes, avoiding evaluation, being flexible, rewarding creative behavior, and understanding the creative process.

Counseling is a creative process because it can help clients make decisions that can positively impact their lives (Gladding, 2005). The creative arts have much potential to help counselors in assisting clients but counselors must first know how to use them. It is important to have a variety of appropriate interventions to work with a variety of populations. When the creative arts are used, they help the client and counselor gain new perspectives and lend a different way of looking at their world (Gladding, 2005).

Chapter Two:

Creativity is:

“Creativity is the process of bringing something into being...creativity requires passion and commitment. Out of the creative act is born symbols and myths. It brings to our awareness what was previously hidden and points to a new life. The experience is one of heightened consciousness-ecstasy.”

Rollo May



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To fully understand, develop, and appreciate the use of creative interventions in the counseling setting, it is important to understand the nature of creativity. Furthermore, it is important to understand creativity's function on the brain and how it affects the counseling process.

The theories of creativity are abundant and varied. Some definitions used by those who have studied creativity follow: Presbury, Benson, and Torrance (1997), found Vernon's definition to be comprehensive. "Creativity means a person's capacity to produce new and original ideas, insights, restructuring, inventions, or artistic objects, which are accepted by experts as being of scientific, aesthetic, social or technological value" (Vernon, 1989, p. 94).

According to Weisberg (1993), all who study creativity agree that for something to be creative, it is not enough for it to be novel; it must have value, or be appropriate to the cognitive demands of the situation. Kubie (1958) said creativity is the ability to be flexible, to learn through experience, to change, to become, to influence.

E. Paul Torrance, known as the "Father of Creativity" due to his 60 years of creativity research, brought to awareness the fact that creativity is not a distinct process but it is influenced by environmental, personality, and cultural factors (Sternberg, 1998). Torrance described creativity as a multifaceted phenomenon that defies precise definition. He used three definitions to guide his extensive creativity research: a research definition, an artistic definition, and a simple survival definition (Sternberg, 1998).

Torrance's research definition describes creative thinking as a process of sensing difficulties, problems, gaps in information, missing elements, something askew; making

guesses and formulating hypotheses about these deficiencies. It also includes evaluating and testing these guesses and hypotheses, testing them and finally communicating the results (Sternberg, 1998).

Torrance's artistic definition was given to him by one of his students, Karl Anderson in 1964. The definition consists of simple line drawings and simple sentences that all begin with "*Creativity is...*" This beginning is followed by various endings which include: wanting to know, digging deeper, looking twice, listening for smells, getting in, getting out, having a ball, cutting holes to see through, cutting corners, plugging into the sun, building sand castles, singing in your own key, shaking hands with tomorrow (Sternberg, 1998).

Torrance's survival definition is associated with everyday creativity. A person must use creativity to some degree every day when he has no learned or practiced way of doing something. The aspects of the creative solution can be taught, but creativity itself must be discovered by the person experiencing the problem (Sternberg, 1998).

Samuel Gladding believes that creativity as a concept is somewhat elusive (Rosenthal, 2002). In an interview he described his thinking about creativity, "It involves divergent thinking where elements within the environment are arranged and rearranged so that a new and productive process or outcome occurs. In creativity there is an "aha" experience, that what has been assembled and has a usefulness that provides pleasure and possibilities that were not present before it came into being (Rosenthal, 2002, p. 26)."

Abraham Maslow, foundational theorist in psychology, provided a humanistic perspective on the description of the creative personality. According to Maslow, creativity could be found in all people but it has a tendency to develop more in the self actualized

personality (Houtz, 2003). He didn't believe it was a special talent, but an inherent piece of personality that shows itself in the everyday affairs of life (Houtz, 2003). Hecker and Kottler (2002) said that people are creative in their everyday functioning when they find alternative ways to deal with old problems and it is this everyday creativity that can enhance therapy in a clinical setting. Bohart (1999) explained that human beings are continually modifying and using concepts to try to deal with everyday life problems and creativity and intuition are used in therapy.

Graham Wallas, a social psychologist known for providing the first model of the creative process (1926), as cited by Presbury, et al., (1997), proposed that there are four stages to the creative process: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. These stages are present throughout the creative process in counseling. The first stage, preparation, involves a long period of conscious effort to try to solve the problem without success.

The second stage is the incubation stage. Incubation is a period of rest in which there isn't any conscious work being done. The problem is not consciously being worked on but unconsciously being blended into a "supra-rational stew" (Presbury, et al., 1997). During this stage there is a large amount of creative worrying being done until a solution is developed. This can take a very long time, or it can be a short period. It is during this period that clients sometimes drop out of therapy for awhile and struggle with problems on their own or they seek out others to help them (Hecker & Kottler, 2002).

The next stage is the illumination or inspiration stage. The answer to the problem is worked out and there is a sense of moving forward. Some people have reported feeling a sense of elation that they have solved the problem even before the solution is clear. David

Dollahite (1998) cited by Hecker and Kottler (2002) described the moment of becoming unstuck as “when lightning strikes”. This applies to when a problem is thought of over and over again but little to no insight is gained. Then suddenly a solution hits and it feels like lightning has struck. At times the therapist experiences this jolt, the client experiences it, or both, as a result of their work together. According to Hecker and Kottler (2002), many ideas that occur that fit the needs of the client come while the therapist is doing something other than a counseling related activity. The idea might “hit” while the counselor is driving to work, or taking a shower. When the idea or solution becomes clear, people describe this as feeling like a stroke of genius has hit. The solution can involve coming up with an intervention, or simply understanding and entering the world of the client (Hecker & Kottler, 2002). This is the “aha” moment of creativity.

The verification stage of the process is the time when the solutions are tested and the kinks are worked out. This stage requires the crafting or testing of the product and the public exhibition (Presbury, et al., 1997). In the therapeutic process, this is when the client and the therapist test the new idea or behavior. If it works, the change will fit and the client will move in a positive direction (Kotter & Heckler, 2002).

Chapter Three:

The Brain on Creativity:

What is Happening in There?

“Creativity is not associated with a single capacity but is associated with an aspect of intelligence that involves many different capacities such as noticing, remembering, seeing, speaking, classifying, associating, comparing, evaluating and introspecting.”

Margaret A. Boden



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It has long been understood that creativity lends to a greater connection to emotions. Being creative allows for a deeper ability to tap into feelings and a loss of inhibition and self censorship. A Johns Hopkins University study (Wenger, 2008) provides the science behind why creativity allows for deeper self expression and a loss of self censorship.

