

BRINGING MY WORLD ALIVE

Combining Sandtray-Worldplay and Psychodramatic Bodywork®

By Rita Benson

My initiation into the blending of these two powerful processes came when I was attending an Advanced Training in Psychodramatic Bodywork®* with eight other therapists. I had been facing an extremely difficult work situation in which I felt as if I could be destroyed. The week prior to the training I had created a Sandtray-Worldplay* World which was very powerful and was still resonating within me.



In the centre of the World are two people in a ship with spears in their hands. They are attempting to fend off two very large sharks, one of whom has blood dripping from his teeth. Off in the distance behind them are three figures: i) a wise Chinese elder; ii) a woman sending them off on their long journey; and iii) a Quan Yin figure holding

compassion for the journeyers. Ahead of the ship, on a large white rock is a wise First Nations elder, with a candle beside him. He holds the energy for the people in the ship as they go through this enormous trial.

As I sat with this world that I had created individually, I was moved. It was very powerful to see a vivid depiction of the threat I was experiencing. It also placed that threat in the context of time and pictured it as part of a journey. There was a woman on shore who sent them off, knowing there may be big challenges on the way. There was the elder waiting on the other side, when the tests were done, holding the very spiritual, ancient and wise place of the ancestors. I also felt the support of the wise Chinese elder and the compassion of Quan Yin for me in my struggles.

In the training for Psychodramatic Bodywork®, I brought a photograph of my World to share with my group as I worked with the issues I was facing. The idea came to enact the scene in the World and have group members embody the figures. The blending of these two processes turned into a vivid psychodrama for me.

Inside the scene I had sharks (two people) coming at me and my three support figures were right behind me, saying their supportive messages. A First Nations man in my group was chosen to be the elder, holding a candle far ahead of me. In the main action of the drama, I role reversed with the sharks, demonstrating the threatening positions and yelling decimating messages. I reversed back and received the impact of these threats. I crumbled, becoming very small, and recognized the projection of my father who was physically violent to my mother when I was a child. I went to a scene in my mind from my childhood where I thought he might kill her. This scene was re-enacted psychodramatically. I was removed from the scene as the child and held by a support figure (something that did not happen for me when I was young. This represents the repair aspect of psychodrama.). A very powerful adult woman who is an expert in woman abuse was enrolled and sent in to deal with my father and limit his abuse. I was able to play the role of this expert, limiting the abuse,

and I was also, sequentially, able to be the child, being held and watching an adult take over and limit the abuse.



A very powerful moment for me in this experience was when the facilitator instructed me to look ahead at the Native man holding the candle. This was one of the most potent places for me in my original Sandtray World. I looked and saw this real First Nations man, holding a candle I had placed in his hands. I had felt an important connection to this man, who had done ceremony for our group each morning as we began our training. The invitation was created for me to go over and be held by him. I quickly did so. As he held me, I realized I wanted to hear him sing. I did not know at a conscious level that he was a singer in his traditional practices. In his own tongue, he sang to me a song, honouring women. I leaned back into his arms, hearing his deep voice and sounds resonating through me, and felt as if I was being held by ancestors through time. There was a level of healing in that timeless place that is difficult to describe. As I write this now, I also realize I was being held by a gentle but strong man, something I had yearned for but never been able to have with my father.

This work allowed me to clear the transference I had of my father onto my workplace. I got to see and heal the place of "stunned invisibility" that was my reaction to the abuse and violence. There was healing of the old violence. There was a chance in the role of the expert, to have an initial experience of standing up to the violence and having my voice. There was a chance to be little, have my feelings and be

supported. Deep healing came from being held by a kind and wise man and feeling the healing energy of the ancestors through him. It is still with me.

I share this experience as an example of blending these two very powerful approaches. It teaches me about the importance and potency of bringing alive Sandtray-Worldplay in action. The techniques of Psychodramatic Bodywork® are powerful in magnifying the energies and figures inside a world and in deeply accessing the healing. A powerful approach for a group process is the enactment of Sandtray-Worldplay Worlds psychodramatically and with bodywork.

*Psychodramatic Bodywork is a process developed and taught by Susan Aaron. It blends bodywork from Shiatsu methods to facilitate emotional releases in combination with the use of traditional Psychodrama and Sociometry. For more information, her website is www.youremtions.com.

*Sandtray-Worldplay refers to this method as taught by Dr. Gisela De Domenico. Refer to www.Vision-Quest.us

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