

The Continuum of Arts-Based Healing Practices: Art-in-Therapy / Art-as-Therapy*

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"All Creative Arts Therapies are based on the idea that symbolic representation of inner sensory-based information and experience will always be less distorted or truncated than solely verbal interpretations of such things can ever be. Thus each time people create or view drawings or photographs (or react to other people's images), they will always be simultaneously projecting unconscious information through metaphoric communication emerging from deep inside themselves"¹.

When discussing what to name this Chapter, we found ourselves wanting to be inclusive of all the different ways the arts were used within therapeutic applications because Therapists who used the Arts as adjunctive tools to assist during the verbal counselling process ("arts-in-therapy") are also likely to also occasionally encounter clients who have been using the arts themselves, as therapeutic self-help ("arts-as-therapy"), due to the very naturally therapeutic and healing effects of the creative process upon the human psyche!

"Arts-in-Therapy" happens when arts-based techniques are used as adjunctive tools within the therapy process -- under the guidance and care of a trained counselling professional during the formal counselling process, and as an integral part of it) -- to assist other people (their clients) in resolving problems.

"Arts-as-Therapy" happens when people use the arts for themselves rather than at the direction of a therapist -- in self-initiated activities done outside any formal counselling context (for their own self-exploration, personal insights, or "artistic statement" purposes) -- but where there's no mental health professional formally guiding the process.

We wanted to be clear that our "Creative Arts in Counselling" Chapter is inclusive of all uses of the Arts in connection with Counselling, because we see this Chapter as being useful no matter where members are "located" along this "continuum of arts-based healing practices" discussed above. "Arts-in-Therapy" can be at one end, with "Arts-as-Therapy" at the other -- without these differences being mutually exclusive, adversarial, or prioritized in relative valence. ALL uses of art in or as therapy can be beneficial to clients (and counsellors too!). Therefore this Chapter welcomes members who work anywhere along this entire spectrum.

*(Note: This article is © jointly copyright 2004, Judy Weiser and the Creative Arts in Counselling Chapter)

¹ Weiser, J. (2001). Compared with other fields. "PhotoTherapy Techniques In Counseling and Therapy" Website: <http://www.phototherapy-centre.com/comparisons.htm>