In a press release (Wenger, 2008), it was announced that Johns Hopkins University researchers discovered when jazz musicians improvise, their brains turn off the areas linked to self censoring and inhibition and turn on those that let self expression flow. Brain images were taken of the musicians while improvising. The region of the brain known as the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex showed a slow-down in activity during improvisation. This area is linked to planned actions and self censoring such as thinking about what words to use in an interview. Shutting down this area could lead to lowered inhibitions. The brain pattern is very similar to that seen in a dream state. Brain scans showed increased activity in the medial prefrontal cortex, which is in the center of the brain's frontal lobe. This area is linked with self expression and activities that convey individuality, such as telling a story about one's personal life. The researchers, Limb and Braun (2008) believe that when creativity is being used, the neural impulses that would slow down novel ideas (inhibition) are shut down. According to the researchers, it's almost as if the brain ramps up its sensory-motor processing in order to be in a creative state (Wenger, 2008).

The state of mind of the jazz musicians and lack of inhibition are much like the "flow" (Csikszentimihalyi, 1996) state of creativity. "When jazz musicians improvise, they often play with eyes closed in a distinctive, personal style that transcends traditional rules of melody and rhythm. This demonstrates a remarkable frame of mind during which, all of a

sudden the musician is generating music that has never been heard, or thought about before and what comes out is spontaneous” (Wenger, 2008, p. 2).

Most people have experienced the suspension of time that takes place when completely involved in something they love to do. According to Cathy Malchiodi (2007), in this state of mind one becomes one with the process or activity in which one is engaged. This “flow” state is very much like a meditative state because it involves being mindful and absorbed in the present moment. She believes that creative work is a natural flow inducer that helps to shut out chaos, focus our energies, and experience exhilaration.

Mihaly Csikszentimihayli (1997), originator of the “flow” concept, describes the experience as follows:

“In everyday life, we are always monitoring how we appear to other people; we are on the alert to defend ourselves from potential slights and anxious to make a favorable impression. Typically this awareness of self is a burden. In flow we are too involved in what we are doing to care about protecting the ego. Flow is the result of intense concentration on the present, which relieves us of the usual fears that cause depression and anxiety in everyday life. Flow is a process in which time is forgotten, self consciousness is transcended and there is little worry over failure” (Csikszentimihayli, 1997, p. 112).

Csikszentimihayli (1997), believes that the process of discovery that comes with creativity is one of the most enjoyable activities which humans can be engaged. As counselors, this information can provide us with a sense of how creativity can afford our clients freedom from ego boundaries and a deeper understanding of their inner world without inhibition.

Chapter Four:

On Becoming a Creative Counselor

“As a therapist, I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing.”

Carl Rogers



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Hecker and Kottler (2002) said that creativity is not an in-born trait, but a skill that can be learned and fostered over time. The more creativity that we are exposed to, the more likely we are to become creative. Although it can feel awkward and frightening to try something different in the counseling setting, it is important to allow yourself creative freedom. The most frequently reported characteristics of a creative therapist are flexibility, risk taking, and a sense of humor (Carson, et al., 2003). Some of the other characteristics include using intuition, openness, thinking outside of the box, spontaneity, self confidence, and courage. According to E. Paul Torrance, to fully use creative powers, it requires the temporary suspension of the rational process (Torrance, 1990).

Torrance felt that in order to tap into creativity one needs a certain amount of “satori”. He was captivated by this term when he was in Japan and suggests ways in which the concept of “satori” could be used in creativity. The Japanese expect that it will take many years of concentrated training to acquire excellence in any worthwhile skill. They regard shortcuts as harmful and the highest point one can reach is called satori (Torrance & Safter, 1990). In order to attain satori, one is required to become very committed and consistent. It necessitates that one be in “love” with something. It requires long term work with a teacher and demands persistence and self discipline (Torrance & Safter, 1990).

In a longitudinal study, E. Paul Torrance studied people in various professions who were able to maintain their creativity. He identified factors for preserving creativity and developed the following guide (Torrance, et al., 1996, p. 1):

1. Don't be afraid to “fall in love” with something and pursue it with intensity.

2. Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, use, exploit, and enjoy your greatest strengths.
3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they try to impose upon you.
4. Free yourself to “play your own game” in such a way as to make good use of your gifts.
5. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.
6. Don’t waste a lot of expensive, unproductive energy trying to be well rounded.
7. Learn the skills of interdependence.

Chapter Five:

The Use of Expressive Arts as Creative Interventions

"In the creative state a man is taken out of himself. He lets down as if it were a bucket into his subconscious, and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach. He mixes this thing with his normal experiences and out of the mixture he makes a work of art."

E.M. Forst



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The expressive arts can be used as creative interventions in the counseling setting. The process of using expressive arts can bring forth the client's intuitive and imaginative abilities and provides a different way of expressing emotions and feelings. They include graphic art, music, play, movement, enactment, or creative writing. These methods of creative exploration can be a person centered way of facilitating growth with an individual or a group when the activities are used in a safe and supportive setting with the therapist being empathic, open, honest, congruent, and caring (Rogers, 1993).

In an interview, Natalie Rogers explained that the expressive arts literally move the client into the world of emotions (Merry, 1997). They offer the client new ways to travel inward and also expand the capacity for client/counselor verbal communication (Merry, 1997). Rogers believes that empathic listening along with these activities aides in peeling back the layers of denial and defenses in the client. Creativity comes from the unconscious and our feelings and intuition. Most people put a tight lid over the unconscious which Natalie Rogers described as a "deep well" (Reisberg, 1993). The energy from emotions and feelings can be set free through the use of creative interventions (Reisberg, 1993). Rogers found that when she used varying creative interventions with clients they reported a sense of freedom to be (Reisberg, 1993).

Carl Rogers believed there is a need for the creative process to be awakened in clients and person centered conditions allow it to happen (Rogers, 1993). He thought that to foster constructive creativity, there is a need for psychological safety which includes accepting the individual as one with unconditional worth, empathic understanding, and providing a climate of non-judgment. The second condition is a climate for psychological freedom. Natalie Rogers expands on this to include the expressive arts as a way to offer

stimulus and permission to take off social masks and discover inner truths. A person centered approach gives the strong footing on which to build expressive arts (Rogers, 1993).

Samuel Gladding, (2005) suggested that there are several reasons to include the creative arts in therapy. Counselors are challenged to help clients discover what works best for them and why. The first reason for using creative arts in the counseling setting is that they provide a means to help the client become integrated and connected. A second reason is that art involves energy and process. The reflecting and talking about the activities can lead to new and improved functioning in the person involved. A third reason, is focus. The arts allow the clients to see more clearly what they are striving for and what progress they are making toward their goals. A fourth rationale is the stimulation of creativity. The fifth reason is that creative arts help establish a new sense of self. The visual, auditory, and other sensory stimuli can give clients a different way to experience themselves. A sixth reason for including the arts in counseling is concreteness; when the client finds something that works, it can be replicated. The creative arts can also bring about new insight for the counselor (Gladding, 2005).

