

## Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Photographs: Using PhotoTherapy Techniques in Resolving Issues of Trauma

Full-Day Pre-Conference Workshop • Sept 18, 2008 • CATA/AATQ Conference • Montreal

Presenter: Judy Weiser, R.Psych., A.T.R., Founder & Director, PhotoTherapy Centre

Ordinary personal snapshots serve as 'mirrors with memory' reflecting what and who has mattered most in people's lives -- thus a photo's value lies not just in what its surface visual details depict, but more importantly, in what these mean *emotionally* inside each viewer's mind (and heart).

Because photographs have "secret lives" as visual narratives, symbolic self-constructs, metaphorical transitional objects, and crystallized family systems, they can serve as powerful emotional triggers and nonverbal bridges into previously-unconscious, long-buried, or overly-defended information (and underlying beliefs and values), in ways impossible with words (or private self-reflection) alone. For this reason, they can be of *particular* benefit in counseling people who have experienced trauma such as abuse, violence, residential school legacy, sudden loss, HIV-diagnosis, war, and other types of "life-shattering" events.

Therapists trained in "PhotoTherapy techniques" use personal snapshots, family photos, and pictures taken by others (and the feelings, memories, thoughts, and other information these evoke) to deepen and enhance clients' therapy process.

In PhotoTherapy-based therapy sessions, clients not only view existing photos, but also take, pose for, actively reconstruct, visually sculpt or create new ones, as well as remember or imagine those not possible to be brought with them. Those additionally trained in Art or Expressive Arts Therapy can use specialized "Photo Art Therapy" techniques for further explorations.

PhotoTherapy is about "photography as symbolic emotional communication", rather than "photography as art" -- *photographs as active agents of change and self-exploration*, but *always* done under the guidance of a trained therapist.

Using these techniques requires no prior experience with cameras, nor any knowledge about photographic art -- and they can be used with any therapeutic modality, client population or setting. Not limited to "paper photographs", these techniques can be used with any photographic imagery, including digital/electronic formats, videos, DVDs, films -- as well as technologies yet to be invented...

*This full-day Pre-Conference Workshop* (by a therapist with over 30 years experience counseling people who are survivors of various kinds of trauma) will begin with a slide-illustrated presentation of the "what", "why" and "how" of PhotoTherapy techniques, with several case illustrations -- and then provide several experiential\* opportunities so that participants can learn for themselves how these techniques can be particularly useful in helping clients heal from traumatic experiences and resolve issues these have caused. (\*Note: participation in these activities is voluntary and is for the purpose of education, not personal therapy!)

Many handouts will be given to provide summary of presentation information, recommended further readings, and to guide the experiential portions.

For more information about PhotoTherapy, see: <http://www.phototherapy-centre.com>

**IMPORTANT:** *Although not required, it would be helpful for participants to bring along:*  
one recent photo of yourself -- plus photocopies of 10 to 20 snapshots that have special meaning for you)

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### Objectives:

#### Workshop participants will leave being able to:

- 1) List and explain the five major individual PhotoTherapy techniques -- and discuss ways that each can be adapted especially to trauma-related counseling with individuals, families, and groups,
- 2) Understand why and how PhotoTherapy techniques are particularly beneficial in therapy for issues relating to trauma,
- 3) Experience at least two of these techniques personally [*IMPORTANT: participation in these activities is voluntary and for the purpose of participants' education, not personal therapy!*]
- 4) Begin using PhotoTherapy techniques immediately in their own individual or group therapy practice, or in related "therapeutic activity" situations/settings.

### Instructor:

Founder and Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre in Vancouver, Judy Weiser is a psychologist, art therapist, author, consultant and trainer with over 30 years experience specializing in two areas of therapy practice: 1) *PhotoTherapy Techniques* (using people's own personal snapshots and family photos to connect with feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and memories during their counseling sessions, in ways that words alone cannot do) -- and 2) *Counseling marginalized/disenfranchised people who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS*, particularly inner-city street-involved Aboriginal youth and adults.

Author of the classic text "*PhotoTherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums*" and the informational website explaining the field ([www.phototherapy-centre.com](http://www.phototherapy-centre.com)), she has produced a video about PhotoTherapy and numerous articles and book chapters about both of her specialty areas.

Long considered the "world authority" on PhotoTherapy, she has given nearly 300 workshops, lectures, and training intensives about these techniques (and related applications of Therapeutic Photography) in over 50 cities world-wide during the past three decades, and has mentored dozens of graduate Theses and Dissertations.

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