

PhotoTherapy, Photo Art Therapy, and Therapeutic Photography:

Exploring the Spaces and Partnerships Between Art, Therapy, and Photography (Implications for Arts Therapies Education and Practice)

PhotoTherapy techniques use people's own personal snapshots, family albums, and photos taken by others (and the feelings, memories, thoughts, and beliefs that these pictures evoke), to deepen and improve personal insight, understanding, and relationships with others, in ways that words alone cannot do. Photo Art Therapy is a subfield of these techniques practiced only by those with additional specialized training in Art Therapy.

These techniques are about "photography as personal-symbolic emotional communication", using photographs as active agents of change and self-exploration, while under the guidance of a trained therapist.

What photographs are about *emotionally* (and the stories they contain) is always more important than the visual details that appear on their surfaces. With "secret lives" as visual narratives, symbolic self-constructs, and metaphorical transitional objects, ordinary snapshots can be 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.

In PhotoTherapy sessions, clients not only view and discuss existing photos, but also take, pose for, actively reconstruct, visually sculpt or create new ones, as well as remember or imagine others. In Photo Art Therapy sessions these are combined with traditional art media into creative art-making process that facilitates confluence and exchange far more powerful synergistically than individually.

This Presentation (by the person considered the "world authority" on these techniques), will provide an illustrated overview to theory and applications, and demonstrate how, 30 years after first being pioneered, these techniques have clearly moved into mainstream therapies practices worldwide and it is time that educators recognize that a full education about using the entire spectrum of all arts media in therapy practices must now include the photographic ones, so that graduates will be properly prepared to work with clients who are themselves leading increasingly digital lives.

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Presenter Information

Judy Weiser, R.Psych., A.T.R.; Founder/Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre in Vancouver Canada; Executive Director of the "Judy Weiser PhotoTherapy and Therapeutic Photography Educational Society"; psychologist, art therapist, author, consultant, trainer, and early pioneer of PhotoTherapy; author of the classic text *"PhotoTherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums"*; manager of the informational website explaining the field (www.phototherapy-centre.com); author of numerous articles, book chapters, and a video about PhotoTherapy; presenter of over 300 workshops, lectures, and training intensives in 50+ cities world-wide during the past three decades; mentor of dozens of graduate Theses and Dissertations; email: JWeiser@phototherapy-centre.com

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