

Ancient traditions within a new drama therapy method: shamanism and Developmental Transformations

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This paper will build on previous writings linking the creative art therapies with shamanism, by drawing comparisons between the drama therapy method known as Developmental Transformations and elements of shamanism. I will explore specifically how ancient techniques such as extraction and shapeshifting occur organically in the supposedly “post-modern” method of Developmental Transformations, and elucidate the parallels between the concept of playspace in Developmental Transformations and that of the ceremonial space in shamanic ritual. The paper will also compare how imagination is used in both practices, and conclude with the implications of these connections.

Shamanism

Shamanic traditions have thrived in indigenous cultures for centuries, with shamans acting as bridges between the unseen world of spirit and the material reality of humanity (Harner, 1980). Since Eliade published his seminal work, *Shamanism* (Eliade, 1964), these traditions have encountered a resurgence of interest and popularity. In addition to the indigenous cultures that still practice them, many modern healers have incorporated these traditions into their practices. A blend between therapy and shamanism seems a natural way for the ancient traditions to continue in the modern world. Parallels between theatre and shamanism (Bates, 1987; Cole, 1975), creative arts therapy and shamanism (McNiff, 1981; Johnson, 1990; Moreno, McNiff, Schmais, Irwin, & Lewis, 1988), and Developmental Transformations and shamanism (Johnson, in Jennings, 1992) have already been documented. In the special issue of *The Arts in Psychotherapy* (1988, Vol. 15), devoted to the exploration of creative arts

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therapists as modern-day shamans, Shaun McNiff asserts that the creative arts therapies “are contemporary manifestations of ancient continuities in art, health and religion” (p. 285).

I will now provide an example of a shamanic healing, as witnessed by Alberto Villoldo, a clinical psychologist and modern-day shamanic practitioner who has spent years studying and integrating the practices of ancient Incan shamanism into his work. Villoldo (2000, pp. 41–42) describes an *extraction* he witnessed accompanying one of his masters, Eduardo, to a healing ceremony.

The patient was a young woman who was holding her child. The shaman spontaneously broke into song, and soon after, five or six tendril-like strings of energy emanated from the woman’s belly. Attached to the end of these tendrils was a milky form that Eduardo described as her former husband, who was energetically trying to take custody of her child. “This man is hurting you,” Eduardo said. “He is joined to you through your womb” (p. 41). The shaman jumped up and retrieved his sword from the altar. As he brought it to her belly, swirls of energy that resembled a lava lamp of light and dark colors were streaming just above. Then, Eduardo flicked his sword to sever the darkest cord, which immediately retracted into the entity’s abdomen. Villoldo continues:

Eduardo began sucking the other dark tendrils from the woman’s belly, loudly drawing into his mouth the toxic strands. He did this for nearly a minute and then stepped outside the circle. I could hear him retching violently.

When I looked at the woman again, all of the dark fibers were gone. I could see her second chakra spinning sluggishly and then picking up speed, reorganizing itself into a conical shape. (p. 42)

Here, the shaman Eduardo extracts unwanted energy from the patient’s body, through cutting and sucking it up. This example will be used as a basis of discussion later in this article.

Developmental Transformations

In the late 1980s Developmental Transformations emerged as a drama therapy method that is based on transformations of embodied encounters in the *playspace*. Johnson (2000) defines the playspace as a mutual agreement between client(s) and therapist that what is occurring is in play. Through a state of bodily oriented improvisation, or free play, therapist and client(s) open themselves to an encounter with the other. Sessions may begin with basic movement and sound, but gradually include the enactment of various roles and circumstances, which change as new associations and references are introduced into the playspace. When a client is unable to sustain playing in an embodied state, an interruption in the flow of the play occurs. This allows issues of disembodiment and intimacy to be detected and addressed.

Developmental Transformations has been used successfully with a variety of populations, varying from mentally ill homeless to Vietnam veterans (Johnson, Forrester, Dintino, James, & Schnee, 1996). The following example is extracted from my notes of an ongoing Developmental Transformations group consisting of three “normal neurotic” women.

It contains similarities to the previous shamanistic passage, and I will refer back to this example as well.

Susan is a print ad director in her mid-thirties, and was trying to repair her passionless relationship with her girlfriend of 5 years, while fighting her desire to have an affair with a younger woman at her job.

