

**Part One (Lecture):**

**A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:  
An Introduction to PhotoTherapy Techniques**

**Two-Hour Lecture Presentation • Lucca, Italy • Thursday Morning, January 19, 2006**

by

Judy Weiser, R.Psych., A.T.R. -- Founder & Director, PhotoTherapy Centre (Vancouver, Canada)

Author of the book "*PhotoTherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums*"

Open to everyone interested (prior knowledge of photography or therapy is *not* necessary)

**Summary:**

PhotoTherapy techniques use people's own snapshots, family photographs, and pictures taken by others (and their interactions with these during therapy sessions and personal healing work) to connect them with feelings, thoughts, information and memories that are stored at levels deep inside where words alone cannot reach.

This slide-illustrated presentation will introduce the interrelated system of PhotoTherapy techniques and discuss the "what", "why", and "how" of each, showing how they work (alone or in combination with other art media) to enhance any therapy practice, regardless of the therapist's own theoretical orientation, particular modality, or preferred client population.

Numerous examples will be shown, and questions and discussions are welcomed.

**Note:** This "Part One" Lecture will be followed by "Part 2": A brief Workshop for experiencing one of these techniques personally at an informal (non-therapy) level.

*Attending "Part 2" will be useful for deeper understanding of this Presentation!*

**Presenter:**

Psychologist, art therapist, and PhotoTherapy pioneer Judy Weiser is the Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre in Vancouver, Canada (which she founded in 1982). Former Editor of the Journal *Phototherapy* and author of a book, website, and many book chapters and articles on the subject, she has focused her thirty-plus years of therapy practice on using PhotoTherapy techniques to help her clients heal. She currently consults, lectures, and gives training workshops world-wide, teaching people how to use these techniques to improve their therapy work -- and their lives. *She can be reached at:* [jweiser@phototherapy-centre.com](mailto:jweiser@phototherapy-centre.com) or in Canada at: 604-689-9709.

**Presentation Objectives:**

Those who have attended should be able to:

- 1) List, describe (and explain the differences between) the five basic PhotoTherapy techniques.
- 2) Explain why and how using these techniques can improve any kind of therapy practice with any kind of psychological problem or emotional or family issue.
- 3) Know how to access other practitioners and additional information about this subject (including receiving handouts for recommended readings, networking contacts, etc.).

**Longer Summary, with References:** *see next page....*

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**Longer Summary:**

Ordinary personal snapshots are like 'mirrors with memory', reflecting what and who has mattered most in people's lives. Therefore, what any snapshot is *about* emotionally is far more important than its visual details -- because its value always has more to do with what that image *means* inside people's minds and hearts, than in what their eyes see on its surface.

Based on this, PhotoTherapy techniques (Weiser, 1993/1999; 1975-2004 below) use people's own snapshots, family photographs, and pictures taken by others (and their interactions with these) as nonverbal tools to assist their therapeutic communication and personal healing. Worked with as symbolic self-constructs, transitional objects, personal or family narratives, and metaphoric communications from "deep inside", ordinary photographs can help people bridge into feelings and memories in ways that words alone cannot do.

In PhotoTherapy-based therapy sessions, photos are not just looked at, but also taken, viewed, posed for, actively reconstructed into new narratives, "sculpted", worked with in memory or imagination, or even explored through interacting with pictures taken by others. *This work is about "photography as symbolic communication", rather than "photography as art": it is about using photographs as an active agents of change and self-exploration...*

People's photos are usually worth far more than the proverbial "thousand words" -- and thus therapists trained in PhotoTherapy techniques find that making use of these "secret lives" of ordinary photographs helps clients learn a lot more about themselves -- especially when combined with art, play, drama, music, poetry, and numerous other creative-expressive therapy approaches.

Using these techniques requires *no* prior familiarity or experience with cameras or photographic art and is extremely "user-friendly" for the client.