Chapter Six:

Reawakening Creativity

An Experiential Workshop for the Novice Counselor

The following section is intended to reacquaint you, the novice counselor, with your own creative resources. It includes experiential exercises designed to help you overcome barriers and breathe life into creativity and creativity into your work. It is my hope that this guide will open your mind, ease your apprehension and inspire you to use creativity in your work and in your everyday life. ~Tina



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Many expressive arts activities and interventions are available for you to help reawaken your creativity. Natalie Rogers said that her father Carl discussed the need for the creative process to be awakened and the person centered conditions under which it could grow. They felt that to foster constructive creativity, there is a need for psychological safety which includes accepting the individual as one with unconditional worth, empathic understanding, and providing a climate of non-judgment (Rogers, 2009). I would like for you to begin this process by giving yourself this kind of acceptance. Go easy on yourself. Allow yourself the freedom to try new ways of being and refrain from judging yourself.

Begin this process by stepping out of your comfort zone and immersing yourself in the expressive arts. Feel free to embellish the activities and make them your own. Be creative with them. You may even find yourself in “flow” as you are creating something, or, as you are creatively working with a client. You may even find a piece of yourself that you didn’t know existed. Once you have tried some of the activities you might find yourself thinking about how you might be able to use them with your clients.

The following experiential activities have been designed to help introduce you to your very own creative source, to awaken your capacity for using your inner wisdom, intuition, and breathing life into creativity. These activities have been designed to be done alone or in a small group setting with other novice counselors. The main ingredients necessary for a small group are trust and safety. Remember, these exercises are for your personal exploration of creativity-- they are not to be judged or interpreted by anyone. It is about the process and not the finished product! Choose the exercises which speak to you most. Let’s begin...

Items Needed for Your Journey:

- Sketchbook/Art Journal
- Colored Pencils
- Pencils
- Pastels
- A Box (Any shape or size, cardboard or wooden cigar box)
- Collage Materials – Magazine cutouts, items from nature, fabric, pictures.
- Air Drying Clay
- Glue
- Modge Podge (A decoupage medium)
- Paint
- Paintbrushes/sponge brushes
- An Open Mind
- A Safe Environment
- A Traveling Companion/Small Group of Novice Counselors

Experiential Exercise One:

BEING OPEN

Slow Relaxing Breath with Mental Focus

I would like to suggest that you start with deep breathing and relaxation exercises before you begin any creative endeavor, including, working with a client. With practice it can help you to stay focused and help you clear your mind so you can be fully engaged in the process of creativity. Allow yourself time in between each client to start anew. This is a skill that you can learn and it can also become an intervention to teach your clients.

Begin with what Hardaway (2008) refers to as a creativity booster. Creativity flows more freely when we are taking care of ourselves. This kind of booster allows for a greater mind-body coordination to foster a state of relaxed alertness.

1. Begin by slowly closing and opening the eyes, noticing the difference between a quiet state as the eyes close and a more active state when the eyes open. Relax any taut muscles of your body, and focus on your breathing.
2. Exhale completely by pulling in and gently tightening the abdomen. Notice the rib cage contracts, the collarbone drops, and the shoulders move slightly forward.
3. Inhale, relaxing and rounding the abdomen, expanding the rib cage, lifting the collarbone and allowing the shoulders to move slightly backward.
4. Now relax the breath allowing the air to flow in and out effortlessly. As you become aware of thoughts that arise, notice how easily and effortlessly they come, just like the breath. Without judgment, release the thoughts, and gently return the focus on breath. Continue to inhale and exhale smoothly, completely and deeply for 1 to 3 minutes.

5. Now gently guide your mind to imagine yourself in a time and a place in which you feel calm and receptive. Stay with this until your entire body-feet, legs, torso, arms and head-is relaxed. Carry this open, receptive feeling as you begin your creative endeavor.

Experiential Exercise Two:

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY



There may be barriers or blocks that keep you from accessing your creativity. It is important to think about them and understand why they are there. The three blocks that are most apparent are environmental blocks, people blocks, and ourselves (Straker & Rawlinson, 2003).

Your environment should be a place where you can feel creatively stimulated. For some people this is a place where they feel relaxed. The right environment for you may vary with your mood and it is important to experiment with your environment whenever possible. Because we feel a need to fit in and we are social creatures, often times we are inhibited by what people might think of us. It is important to trust your co-creators during these exercises. And finally, we must realize that we, ourselves, are sources of our own creative blocks. The little voice inside of us warns us when we have unconventional thoughts. These blocks come from the past and are set early in life (Straker & Rawlinson, 2003).

In this exercise we will use the mandala as a way of breaking down the blocks that come from our inner critique and keep us from connecting with our creative self. The mandala was introduced to modern psychology by Jung (Fincher, 1991). He noticed that his

art journal reflected his state of mind. He would follow inner impulses to capture his mood in his drawings of circular designs. Jung later discovered that this circular design was called a mandala and it means center and circumference in the Indian tradition. The significance of the mandala is its symbol of Self (Fincher, 1991).

Materials: Large piece of paper, pastels, a large circle to trace or a compass to draw a circle.

Close your eyes and begin with the deep breathing and focus exercise.

- With your eyes closed allow an image to come to your mind which represents your inner creativity.
- Think about the barriers which stand in the way of your creativity. Allow an image to come to mind to represent these barriers.
- Visualize yourself overcoming these barriers.
- Open your eyes and begin to sketch the symbol or images on the paper and then choose colors to complete.
- Journal about your drawing. Make note of why you may have chosen specific colors and why this image came to your mind.
- What blocks do you think keep you from accessing your inner creativity?
- How were these blocks represented in your drawing?
- How did it feel when you thought about overcoming this barriers?
- Is there a client you are currently working with who might be able to use this activity? Is there a way that you might change this activity to fit your client's scenario? What barriers might be keeping your client from becoming?
- Discuss this activity with another novice counselor or with your supervisor.

For an exploration of the mandala and its uses in counseling please refer to : Fincher, S. F. (1991). *Creating Mandalas for Insight, Healing, and Self-Expression*. Boston: Shambhala Publication

Experiential Exercise Three:

CREATING A SAFE PLACE

(Malchiodi, C.A. 2007. *The Art Therapy Sourcebook*. New York: McGraw-Hill)

Materials Needed: White drawing paper and pastels or colored pencils.