Susan came to the group with severe menstrual cramps and did not feel inclined to play. Every time the group gathered momentum and a flow began to build, she retreated and held her lower stomach. "You are holding something in there!" I mock accused her. "What is it?" The other women gathered around her stomach. "Let's go in there and get it," another member suggested. We began to pull ribbons out of her abdomen. Susan responded and reacted in mock surprise. At first we pulled strands of red and purple and then rainbow colors out of her womb. As we were pulling, we came close to something at the end of these strands, which felt "big." We were examining this hunk of something, when Susan declared it was an apple pie! We opened it up and reluctantly began to eat it. I asked what was in this delicious pie and Susan called out, "Apples . . . cinnamon . . . and . . ." she continued, "a skunk!" There was a pause while the group tried to take in and play with this jarring image. We continued to eat, while 'feeling queasy,' playing with the presence of something sneaky and smelly, despite the fact that everything tasted so good. This scene quickly gave way to another, and the play flowed strongly from this moment on, eventually transforming to a scene at a board meeting in which I played a flirtatious young woman who was making advances towards her. Before the end of the session I checked in with Susan about her cramps. She reported they were gone.

Here, the therapist allowed the group to enact constantly transforming imagery, consisting of extracting ribbons from Susan's womb and then eating what had become an apple pie and then a skunk.

Similarities

Playspace and sacred space: trance-related

Winnicott (1986) describes play as *transitional phenomena*, introducing the concept that the act of playing has a place and time of its own, one that exists neither inside one's psychic experience nor outside the individual completely, but rather, somewhere in between. Johnson (1998) views the playspace as an extension of the transitional space. He refers to the playspace as "an *enhanced* space, where the imagination infuses the ordinary . . . [the playspace] is summoned merely by the creation of the illusion of an alternative reality . . . In this sense, the playspace is a form of trance" (1992, p. 113).

"Trance" is a word used to describe the shamanic state of consciousness, although Harner (1980) avoids the word because of Western associations of trance states as being non-conscious. Villoldo (2000, p. 137) uses the term *sacred space* to define the mode in which all shamanic work occurs, calling it a "healing sphere that is pure, holy and safe." There are many other names for sacred space, including "sacred ceremony" (Villoldo, 2000),

and “dreamspace” (Moss, 1996). These terms will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

Expressive arts therapist McNiff (1981, p. 13) reveals the healing power of the trance in shamanic and psychodramatic work in the following passage:

Shamanism consistently makes use of the ecstatic trance as a form of healing . . . The intensity of psychodramatic enactments can be likened to a trance because participants so completely immerse themselves in their respective roles that they transcend their immediate reality in opening up feeling states beyond the limits of space and time. The individual's demons are confronted in much the same way in these enactments as they are in aboriginal ceremonies. Both provide a means for the release and dramatization of tensions, which can produce peak experiences rather than a continuation that plagues consciousness.

Although the playspace allows issues to be treated with lightness and humor, it often gives way to serious albeit imaginative explorations of a client or group's deeper feelings. A Developmental Transformations group of Vietnam veterans that began with jovial spirits and mutual ribbing, transformed into a puddle of soldiers passing a cadaver around the circle and weeping for their lost buddies (James & Johnson, 1997). One might assume that the maintenance of sacred space requires serious focus, but Villoldo upholds the playfulness in sacred ceremony, saying, “. . . the sacred space is neither serious nor ponderous. Shamans take their work seriously, but they do not take themselves very seriously at all, and there is often laughter and playfulness during healing ceremonies” (p. 136).

Extraction

Modern-day shaman and dream teacher Moss (1996) believes that after physical death, some spirits, especially those who die unexpectedly or those who are not properly mourned, try to stay connected to physical reality through an embodied presence, and their addictions and burdens manifest through the host. Moss (p. 225) says:

A serious limitation of psychotherapy is that, just as the therapist may fail to appreciate that the client is not all there (because of soul-loss), she may also fail perceive that she has more than one client, in the most literal sense.

In order to remove these ‘entities’ from the sick person's energy field, shamans may cut, suck, or pull them out, in a procedure known as an *extraction*, which was exemplified by Eduardo in the aforementioned healing. Villoldo, like Moss, believes that extractions can cure what years of psychotherapy cannot.

McNiff (1988), commenting on the creative arts therapies in general, stresses the therapeutic value of this shamanic process by suggesting the following:

. . . therapists have to learn how to ‘eat’ the pain and illness of other people. . . . Eating pain . . . is a primary, body metaphor that has to do with our ‘insides.’ It is active and transformative. We must learn how to take nourishment from it and let it pass through us. (p. 288)

From my six years of training with, talking to and reading the works of Developmental Transformations therapists, I can safely assert that they often find themselves sucking,

pulling and cutting images out of their clients, as revealed in the former example of Susan in the group. They most likely do not think of themselves as performing extractions, and might not consider that their playful and imaginary actions have any real or lasting effect. Rather, they view these activities as providing a dramatic structure for a client to transform energy.

