

Transpersonal Art Therapy Education

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Abstract

Training future art therapists is a challenging task. It requires a cautious, yet innovative approach to synthesizing both traditional and novel topics relevant to our field. Training programs have a responsibility to engage with paradigms that honor time-tested theories and also embrace the visionary. Transpersonal psychology, at its core, engages traditional psychological models with progressive models that examine matters of spirituality, world wisdom traditions, and consciousness research. This article addresses these themes along with a unique branch of transpersonal psychology referred to here as "contemplative education." Contemplative practices such as meditation, and their relationship to creating art, are discussed in detail. Transpersonal psychology and contemplative education create the foundation for the approach to art therapy training advocated in this paper. A definition of transpersonal art therapy is offered followed by a literature review to familiarize the reader with this recondite subject. Examples of contemplative education are covered throughout the paper.

Introduction

In 1995 the AATA Board of Directors published a revised definition of the profession which included the following statement:

Art therapy practice is based on knowledge of human developmental and psychological theories which are implemented in the full spectrum of models of assessment and treatment including educational, psychodynamic, cognitive, *transpersonal* [italics added] and other therapeutic means of reconciling emotional conflicts... (*Art Therapy: The Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 13(1), p. 5)

The naming of a transpersonal perspective came as welcome news to many art therapists, a number of whom had been instrumental in focusing attention on this topic at the 1993 AATA annual conference, "Common Ground: The Arts, Therapy and Spirituality." Meanwhile, the inclusion of a "religious or spiritual problem" (V62.89) in the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders - Fourth Edition* (1994) confirmed that spirituality was an official area of investigation within the mental health arena. Public recognition of the relationship between art therapy and transpersonal psychology was particularly welcome at Naropa University where a graduate program combining art therapy training with the study of transpersonal counseling psychology and contemplative education was entering its second year.

This article describes several unique educational features of that program and its curriculum. We begin by defining transpersonal psychology and transpersonal art therapy, highlighting the contributions of significant authors in both fields. Next we address how a transpersonal vision influences the teaching of basic art therapy skills—skills that are applicable to the practice of art therapy in traditional and non-

traditional settings. Contemplative education, a unique feature of the Naropa program, is then explained in some detail, especially as it relates to the studio as a place of self-inquiry. Finally, we introduce the *body, speech, mind* practice and the *warrior exam*, as examples of contemplative education. We conclude with a description of group art therapy training within a transpersonal model.

Before beginning, it should be noted that considerations of spirituality are not unique to Naropa's art therapy program. Work in this area has occurred in several training programs across the country, whether as a formal focus of the curriculum (e.g. The University of New Mexico's archetypal emphasis, Shawn McNiff's early work at Lesley College, the transpersonally oriented programs at Sonoma State University, Ursuline College, Southwestern College and St. Mary-in-the-Woods College) or in specific coursework or guest presentations at many educational sites.

Transpersonal Psychology

If we define "psychology" as the study of personality and human behavior and "transpersonal" as beyond or through the personal, then transpersonal psychology includes dimensions beyond our physical, mental, emotional selves, beyond our conditioned, independent personalities. As stated by Boorstein (1996), editor of a key text in the field, "Transpersonal psychology ... recognizes the yearning for spiritual unfolding as one of the givens of human growth and development" (p. 5).

The field of transpersonal psychology was officially founded in 1968 by Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich and others. Often called the fourth force in psychology (following cognitive/behavioral, psychoanalytic, and humanistic models), it concerns itself with both the development of the self and the urge to push beyond the boundaries of the self into those areas of consciousness identified by every major metaphysical tradition throughout history (Wilber, 1977). Thus transpersonal psychology forms a bridge between Western psychology and the world's wisdom traditions. As Vaughan reminds us, this approach "does not invalidate other approaches, any of which may be relevant to different people at different times" (Vaughan, in Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p.161).

Boorstein (1996) offers this distinction:

Without the transpersonal perspective, traditional psychotherapy gives an implicit message of pessimism, which might be stated without too much exaggeration as, "Know thyself and adjust to the absurd!" The transpersonal ingredient alters this implication to "Know thyself, transcend defenses, transferences, projections, and even beliefs, and attain the station of one who has outgrown the need for such childish things, as the great human beings of all times and places have done!" (pp. 3-4).