1. Start with the relaxation exercise described in Experiential Exercise One. When you feel relaxed, think of all the places, real and imaginary, that have felt safe to you during your life. (If you can't think of a specific one, try to imagine one.)
2. Make a list of all the characteristics of your safe place (for example, things that are comfortable, such as pillows and furniture; things that are familiar; and things that you enjoy having around you).
3. Use the art materials to draw your safe place; you can make a simple diagram or an elaborate illustration. Add any features that will enhance the safety of the place or make it more comfortable.
4. Look at your image, and describe the significance of each characteristic or feature you included. Imagine yourself standing in this safe place. What would you see to the left and right of you, in front of you, and above and below you?
5. Look at your image, and consider under what circumstances your safe place would be most helpful to you. Note these.
6. Develop a picture in your mind of your safe place, and practice visualizing it during the next few days. What does it feel like to visit this place in your imagination?

This exercise is one that might prove to be very useful for your clients. Practice this, use your imagination, and experience the full essence of what it is like to feel safe. Once you know this feeling and believe in this exercise it is easier to relay it to your client.

Experiential Exercise Four: Divergent Thinking

COLOR SCHEMES

(Cameron, J. 2006. The Artists Way Workbook. New York: The Penguin Group)

Materials: Paper and pencil

Instructions:

Pick a color and write a quick few sentences describing yourself in the first person. (“I am silver, high-tech and ethereal, the color of dreams and accomplishment, the color of half-light and in between. I feel serene.” Or, “I am red. I am passion, sunset, anger, blood, wine and roses, armies, murder lust, and apples.”

What is your favorite color?

What do you have that is that color?

I am _____ . I am _____ ,
 _____ , _____ ,
 _____ , and _____ .

My favorite color is _____ because _____ .

What do I have that is this color? _____

This exercise can give you practice in thinking about things differently. Divergent thinking allows you to think broadly, in a way that you would not normally experience or to go to places you would not venture. Divergence allows for the generation of ideas. Take a deep breath and think of several other ways that you might be able to creatively describe yourself.

Common Color Associations

(Malchoidi, C. A. 2007. The Art Therapy Sourcebook. New York: McGraw-Hill.)

- ❖ Red – birth, blood, fire, emotion, warmth, love, passion, wounds, anger, heart, life
- ❖ Orange – fire, harvest, warmth, energy, misfortune, alienation, assertiveness, power
- ❖ Yellow-sun, light, warmth, wisdom, intuition, hope, expectation, energy, riches, masculinity.
- ❖ Green –earth, fertility, vegetation, nature, growth, cycles of renewal, envy, over protectiveness, creativity
- ❖ Blue-sky, weather, sea, heaven, spirituality, relaxation, cleansing, nourishment, calm, loyalty
- ❖ Violet/purple-royalty, spirituality, wealth, authority, death, resurrection, imagination, attention, excitement, paranoia, persecution
- ❖ Black-darkness, emptiness, mystery, beginning, womb, unconsciousness, death, depression, loss
- ❖ Brown-fertility, soil, sorrow, roots, excrement, dirt, worthlessness, new beginnings
- ❖ White-light, virginity, purity, moon, spirituality, creation, timelessness, dreamlike, generativity, resurrection, clarity, loss, synthesis, enlightenment.

Experiential Exercise Five:

Family Sculpting with Clay

(Adapted from the JMU Creative Arts in Counseling Workshop, 2009)



(with permission of the artists)

Materials: Air drying clay

Instructions:

Use clay to sculpt a symbol representing members of your family.

Note the size and position of each of your symbols. _____

Think about who you made first and last. _____

What might this make you aware of? _____

Who in your family fostered your creativity? _____

Who or what in your family system inhibited your creativity?

Sculpt a symbol of a tool that you can keep as a reminder that you have the ability to protect and foster your creativity.

Experiential Exercise Six:

Breaking Out of the Box

(Carson, D. K. & Becker, K. W. (2003) Creativity in Psychotherapy. New York: Haworth Clinical Practice Press.)



The box is one of the most common visual images referred to when discussing creativity. We all have a box that has been created and restructured over time. For some of us our box is constructed of childhood messages (can't, shouldn't, don't) or previous constraining professional experiences. This activity is designed to assist you in taking a clear and concentrated look at your box. The following steps are provided as a guide only. As new or better ideas come to you, seize them and incorporate them. This is your box.

1. Find or construct a box of any shape or size. Spend the time to come up with a box that represents you, your potential, and the messages of realities that provide obstacles to your creativity.
2. Draw past images, words, or pictures that bring your box to life. You may want the inside of the box to symbolize your untapped creative potential while the outside represents both your current creative endeavors as well as your personal or professional barriers. Feel free to use any objects or materials that seem right for you.

3. Put your box in the middle of the room and slowly walk around it to view your box from as many perspectives as possible. What do you notice from each angle? What do you experience as you look inside your box? Now pick up your box. What does it feel like? What does the size, weight, and texture communicate to you? What are you learning about your box, yourself, and your potential?
4. Share this experience with someone (or in your journal).

Experiential Exercise Seven:

Intuition

Your Inner Advisor



(with permission of the artist © Deborah Koff-Chapin www.touchdrawing.com.)

Intuition is a powerful tool to help the clinician formulate interventions. Intuition brings together clinical data, theoretical knowledge, and practical experience. The counselor perceives incoming information and without being aware organizes patterns connected with memories of previous clinical situations, life experiences and academic knowledge. When these are blended and then brought to awareness it becomes an intuition about a client or a situation (Eisengart & Faiver, 1996).

Guided Imagery/Joining Your Intuition – Quiet, dimly lit room with peaceful music in the background.

Instructions: Quietly center yourself and imagine yourself walking down a path. You see a dark cave to your left and you feel pulled to see what is inside. You enter the cave and from above you see some light shining through a crack in the cave. It illuminates the cave with an iridescent, sparkling light. You follow the winding stairs down, down, down. You sense someone else. When you look closely you start to make out a figure, it is sparkling in the light and you realize this figure looks a lot like you. A sense of peace comes over you as you

look into the eyes of this other you. Immediately, you are flooded with the feeling of knowing, understanding, and trusting. You are filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. Grateful beyond anything you have ever felt. You realize that this other is your Intuition. With your eyes and your mind you look into the eyes of your intuition and send your gratitude without speaking. You thank your intuition for being there throughout time, warning you, letting you know, watching over you. You apologize, using your mind to speak, for not always listening. And again, without speaking, you let your intuition know that you will listen when it quietly speaks to you, you will trust all that it says to you.

You ask your intuition if you can merge with it. If this is okay—merge-- and now looking out through the eyes of your intuition what do you see? What do you feel? What do you hear? When you are one with your intuition what resources are available to you that you don't ordinarily use in your work with your clients?

Now turn toward the interior of the cave. Follow the stairs up through the cave and into the land you are familiar with. Before you open your eyes – let your intuition speak to you—sending you a message to carry from your unconscious out into the world.

What did you hear?

When you are ready, take a moment to write or draw about this experience.