The “extractions” revealed in the examples of Susan and Eduardo are different in many ways, but the fact that both were centered in the second, sexual *chakra* (the Sanskrit word for energy centers in the body) where there were issues related to sexual relations, is noteworthy. In addition, the tendrils in Eduardo’s healing and the ribbons in the group are reminiscent of one another. The fact that the group ate the pie is similar to the shaman’s sucking up the tendrils. The significance of the skunk in the apple pie will be revealed later in the paper.

Shapeshifting

In “Shaman, Healer, Sage” Villoldo (2000) shares a story of a lesson taught to him in Peru by his teacher, the revered and powerful crone Doña Laura. He was at a ceremonial event, where he spotted a beautiful woman. He became very focused on her, and watched her go behind a boulder. An instant later the wizened and homely Doña Laura emerged from behind it. Villoldo was startled. “You don’t think I am pretty anymore?” (p. 102) she asked him, implying that she had changed her physical form and *shapeshifted* into a beautiful young woman.

“Shapeshifting requires reshaping the imaginal realm, and consciousness becomes *objectified* in some other thing,” writes Celtic shamanic practitioner Cowan (1993, p. 30). “In this dreamlike state, the imaginal realm reshapes itself, creating a placeless, timeless field in which the shaman can participate in the consciousness of other creatures.” Not all shamans are shapeshifters, and not all shapeshifting results in a literal change in the physical body. Although the actual physical shifting is the most dramatic, it is not necessary or the most important aspect of the skill. A shaman who has the power to change the physical body for showmanship misses the gifts inherent in the act of shapeshifting, such as true communion with other (Cowan, 1993).

Good acting is a form of shapeshifting, however, more often into fictional and not living beings. Good actors can be so skilled at shapeshifting that audiences forget their skill and some refuse to believe that the personality of the actor is different from the characters they portray. Developmental Transformations therapists and clients are shapeshifting all the time. Shapeshifting is akin to what Developmental Transformations therapists call, “Faithful Rendering” (Johnson, 2000). This is when the therapist places herself in the client’s frame of reference and enacts what she discovers, in an effort to reveal the client. Not only does the Developmental Transformations therapist enter into the client, but she also shapeshifts into the different characters that represent the client’s inner world.

In my work with an African American PTSD survivor who was alexithymic, I encountered a powerful experience of shapeshifting. He was a Vietnam veteran who reluctantly engaged in play and did not move from a seated position for very long. In an attempt to lead him into play, we created a game out of getting him out of his seat and onto his feet. Each new idea I introduced kept him out of the chair for only a second longer. Finally, I playfully “gave up” on him, and confessed my diagnosis that he would never fully emerge from the chair, and that he was really incurable. He responded that I sounded like his mother. Suddenly

an image of him as an adolescent boy with his mother flashed through my mind's eye. Prompted by this image, I began acting, despite intense fears of stereotyping and being perceived as racist, as I saw his mother, insulting him in a Southern accent (I did not know where he grew up) and insisting that he "git hiz lazy self up and do something!" He began to laugh, expressing awe at how I, without ever having met his mother, "acted exactly like her."

Shamans who master the gift of shapeshifting understand not only that "they are no different from the stones, the plants and the Earth" (Villoldo, p. 102), but also "that the river of life flows beyond form and formlessness, beyond existence and nonexistence." I view this "river of life" as the Source, Johnson's term (2000), for the formless presence that rises up in each of us. As clients move through the stages of embodied play, they hopefully become more connected to the Source, experiencing less separation between Self, Source and Other (Johnson, 2000).

Dreaming and journeying

Shamans in most traditions have a strong connection to dreams and believe that dreaming is a powerful part of consciousness (Moss, 1996). Important messages are delivered from Spirit into the dreamer, either while he is asleep, or in a focused, meditative dream state known as journeying. Journeying, or "dreaming" while awake, is a practice in which consciousness "becomes the spirit world in which the shaman will travel" (Cowan, 1993, p. 30). Journeying is often induced, and the sacred space is accessed or enhanced by singing and dancing, the use of hallucinogenic drugs such as ayuhausca, and/or the constant beat of a drum or a rattle.