*This slide-illustrated Presentation (including anecdotal examples) will introduce the interrelated system of PhotoTherapy techniques and discuss their rationale and applications (alone or in combination with other art media) for any kind of mental health work -- regardless of the therapist's own theoretical orientation, particular modality or preferred client population.*

**NOTE:** *Attending "Part 2" (the PhotoTherapy Workshop following this presentation) will be useful for deeper understanding of this Presentation.*

**Presenter's Publications:** *see next page....*

## **Publications\* by Judy Weiser:**

\*Please note: Most of the articles and book chapters listed below may be downloaded *for free* from:  
[www.phototherapy-centre.com/biography.htm](http://www.phototherapy-centre.com/biography.htm)

- 2004(a) -- PhotoTherapy techniques in counseling and therapy: Using ordinary snapshots and photo-interactions to help clients heal their lives. *The Canadian Art Therapy Association Journal, Fall, 17:2, 23-53.*
- 2004(b) -- The continuum of arts-based healing practices: Arts-in-Therapy/Arts-as-Therapy. *Creative Arts in Counseling Chapter Newsletter (Canadian Counseling Association), Fall, 1:2, 3.*
- 2003 -- A picture is worth a thousand words: Using PhotoTherapy Techniques in Counseling Practice. *Bulletin of the Private Practitioners Chapter Newsletter (Canadian Counseling Association), March, 3:2, 3-4.*
- 2002(a) -- PhotoTherapy techniques: Exploring the secrets of personal snapshots and family albums. *Child & Family, Spring/Summer, 16-25.*
- 2002(b) -- PhotoTherapy techniques: Exploring the secrets of personal snapshots and family albums. *B.C. Psychologist, Winter, 26-27.*
- 2001 -- PhotoTherapy techniques: Using clients' personal snapshots and family photos as Counseling and Therapy tools (Invited feature article in "Special Double Issue: Media art as/in therapy"). *Afterimage: The Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism, 29:3 (Nov/Dec), 10-15.*
- 2000 -- PhotoTherapy's message for Art Therapists in the new Millennium. *Journal of the American Art Therapy Association, 17:3, 160-162.*
- 1999\* (Book; 2nd Edition) -- *PhotoTherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums.* (1st edition: 1993), Vancouver: PhotoTherapy Centre Press [ISBN: 0-9685619-0-X].
- \*IMPORTANT NOTE:** Italian Lawyers have estimated that over 90% of Giusti & Proietti's book "*Fototerapia: E Diario Clinico*" was directly copied from this book. Writs have been served against the two, and the court date for the plagiarism case is set for Milan, February, 2005. (Visit [www.phototherapy-centre.com](http://www.phototherapy-centre.com) for more information)
- 1990 -- "More than meets the eye": Using ordinary snapshots as tools for therapy. In: Laidlaw, T., Malmo, C., & Associates (Eds.), *Healing voices: Feminist approaches to therapy with women* (pp. 83-117). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 1988(a) -- "See what I mean?" Photography as nonverbal communication in cross-cultural psychology. In: Poyatos, F. (Ed.), *Cross-cultural perspectives in nonverbal communication* (pp. 245-290). Toronto: Hogrefe.
- 1988(b) -- "PhotoTherapy: Using snapshots and photo-interactions in therapy with youth. In: Schaefer, C. (Ed.), *Innovative interventions in child and adolescent therapy* (pp. 339-376). New York: Wiley.
- 1986 -- Ethical considerations in PhotoTherapy training and practice. *Phototherapy, 5:1, 12-17.*
- 1985 -- Training and teaching photo and video therapy: Central themes, core knowledge, and important considerations. *Phototherapy, 4:4, 9-16.*
- 1984 -- PhotoTherapy: Becoming visually literate about oneself. In: Walker, A.D.; Braden, R. A.; and Dunker, L. H. (Eds.), *Visual literacy: enhancing human potential* (pp. 392-406). Virginia Polytechnic State University Press.
- 1983 -- Using photographs in therapy with people who are 'different'. In: Krauss, D. A. and Fryrear, J. L. (Eds.), *Phototherapy in mental health* (pp. 174-199). Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- 1975 -- PhotoTherapy: Photography as a verb. *The B.C. Photographer, 2, 33-36.*