Experiential Exercise Eight:

THE REAL YOU

(Hardaway, M. (2007). *The Art Therapy Guidebook*. Laguna Hills: Walter Foster Publishing)

Materials

- White Pastel
- Black Drawing Paper
- A Freestanding Mirror
- Lightweight Drawing Board
- Tape to Secure Paper

You May Also Want:

- Writing Materials
- Colored Pencils

Children experience very strong emotions and often use their bodies to express themselves. When they're excited and happy, they dance and jump up and down: when they are scared, they often lash out by throwing a flurry of fists or running away. As we get older we learn from others to avoid or subdue our feelings so they don't explode on the surface. Over time, our ability to express ourselves diminishes, and we can lose awareness of our bodies. Use this project to bring yourself back to a state of awareness through rediscovering the most expressive area of your body: your face. This can be a fun process if you can push yourself to be more expressive than usual (Hardaway, 2007).

Historically "split-brain hemisphere" research seemed to indicate distinct differences between the two sides of the cerebral cortex that define the way we receive and process information. The right side of the brain became associated with intuitive, visual, and perceptual abilities, the left side became associated with verbal, logical, and analytical process. We now know that "bilateral brain" is a much more complex mechanism, with the hemispheres working in tandem to integrate thought processes. The integration or "union" as the ancient yogis called it, is the goal of many psychotherapeutic methods (Hardaway, 2007).

1. Position yourself in front of a mirror and get comfortable—you'll need to maintain this position until the end of the session.
2. Limber up by playfully making faces in the mirror until you settle on a face that expresses what you are feeling. Then exaggerate this facial expression a bit and hold it.
3. With your pastel at the top center of the black paper, look in the mirror and use your dominant hand to begin drawing from the center of your forehead, just below the hairline. Draw a continuous line as you move your eyes and pastel downward and back and forth across the midline of your face to record the dominant lines of your eyebrows, eyes, nose, and lips, finishing with a line that describes your chin. "Feel" your way down and across your face coordinating the movement of your eyes with the movement of your pastel. Imagine that the pastel stick is touching your face as you trace the edges of each shape and line.
4. Look at your drawing as little as possible—only make sure you're not drawing off the page and to maintain some sense of proportion.
5. When you have finished the drawing, take a moment to stretch, breathe, and relax your body including your face.
6. Repeat the previous steps, this time drawing the same facial expression with your non-dominant hand. This unfamiliar process will bump up your alertness even more.
7. Use the second sheet of paper for another expression—perhaps the opposite of the first. Begin, again with your dominant hand, and then turn over the paper to "activate" your non-dominant hand.

Experiential Exercise Nine:
THE MASK: LOOKING AT WHO YOU ARE



Materials:

- Large sheets of construction paper
- Picture filled magazines, wall paper samples, fabric, scraps, decorative tissue paper, feathers, gems, items from nature, craft supplies
- Scissors
- Glue
- Colored markers, pencils, crayons, paint
- A ready to decorate white mask – or a cutout of a mask

We wear many masks as a way of hiding our true self and our feelings. Often times we present these masks differently with friends, people at work, and with our family. These masks are somewhat invisible to us while also being familiar. This exercise was designed to make visible the pieces of yourself which you keep hidden. This can be a very

powerful way to unleash inhibition and make us aware of those hidden aspects of ourselves that need to be set free.

Decorate the outside of the mask to represent how you present yourself to others. Use symbols, colors, or other decorative features to embellish your mask. Also add the hidden aspects of your true self and your identity. Use items to represent your intuition, your inner being and the hidden aspects of your creativity.

Journal or discuss with another what the differences are and what you thought about and discovered while you decorated your mask

Chapter Seven:

Creative Interventions

A Resource for the Creative Counselor



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Tips for Selecting and Using Expressive Arts Activities

The Counselor/Client Relationship is the Most Important Tool for Success

The working alliance between the counselor and client sets the foundation for all other work. It is important to build rapport and maintain a safe, secure environment in which the client feels validated and understood. Activities can enhance the therapeutic process and should only be used in addition to the core conditions once a working alliance has been established.

Allow Theory to Drive your Intervention

Counselors should always have a strong theoretical conceptualization of the client before using an activity as an intervention. Choose an intervention that matches the theory you are working from.

Know Your Client

The intervention you choose should always match the needs and developmental level of the client. Always keep the best interest of the client in mind.

Match the Intervention to Treatment Goals

The intervention can be used as a tool to meet treatment goals and be a part of the overall treatment plan.

Remind the Client and Yourself that it is about the Process and not the Finished Product.

Remember to let clients know that the activities are designed more for self expression and self discovery. They are not being used for interpretation and will not be judged for their art ability. It is about the process of discovery that comes with the activities that is important to the therapeutic process.

Make the Activities Your Own

Feel free to change the activities to fit your client's needs. Allow your clients to creatively use the activities you present. Don't have a certain expectation of what the finished product should be.

Inner Polarities

(Rogers, N. (1993). The Creative Connection. Expressive Arts as Healing. Science and Behavior Books)

➤ **Group or Individual**

- **Purpose: Self-Understanding**
 - **Materials: Paper, colored pencils**

The following two exercises are suggested ways to tap into your unconscious to accept your shadow and embrace your light.

Exercise One

Writing

Brainstorm (by yourself or with a friend) the inner polarities that are familiar to you, such as: love/hate, fear/confidence, passivity/aggression, playfulness/seriousness, joy/sorrow, attraction/repulsion. What others can you think of?

Meditation

Take a few minutes to sit quietly, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and let all these words float in your consciousness. Which polarities are you drawn to explore? Choose one pair.

Visual Art

Facing a large piece of newsprint 18 x 24 inches, use your non-dominant hand to choose the colors and express your feelings about each side of the polarity. Don't worry about what the picture looks like. Experiment with closing your eyes as you draw. Use one page for each aspect of the polarity, or put both on the same page.

Writing

On each picture, write five words or five sentences that begin with "I."

Movement and Sound

As you look at the first picture, let your body move to the line, the rhythm, and the colors you see. Let out sounds to express your feelings as you move. Remember, when you move you have high and low space, wide and narrow space. You can move slowly, or quickly. You can be angular or flowing. Experiment with all kinds of sounds as you move.

Writing

Take ten minutes to do free writing. Don't censor yourself, don't stop writing. Or, have a dialogue between the two poles.

Visual Art

Now, quickly create a third picture. Use both hands at the same time let anything happen. What words come to mind when you look at this picture?

Meditation

Reflect on what you have done. Close your eyes, breathe deeply. Let go. How are you feeling now? What are you learning about yourself and your inner conflicts?

Inner Polarties (Continued)

Exercise Two

Since exploring the shadow means going into the unknown, it can be difficult to do on your own. Discovering your shadow requires an inner journey to face those aspects of self that are denied or repressed. As previous examples illustrate, you may discover beautiful treasures in this chamber or your worst ogre, or both. The ogre may have important messages for you and become an ally.