Developmental Transformations sessions are often reminiscent of dreams. In a session with a strong flow, in which both therapist and client(s) are experiencing enough freedom in the playspace to follow their embodied impulses in relation to one another, dramatic scenes and images arise and then transform quickly, as they might in dreams or shamanic journeys. In dreams, we frequently find ourselves in one scenario that suddenly shifts and opens up into another. Different historical periods in one's personal life or in cultural history can be mixed into one episode. These phenomena also occur in Developmental Transformations sessions.

Developmental Transformations, which occurs in a room with only the therapist and a few pillows, does not rely on drugs or the beat of a drum to facilitate the journey into the unconscious. However, in group-work especially, sessions begin with and are often characterized by repetitive movements and sounds. McNiff (1981, p. 12), when describing warm-up phases of creative arts therapies, refers to repetitive movements and sounds as "hypnotic and comforting" tools that both the expressive therapist and shaman use to enter deeper levels of consciousness.

Roles of the therapist/shaman

A Developmental Transformations therapist cannot take him or herself seriously if she is to do the work well. In fact, every aspect of the therapist's persona is available as play material for the client (Johnson, 2000). Johnson (1992, p. 116) has already compared the

Developmental Transformations therapist to the shaman in specific instances during play in which the drama therapist "submits to the spirits of the *illud tempus*" (other world), and performs for the client in order to bring him or her to greater awareness. There are other similarities between the two practitioners. Mindell (1993, p. 161) defines the shaman as the "caretaker of the absurd," celebrating the unusual and using it to nudge people out of their comfort zones and into broader awareness. Similarly, the Developmental Transformations therapist "attempts to establish non-linear norms" (Johnson et al., 1996, p. 93) in order to loosen the grip of the client's well-formed defenses. Developmental Transformations therapists, in their ability to follow impulses as they arise, no matter how seemingly unfitting, encourage the absurd and celebrate the flexibility and spontaneity that surface as a result of doing so. In another session of the same group previously mentioned, the four of us entered a non-verbal world in which we weaved in and out of one another through dance like movements. It seemed we were all in a quiet spell, very much in tune and moving with one another. Eventually, someone yelled "No!" Others began to repeat the word in various patterns, tapping them out on each other's bodies. "No!" evolved into a combination of "yes" and "no." Occasionally, smiles would be exchanged as we reflected on the strangeness of what we were doing. But, despite the unique ways of relating, everyone reported feeling closer and more relaxed at the end.

The guide

The Developmental Transformations therapist is also the guide into the playspace, as the shaman is the guide into sacred space. Both must demonstrate "comfort and confidence" (Johnson, 2000, p. 92) as they lead clients into their respective realms, while at the same time, *surrendering to the unknown*. In Developmental Transformations the client and therapist have no preplanned agenda or items to play with, but instead maintain focus on "the uncertain, ungraspable encounter between consciousnesses" (Johnson et al., p. 297). Again, the shaman may have some tools to work with, such as a drum or rattle, or a *mesa* (a traveling altar with sacred objects), but usually, like the Developmental Transformations therapist, has no agenda for the healing work until she journeys into sacred space and receives the information needed to act (Russo, personal communication, July 6, 2002). This surrender takes the discipline of what shamans call the second attention (or awareness), and *tracking* energy (Villoldo, 2000). The concept of second awareness, which "allows you to perceive the stories contained within energy" (Villoldo, p. 121), occurs in Developmental Transformations and also corresponds to Moreno's *tele*; the intuitive knowing two people have about one another (Moreno, 1975).

Differences

The guide

The surrender to the unknown is different in shamanic practice than it is in Developmental Transformations. In work with Longo-Russo (2002), a shaman and curandera who has been training with Incan and Native American Shamans (including Villoldo) in North and South

America for more than 15 years, I experienced a new and very profound type of listening to inner impulses and “spirits”:

Fran asked me to find a place in a rural environment, with land by (preferably running) water, for our retreat. I found a place that neither Fran nor I had been to before, and I had no idea what to expect. Fran said that she didn’t either. As I readied myself for our adventure ahead, I put some money, my journal, and water into my backpack. I had a fantasy, based on stories I had read, that I might be asked to jump in the water. “Will I need a towel?” I asked Fran. “I don’t know” she replied. I told her that I knew how to get to a nearby river by car. She paused, cocked her ear towards the sky, and said, without having direct knowledge of the area, “No, we walk. There is water nearby.” She stepped out onto the road, with only a rattle and bottle of fragrant water sticking out of her pockets, paused and listened. “We go this way,” she said, and turned right. I followed her with great anticipation. At a crossroads, she stopped again, and watched the treetops as they blew in the breeze. She followed their direction, and turned right again. Within minutes, we were standing on a vacant bridge over a small stream.

