

Notes on the Importance of Creative Expression in Psychotherapy.

Non-verbal expression - such as artwork, (whether representational or abstract) movement or sound, bypasses the intellect and the rational response. It's therefore often most effective with mentally identified people.

It acts as a bridge between the unconscious and the conscious realms, therefore allowing an inner reality to find concrete expression in the outside world, - so that inner and outer realities find some congruence.

It can reveal hidden truths, messages, (Hillman's '*necessary angels*'), patterns in symbolic form or acts. Expression from the 'wise unconscious'.

Information that has been locked away, repressed or denied can emerge with more safety - as it is externalised and given form. i.e. a client can safely represent in form that which is frightening: giving inner reality external form takes it out of the area of anxiety and inexpressible terrors - or ecstasy.

It can make order and sense of the world - meeting chaos and anxiety - confronting the gods: being one's own creator empowers and can give meaning to life and mortality. It completes what is incomplete in us. (Recommended reading: The Courage to Create by Rollo May).

Creating from self - self-creation, self-forming - lends significance and is therefore healing.

Making a mark, an impact, in form, in materia (matter, mater, mother) - is also healing for people with early abandonment or rejection issues as with adoptees and incubates, where the primary relationship with mother has not impacted or bonded.

Non-verbal expression is a language for the unconscious - not restricted by the usual boundaries of verbal syntax, logic and interpretations, and can shift understanding from the *cerebral unfelt*, to deepen and move it into the experienced *felt sense* i.e.: embodiment or grounding.

Non-verbal interaction - such as play (interactive drawings and painting, working with the non-dominant hand, sand play, clay or play dough, puppets and toys, interactive movement and sounds - rattles and drums etc.) can tap into the early pre-verbal responses and memories of the client, and is a way of suspending ego controls. (Winnicott: Playing and Reality)

The playful space between the therapist and client is healing in itself - according to Winnicott it is the quiet holding presence that facilitates the client to play.

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“Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is when playing is not possible then the work by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play.”

Winnicott, 1971

Honouring Creativity

It doesn't matter what form or shape it takes – creative expression is soul expression: it is a channel or vehicle for spirit or soul to come through.

When spirit comes into matter (material, body or form) it becomes embodied – or ensouled: it becomes a container for soul. Therefore, expression – into form – be it via art-making, music, movement or poetry, honours soul and enables it to become visible and resonant.

Thus, creative expression – soulmaking – is a bridge between spirit and matter, the unconscious and the conscious.

It also bridges the past with the future – the life of our ancestors – with the yet-to-be-lived life of future generations.

Creativity as an act in itself – the process of creating – puts us in touch with our limitations, our mortality, *and* our greatness, our godliness. For in the creative process itself we can experience timelessness, and for a moment – experience being the creator-god. At the same time, we are put poignantly in touch with our human frailty and how we exist with both life and death, with our finiteness – and the eternal.

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