This guided imagery asks you to open the door to two aspects of yourself: one that you keep hidden in the dark, one in the light. These could be archetypal images (a witch, devil, jester, magician, emperor, empress, etc.) or animal images, or they may come to you as colors or feelings. These are the persona behind the social mask. Although these qualities are usually kept in the closet under lock and key, they have power in your life.

Guided Imagery

Sit or lie down. Feel the support underneath you. Breathe deeply. With each exhalation, take time to relax the muscles in your feet, your calves, your thighs, and your pelvis. (Pause.) Continue to inhale and exhale, deeply. As you exhale, allow the muscles of your abdomen, chest shoulders, arms, and hands to relax. (Pause.) Continue your deep breathing. Relax your neck, your face, your jaw, and your scalp. Inhale deeply and as you exhale, tell all the muscles of your body to relax.

Imagine yourself walking down a hillside. Notice the air you breathe. Notice what is to the left of you, to the right of you. Look toward the sky and down the hill. With each step down, breathe and relax. As you go down the hillside path, you notice it goes into a cave. Decide whether you wish to follow the path into the cave. (Pause.)

As you enter the cave, the dim light allows you to see the steps down. There are five steps. Count them as you descend, slowly, exhaling and relaxing with each step down. (Pause.)

You are now in a rotunda-- a round room. There is plenty of space to move and plenty of air to breathe. You are safe. If for any reason you do not feel safe, bring what you need into the rotunda. (Pause.) Explore this waiting area. What do you smell? What can you

touch? Notice that there are two doors in this area. On one it says “Shadow.” On the other it says “Light.” Decide which one you will open first.

Take the doorknob, turn it and gradually open the door. You may see something immediately, or it may take some time for an image to appear. It may be a person, an animal, a color, a word, a sentence, or a feeling. Whatever appears first, accept it. Acknowledge it. (Pause.)

You may ask this image a few questions such as, “Who are you? (Pause.) What do you want from me? (Pause.) “What are your powers?” (Pause.) Listen carefully. What qualities does this image have? How can this inform you? Notice your feelings. (Pause.) Now, say goodbye and close the door.

Now, go to the other door. Notice the sign on the door. Gradually open it. An image or feeling will be there for you. Accept it. Again, you may ask it a few questions: “Who are you? (Pause.) What do you want from me? (Pause.) What are your powers? (Pause.) Listen to the response. How can these two images inform you? What gifts do they have? When you are through, close the door and return up the steps to the daylight and come back to the here and now.

Feeling Maps

(Malchiodi, C. A. (2007). *The Art Therapy Sourcebook*. New York: McGraw-Hill)

➤ Group, Individual, Family, Child

➤ Purpose: self exploration, insight

- Materials: large white paper and colored pencils or felt markers

1. You are going to represent the following six feelings: anger, joy, sadness, fear, love of others, and love of self. Use a different color to represent each of the feelings. Try to imagine what each emotion looks like in terms of size and shape. Try not to use stick figures or happy-face characters to represent these feelings.
2. When you have completed all the images, consider whether any are connected to each other. How do your images relate to each other? Do any have common shapes or lines? How do they compare in size? Which one did you spend the most time on?

Stepping Stones

(Fausek-Steinbach, D. (2002). Art Activities for Groups. Ravensdale: Idyll Arbor)

-
- Individual, Family, Group, Adolescent
- Purpose: self-understanding, individuation
- Materials: construction paper in gray, blue, green, yellow, black and red, drawing paper 24" X 14", gluesticks, black markers, scissors
 - Cut the gray construction paper into roundish shapes to resemble stones.
 - Cut the red construction paper into 14" X 4" strips to resemble flames.
 - Cut 14" X 4" strips of blue construction paper to resemble waves.
 - Cut yellow construction paper into shapes like a sun.
 - Cut green and black construction paper into 14" X 4" rectangular strips.
1. Talk about stepping stones: When we cross treacherous water, when we hike through marshy grasslands, when we go from one place to another in our lives, we use stepping stones. Every transition, change and development in our lives requires us to take a step forward, and sometimes back. A decision is often made on faith, hope and courage, for better or for worse.
 2. Distribute gray construction paper stones and black markers.
 3. Ask each person to think of at least 4 significant points in their lives where they had to make conscious choices about something. Divide the years according to the age group you are working with.
 4. Instruct member to write one word that describes the decision that was made onto each gray stone.
 5. Next, place the different colors and shapes of construction paper onto the work table. Discuss what each color and shape can symbolize.
 - Red –flames, which would indicate a very volatile time or period of “hot” emotions.
 - Green – calm pastures. Indicates smooth sailing, restful time.
 - Black – solemn or sad times.
 - Blue – wave shapes. Indicates rough waters, indecisive times, periods of confusion and upheaval.

- Yellow – sunshine and bright days. Things are good and happy.
6. Ask members to choose a color and shape for each different stone, for each decision.
 7. Next, place drawing paper in front of participants. Ask them to chronologically place the different colors of paper on the background piece.
 8. The final piece should be a chronological map of the past years of the client's life. Discuss the visual effect of the stepping stone image. Allow each person to talk about the decision she/he has made on the journey. Talk about how each decision affects the next. Allow ample time for processing of the stepping stone charts.

Doll- making: Wish or Worry Doll

(Darley, S. & Heath, W. (2008). *The Expressive Arts Activity Book*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

- Group, Family Members, Individual, Child, Adolescent
 - Materials: tongue depressor, old fashioned clothes pins or popsicle sticks, colored pipe cleaners cut in half, 2”X2” fabric which is colorful and varied, small strips of colored paper, pens and scissors, glue sticks, feathers, glitter, fake hair, ribbon, sequins, googly eyes and anything that is appealing that can be glued to the doll.
1. Choose a stick.
 2. Choose one pipe cleaner.
 3. Choose fabric.
 4. Choose a strip of paper.
 5. On the strip of paper, write a worry or a wish. It can be a big or little worry and it is often good to choose something you have very little control over. No one will see your worry or your wish.
 6. Take the paper with the words on the inside and wrap the paper tightly around the stick.
 7. Take the fabric and wrap it tightly around the paper.
 8. Take the pipe cleaner and wrap it tightly round the fabric, twisting once, and leaving the ends out.

Ask the individual or group members to name the doll, share the worry or wish if they want to and tell the group what the doll wants. The want is usually the solution.

Symbolic Review: Mapping the Group's Journey

(Adapted from Barlow, C, Blythe J., Edmonds, M. (1999). A Handbook of Interactive Exercises for Groups.

Boston: Allyn and Bacon)

➤ Group

- Materials: Flip-chart, blackboard, whiteboard or large piece of paper.
Colored markers or chalk.