This is a rich example of surrender to the “*illud tempus*” in order to bring a healing environment to the client. What is also apparent from this example is the connection with nature that the shaman embraces.

Shamans believe in and identify strongly with the forces of the natural world (Harner, 1980). Role-plays in Developmental Transformations may take you to an imaginary landscape, but there is no engagement with the outside world. Once in a suitable natural environment where the elements helped her to do her work, Fran began to shake her rattle; and I began my journey into the imaginal realm. Although there was generally less physical movement and personal engagement with the guide than there might be in a Developmental Transformations session, after it was over, it became evident from our conversations, that for moments in the journey, Fran had traveled into and witnessed my inner imagination with me.

Embodiment

Some shamans, such as Fran Russo and Arnold Mindell, believe embodiment is a key factor in connecting with Spirit and receiving signals from the dreamingbody. On the other hand, for Celtic practitioner Tom Cowan, embodiment is not an essential factor of the work. Cowan (1993) calls the shaman “a master of *escaping* the mind-body matrix that characterizes ordinary consciousness and entering the shamanic or nonordinary state of consciousness (Italics added, p. 30).” Hence, in Cowan’s work, leaving the body is desired as opposed to being more present in it, which is the primary value in Developmental Transformations.

Encounter

Shamans also differ from Developmental Transformations therapists in that they are not as interested in the encounter between themselves and their clients as they are in the encounter with Spirit. The value that shamans put on intimacy with others is not documented, although many tend to be seemingly normal people, integrated with their society (Harner, 1980). Contrary to the work in Developmental Transformations, which is geared towards intimacy

and therefore highly personal, Fran informed me that our interaction was not a personal engagement. In addition, Developmental Transformations therapists are encouraged to play with their privileged position as the knower or wise person in the room, in their role as a “play object” for the client (Johnson et al., 1996). In contrast, during our work, I experienced Fran to be in an instructional role, as she interacted with the “energetic and unseen” parts of me. I was interested in discussing the concept of role in her work, but she did not embrace the concept. “What are these roles?” she asked. “We are just two people, being and walking together.” Although her stance differed from Developmental Transformations therapists, her sentiment reminded me of the concept of *deep play* in Developmental Transformations, a later stage of the therapeutic process in which the therapist and client go beyond the surface play of roles and objects, and into the deep play of presence-to-presence interaction.

Energy and belief

Shamans who track and focus on energy may also perceive energy literally, not just in terms of images or feelings states, as the Developmental Transformations therapist perceives it. Villoldo (2000) bears witness to an energetic presence he calls the Luminous Energy Field (LEF), which is another name for the human aura. Illness is located in the LEF and helps the shaman determine wherein their work lies. According to Villoldo, the chakras appear to be clogged and sluggish when there is toxicity in the body. He writes, “Childhood abuse . . . appears like pools of dark, stagnant energy to those who can see” (p. 57).

However, according to Villoldo, the shaman does not always see the energy of the LEF with his eyes. He may receive the information like an image in his head. These images may be similar to the images that are evoked within the Developmental Transformations therapist, but the shaman treats them as real and not imaginary. Villoldo shares an image he saw when scanning the LEF of a woman who had not been able to heal her emotional trauma through other methods: “I perceived a bundle of knotted strings, like a tangled ball of yarn, clustered above her left shoulder” (p. 58). The Developmental Transformations therapist may have imagined and then played with the same “tangled ball” on a client. For example, in one Developmental Transformations group I participated in, a knot was imaged above the heart of another member, and the group went about thinking of and then enacting different ways of untying and removing it. Even though we were imagining, I sensed we were responding to something “real” about the state of her heart. Nevertheless, at that moment I had no awareness of what this image might mean energetically, and more importantly, no sense that whatever action we took would permanently heal it. Whereas modern and ancient shamanic practitioners believe in the literal images they see, the Developmental Transformations therapist does not. The focus in Developmental Transformations is not on removing or fixing destructive images, but on letting them transform into new images for play.