Process: Say, "This exercise is designed to create a map of the journey our group has taken during the past sessions. Think about the ups and downs and the highlights. What were the best and worst sessions, activities, successes, disappointments and reasons for your judgments? This can be adapted for the individual to process the highlights of the counseling journey. This is a great way to encapsulate or summarize the work that was done in counseling.

Ask one group member to begin. Have them tell the group about what was especially significant and represent that with a symbol. Then ask the participant where on the map he or she would locate the symbol. Invite other group members, in turn, to state their ideas on the group's journey, adding symbols and their initials to the maps. Allow the map to grow in whatever creative direction the group takes it.

Weeding Your Garden: Taking Stock of how One Lives

(Adapted from Barlow, C, Blythe J., Edmonds, M. (1999). A handbook of Interactive Exercises for Groups.

Boston: Allyn and Bacon)

➤ Group, Family, Individual

- Materials: Blank sheet of paper, crayons, colored pencils, or pastels.

In the center of the paper, draw a small circle and print your name in it. Now draw five petals around the circle and on each petal write a characteristic you like about yourself. Now draw a stem on the flower and roots. On each root, write something that you do for self care (for example, your favorite forms of recreation or relaxation). Finally draw four weeds growing next to the flower. On each weed, write a problem that worries you (these are worries over which you have some control, but about which you have done nothing). Ask each member to reflect on whether they will weed them, and how they might accomplish this.

VARIATIONS: Roots might also reflect personal support systems, such as family and friends, and community support systems, such as school and church. Minority groups or people with disabilities might label weeds to represent barriers to their full participation in society. Drawing a flower of a “significant other” person (i.e., one’s parent, spouse or child) enhances empathy.

Butterflies in My Stomach

(Adapted from: Lowenstein, L. (1999). *Creative Interventions for Troubled Children and Youth*.

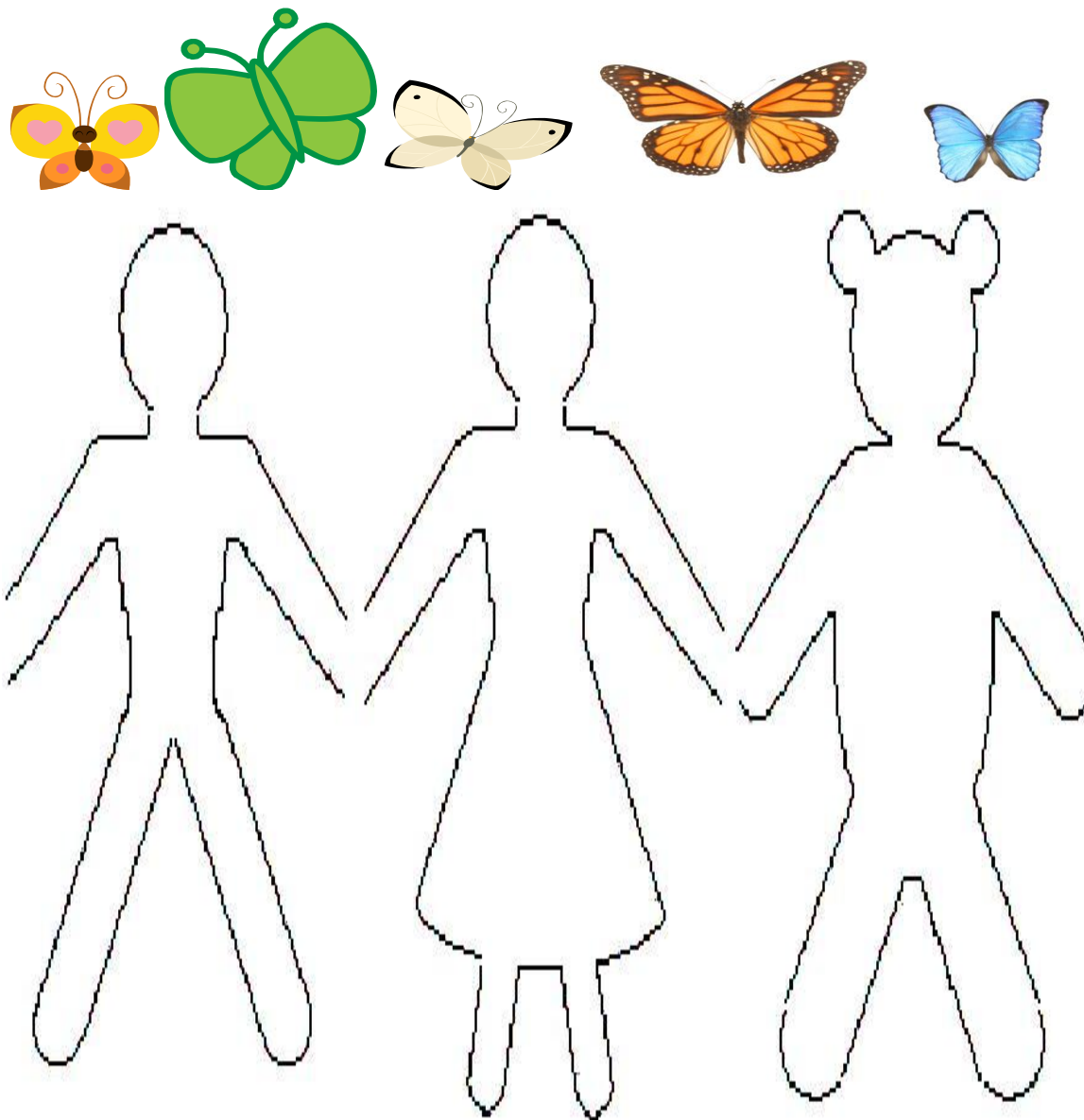
Toronto: Champion Press)

➤ Children Ages 7-12, Individual, Group

▪ Materials:

- Butterfly cutouts (included on next page)
- Cutout of paper doll (included on next page)
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks

Introduce the activity by pointing out that everyone has problems and worries. The counselor outlines the different ways the body reacts to stress; for example, when a person is scared, his heart might pound faster, or when a person is sad and about to cry, he might feel a lump in the throat. The therapist can ask the client if he is familiar with the expression, “I have butterflies in my stomach.” If the client is unfamiliar with the expression, the therapist can offer an explanation such as: “When you are worried or nervous about something, your stomach might feel funny or jittery, as if you have butterflies in your stomach.” Then the therapist gives the child the paper butterfly outlines on which he writes his worries. Bigger worries on larger butterflies, smaller worries on smaller ones. The butterflies are glued onto the paper dolls on the stomach. As the child identifies each worry the therapist can further discussion by asking open-ended questions, such as, “Tell me more about this worry.” The counselor can help with problem solving by asking “Is there anyone who can help with this worry?” The client’s problem solving ability can be assessed and encouraged by asking, “What could you do about this worry to help yourself feel better?”



Photocopy to enlarge

Mandala Journals

(Malchiodi, C.A. (2002). *The Soul's Palette*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc.)

A mandala journal is special form of image journaling and is a practice that is both soothing and stress reducing. Staying with drawing or painting within the circle is containing, structured, and satisfying and can be particularly healing during times of crisis or loss. Keeping such a journal is a transformative practice because your mandala images will change and evolve over time.

The following suggestions may help you get started in creating a mandala journal:

1. Select a square format, which will best contain circular images. Buy a square sketchbook, available in a variety of sizes at art or stationary stores, or have a copy shop cut paper to the size you specify and put a spiral binding on it for you.
2. Consider what type of art materials you will be using before you select or create your journal. For example, if you want to use colored pencils, a smaller sketchbook would be a good size. If you are using oil pastels or chalk pastels, a larger sketchbook is appropriate. For a serious practice of mandala drawing, treat yourself to a very nice set of professional colored pencils or oil pastels in a least 24 colors; if you shop at an art supply store, you can also buy extra colors in open stock.
3. Because creating a mandala is a quiet, meditative experience, playing your favorite relaxing or dreamy music to inspire your imagination and open your creative source.
4. If you are having a hard time getting started on a particular day, try dividing your circle into parts; a quadrant, a square within the circumference, or a series of free-form shapes. Go outside the space if you wish.

Don't worry if your mandala designs are not symmetrical or carefully balanced; go ahead and experiment with free-form or organic designs within the circle. Think of your mandala drawings as your Self emerging; in life, we are rarely completely orderly, balanced, and perfect. What is in our hearts flows to its own special rhythm, sometimes discordance and at other times a finely tuned melody. Let your mandala journal become a reflection for the emotions that are within and flowing through you right now, and enjoy the process.

Drawing Breath

(Malchiodi, C.A. (2002). *The Soul's Palette*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc.)

Becoming more aware of our breath is a simple activity that can help us reconnect with our feelings and bodily sense. As children, we breathe fully, deeply and freely; as adults, we often lose this simple skill because of stress and other factors. When we are frightened we may hold our breath, an action that often stumps us from sensing or feeling our bodies. Many of us have acquired a habit of shallow breathing that physiologically actually increases our sensations of fear or anxiety.

1. Imagine that the bottoms of your feet are open and that energy from the earth can be received through them. With your eyes closed and your feet firmly on the ground, inhale slowly, visualizing the energy that you are bringing into your body from the earth. Consciously think about breathing into your belly rather than your chest. Exhale, watching the energy within you going back through your feet and into the earth. Repeat this for a few minutes. Try to think of the in-breath as strengthening and empowering you, and the out breath as a force that cleanses and purifies you.
2. Stop, open your eyes and slowly try drawing your inhalations and exhalations on paper. Let yourself intuitively make lines and shapes across the paper and use colors that best represent the quality of your breathing. Keep breathing slowly and deeply into your abdomen, and keep making marks and images on the paper that reflect the movement of energies through your body. Continue this process for five to ten minutes or as long as you like and on as many sheets of paper as you like.

This exercise is very helpful with keeping you in touch with how you are breathing and develops a quiet awareness within. If you find this activity helpful, try some other experiments with your breathing.

Grief Quilt

(Adapted from the JMU Creative Arts Workshop)



(with permission of the artists)

-
- Group, Individual, Family, Child, Adolescent, Adult
 - Materials: Large square paper, various paper, paints, stickers, yarn, string, collage items.

Instructions: Ask each participant to create a block for the quilt to represent the person who they are grieving. Give ample time to complete the blocks. Allow time for the group to process their experience/share their block. Ask the group to put the blocks together to form a quilt.

Variations: Ceramic tiles can be designed and placed on a wall as a memorial. This can be done in the school or in other institutions in which there has been a death of a beloved classmate or colleague.

Find Your Voice

(Adapted from the JMU Creative Arts Workshop)



(with permission) JMU Creative Arts in Counseling Workshop

- Materials Needed: Socks, yarn, various crafting supplies, fabric, felt, glue

Instructions:

This activity is designed to use with individuals or groups. Puppets are very useful to help children express their feelings and also to practice new behaviors. The puppet can become a vehicle through which a child can work out problems without feeling as vulnerable or threatened. Because children can often identify with the puppet it becomes a resource for experimenting with solutions and looking for different outcomes.

Ask the client to design a puppet. Give the child the freedom to use various materials to make a puppet. Keep the puppet for counseling time and give the child the freedom to use the puppet at any time during any session. In a group, ask members to pair up and introduce each other to their puppets using the puppet's voice. Use the puppets to role play or to give children a way to express themselves. The therapist/facilitator can also use a puppet.

Chapter Eight

Creative interventions: Now what? Where does a novice counselor begin?

“The great majority of men are bundles of beginnings.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson



(with permission of the artist © Deborah Koff-Chapin www.touchdrawing.com.)

First – try the above interventions yourself. You are the best measurement instrument to know if a technique is going to work. Anyone who has ever watched a training video by one of the “gurus” of our field, knows that some techniques don’t work for everyone! As you practice the activity do you find yourself excited? seeing yourself or others in a new way? encountering emotions that felt inaccessible? recognizing some well worn pattern in yourself? Trust your internal response and choose a technique that you believe in and enjoy. Sometimes – the best interventions are the self-care that we give ourselves. Engaging deeply in the creative process is generative and nurturing to the counselor.

Next, you might want to get together with some friends or fellow counselors and practice the activities together. Solicit feedback and notice the places where you feel confident and the places where you need more practice. Spend time in groups or with another person – children make great partners for practicing creative interventions. Don’t rush the process and also don’t wait until you are sure your intervention is perfect. Trust yourself and trust the timing.

Think about your theoretical orientation and how each creative intervention supports your ideas about how clients change. Think about the person across from you. Using your observations and your own experience of him/her – what type of intervention might be useful? Have a few options in mind and be prepared to be flexible or to abandon the intervention if the timing isn’t right. Ask permission. Sometimes, it is helpful to prep the client and let him/her know that in your next session, you would like to try something expressive and ask if that is something he/she would like to try.

Once you are secure with your intervention, how do you know when to use it? Interventions that are solely “techniques” run the risk of harming our clients or threatening the therapeutic alliance. When is the right time to bring creativity into the counseling relationship? Often, a creative intervention can help when a client is stuck. When we have worked in the affective, cognitive, and behavioral realm and the client has not responded, sometimes we need to access the wisdom of the unconscious. Tapping into that inner wellspring can bring the nourishment and clarity that our clients need to chart their own paths towards wholeness.

Finally, let me know what works. Share your success with me. You can contact me via e-mail at tinamjohnston63@gmail.com.

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