Implications

I will propose a few reasons for highlighting and expanding on the shamanic aspects inherent in Developmental Transformations. Johnson writes of Developmental Transformations (2000, p. 93); “The overall goals of this therapy . . . are to become present, rather than to

gain insight.” Therefore, in Developmental Transformations as in shamanism, there is little post-session analysis or contemplation about what transpires—sessions are appreciated as fleeting manifestations of consciousness. Nevertheless, utilizing the power of observation and bringing insightful connections into the playspace is one way that Developmental Transformations therapists play with their clients. It is my experience that insight alone is not enough to change a person’s behavior or feelings about themselves. However, as I began to explore shamanism, I discovered that for shamans, insight through the study of Nature Totems, or “animal medicine” is a key to understanding how the spiritual is manifesting within our lives (Andrews, 1993). Ted Andrews, a modern-day shaman who has done extensive research on the significance of Nature Totems to indigenous cultures, describes a totem as “any natural object, being, or animal to whose phenomena and energy we feel closely associated with during our life” (p. 2).

McNiff (1988, p.289) suggests that expressive arts therapies tend to evoke animal identification in their clients, and stresses the value of honoring the animals’ significance in creative arts therapies:

The animal may be a source of empowerment or a guide . . . When we perceive these phenomena as ensouled beings, we are more likely to respect their benevolent and malevolent powers as would a shaman. Shamans and many contemporary therapists of the imagination would encourage us to talk with the animal, travel with it and maybe adapt its sensitivities to our lives.

The image of the skunk in the middle of Susan’s apple pie surely stayed with me for some time. Initially I thought that perhaps it represented some trauma that was festering in her womb, which needed to be hidden in sweetness: Susan had a very sweet, non-threatening persona. However, I resonated more with the insight that the shamanic significance of the skunk offered, which I discovered in my research for this paper.

The skunk is a special power animal, a symbol of sensuality, respect and self-esteem (Andrews, 1993). The image of the skunk showed up in Susan’s second chakra, the locale of our sexuality and creativity (Villoldo). Andrews (p. 314) writes, “Individuals with skunks as totems must learn to balance the ability to draw and repel people . . . when skunk shows up as a totem you are going to have opportunities to bring out new respect and self-esteem.” Given the fact that Susan, who suffered from a sense of unworthiness, was trying to “draw in” her girlfriend and repel the seductive intern, would this insight have helped her? Maybe, maybe not, but I do believe that informing her of the skunk’s medicine could have served by reminding her that she is connected to a Source which speaks to her through her own creative impulses. Had I known about skunk’s power then, I might have shared some of its significance in the playspace, or better yet, had us all shapeshift into skunks to explore its properties in an embodied way. She also might have enjoyed reading up on skunk and the ancient associations with it as a contribution to her growth process.

I also believe that Developmental Transformations therapists will benefit from remembering the power of the creative impulse in healing. One time, another client from Susan’s Developmental Transformations group marveled at the results of the “brain surgery” we did on her in a session in which we named and ‘extracted’ different portions of her brain, cleaned them off, and rearranged them in the ways that worked better for her life. Much to my amazement, she allowed herself to be deeply impacted by the scene, and later

expressed on more than one occasion that “that brain surgery” resulted in a perceptible shift in her feelings about herself and her world. If imagination in our work can really be used in the powerful healing ways it is in other countries and traditions, we as Developmental Transformations therapists should be especially mindful about the information and power that flows through our creative impulses.

This mindfulness must not take on a heavy quality, or we will lose the sense of play. It is simply a matter of noting how much we brush off as “just play.” Since the playspace is a trance-state, our awareness is heightened. As it has been exemplified in this paper, even without knowing someone we can channel information about his or her life. Without enough time for safety and trust to develop in the therapeutic relationship this may be frightening for clients. A client may idealize the therapist or imbue him or her with special powers, or feel invaded.

Conclusion

Though the healing art known as shamanism has been around for thousands of years, remnants of it are present in the newer creative arts therapies, and most especially in the drama therapy technique known as Developmental Transformations. Both modalities use the healing power of imagination to help clients experience greater freedom. The playspace and sacred space are trance-like states that embrace the healing process. Developmental Transformations therapists inadvertently practice the ancient shamanic arts of extraction and shapeshifting. Although Transformations therapists and shamans use different tools and sometimes have different intentions for and perspectives on healing, they both uphold the healing value of the creative impulse. The practice of Transformations therapy could be enhanced with shamanic wisdom, especially in helping the Transformations therapist to own more fully the impact of their imagination.

Finally, a deeper exploration into the shamanic elements organically present in other creative arts therapy disciplines could be a useful way to unite and empower creative arts therapists.

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