Like art therapy, transpersonal psychology is a relatively young discipline in the process of developing a solid research base. As in the field of art therapy, there are many approaches. For example, first-year art therapy students take required courses in transpersonal theory and meditation. Studies in

transpersonal psychology address the following topics in Cortright's *Psychotherapy and Spirit* (1997): Wilber's spectrum model of consciousness, Jung's analytic psychology and Washburn's recent innovations, Ali's Diamond approach, Assagioli's psychosynthesis, and Grof's Holotropic Breathwork, as well as transpersonal models of existential, psychoanalytic and body-centered psychotherapy. In addition, attention is given to topics such as meditation and psychotherapy, spiritual emergency, altered states of consciousness, birth and death issues, and addiction and recovery. Students also learn how the field has shifted its emphasis from an earlier fascination with traditional paranormal (e.g., mystical experiences, ESP, clairvoyance, channeling, shamanic journeying, near-death experiences, etc.) to its current interest in finding the sacred in ordinary, day-to-day life and awareness in achieving a more expanded view of the function of ego.

The Transpersonal in Art Therapy

Perhaps the earliest transpersonal art therapist was Carl Jung. Jung's psychological perspective identified an individuation process that required the exploration and integration of spiritual dimensions expressed in the imagery (archetypal symbols) of dreams and art (Jung, 1961; Keyes, 1983). Other pioneers in this area include Joan Kellogg (1978), whose writing about the use of mandala drawings led to a collaboration with Dr. Stanislov Grof's consciousness research at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Institute throughout the 1970s (Thayer, 1994). Florence Cane (1951), who integrated meditative awareness into a series of art exercises using body, breath, and voice was perhaps the first in our field to articulate transpersonal methods and their application.

Soon after the birth of transpersonal psychology, Dr. Joseph Garai (1976), Director of Pratt Institute, developed eight methods for inner exploration which involved meditation and concentration and which sometimes resulted in artistic images and symbols that led to self-transcendence and a redefinition of the personality. Since then, while the majority of art therapists have tended to focus attention on professional issues closely allied with mainstream psychology, a small continue to speak out about the spiritual nature of our work (Dufrene & Shoemaker, 1991). McNiff's (1986, 1992) early writings incorporated Hillman's view of psychology as "soulmaking" and suggested that art therapists consider models of shamanic healing in their use of art in therapy. Other writers (Chickerneo, 1993; Feen-Calligan, 1995) drew on the spiritual dimension of the recovery movement. Others related artmaking to prayer (C. Moon, 1989) or art as an expression of soul (B. Moon, 1997). Farrelly-Hansen (1993) created an art-based pilot project for helping adults reconnect with childhood spiritual experiences. Horovitz-Darby (1994) offered a more clinical focus with her Belief Art Therapy Assessment which identified levels of spiritual development, while Allen (1995) advocated a return to the studio as the avenue for spiritual connection. Further discussion of contemplative approaches to art therapy were provided by Farrelly-Hansen, Franklin and Marek (1997), while Lewis (1997) discussed the implications of a transpersonal arts psychotherapy approach for those in private practice. Most recently, Franklin (1999) expanded on the role of the witness in meditation, art and supervision, and writings by Allen, and Capacchione described various aspects of art as spiritual practice (Myers, 1999).

In June, 1998, Naropa University sponsored a national conference charged with investigating the complexity of transpersonal art therapy. Farrelly-Hansen (1998) offered the following broad description:

Transpersonal art therapy is both a perspective and a path. As a perspective it honors spirituality as universal across cultures and history, requires us to include spiritual in the scope of our assessment and treatment and encourages us to work towards a balance of mind, body, emotions and spirit in whomever we treat, beginning with ourselves. As a perspective, it connects us with a rich inheritance of mindfulness training in the contemplative disciplines and with forty thousand years of shamanic traditions which conceptualize healing as a return to "right relations" with all life forms and woundedness as the healer's path of initiation (Gray, 1995). Within our own Western psychological traditions transpersonal art therapy links us to the spirituality of the 12-step recovery movement, to the wellness model of the holistic health movement, and to notions of spiritual well-being first articulated in the counseling literature in the mid 1960's (Burke and Miranti, 1995). Thus, a transpersonal art therapy perspective offers a broader container, asking us, for example, to evaluate extreme states of agitation or despair as possible indicators of psychosis or depersonalization on the one hand and spiritual awakening or emergency on the other (Grof & Grof, 1989). It spurs us to be open to the reality of those non-ordinary states of consciousness described throughout the ages in world wisdom traditions (spiritual systems) and to appreciate how the very discipline which has been our training, i.e. making art and entering into an authentic relationship with both its process and product, can provide access to some of those non-ordinary states wherein one's consciousness and capacity for compassion and service undergo major transformations.

Transpersonal art therapy supports people functioning at what theorist Ken Wilber describes as the pre-personal, personal or transpersonal stages of development (Wilber, 1998, 1977). Following Wilber's model, we can understand development as a spectrum of consciousness which includes the most fragmented, limited consciousness as well as the most unified, widest consciousness possible. Thus, art therapy can be used at the prepersonal level to enhance sensory awareness and establish a capable ego with stable internalized structures, at the personal level to improve ego functioning in areas such as relationships with self and others, or at the transpersonal level to help well-adjusted persons deal with questions of ultimate meaning and with unusual experiences such as spiritual emergencies, kundalini arousal, or ecstatic visions that promote a disidentification with the personal in service of a larger understanding of the self and world (Scotton, Chinen & Battista, 1996).

This is a tall order! The guiding of clients within such a broad-reaching vision of health and wellness requires that we as art therapists understand our work—both our work as artists and our work with others—as a disciplined practice and as a pilgrimage towards those same ego-transcending goals.

Transpersonal Art Therapy at Naropa University

Developing a transpersonal art therapy curriculum at Naropa continues to be a work in progress, a topic for discussion at almost every faculty meeting. Blending progressive paradigms with traditional psychological models is a large task. We can agree on certain basics such as a focus on healing and wellness instead of on fixing and illness, or on the

importance of each faculty member maintaining both an artistic and a spiritual practice. But how do we actually use our Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Yogic artist-selves in the training of future art therapists?

Over the trial and error of the past 7 years, Frances Vaughan's distinction between transpersonal context, content, and process (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993) has proved consistently useful. For instance, in art therapy we can view the present centeredness of the art therapist, his or her belief in the client's intrinsic health, a nonjudgmental attitude towards symptoms, an awareness of the body-mind connection, and a respect for the wisdom of images as aspects of a transpersonal context. Transpersonal process includes but is not limited to the use of art as meditation (Franck, 1993), the role of intention, practice and ritual (Allen, 1999) within an art therapy session, or the deliberate use of light and color as healing energies (Achterberg, 1985; Cornell, 1994). Examples of transpersonal content are the client's faith journey (Chickerneo, 1993; Horovitz-Darby, 1994), mystical experiences, past life work (Lewis, 1997), myth, archetypal dreams, the relationship of self to the natural world, and the plethora of cross-cultural world views and healing practices.

The following examples show three ways that these ideas become grounded in actual student experience during a first year, second semester class called "Art Therapy Skills II: Transpersonal." This course focuses on helping students synthesize concurrent material from a Transpersonal Psychology class, year-long classes in Counseling Relationships and mediation practice, and their first semester Art Therapy Skills I course.

1. Transpersonal Context: Within three required videotaped art therapy sessions done outside of class with a fellow student, students examine their own spiritual histories, including their relationship to any organized religious tradition(s) and/or their relationship to some larger-than-self source of meaning. Later, each pair of students gives a class presentation about their experiences, describing both the art process and product as well as their successful use of basic clinical skills (e.g., the transition from talking to artmaking, looking at art with the client, appropriate and effective closure). According to Vaughan, "A therapist who has personally explored the transpersonal domain, experientially as well as intellectually, will therefore be better equipped to assist others who are exploring transpersonal frontiers" (Vaughan, 1993, p. 161).

2. Transpersonal Content: The first half of the semester is devoted to actual stages of therapy, a framework introduced in Skills I through art-based assignments and now expanded with selected readings and in-class role plays to practice basic stage-appropriate skills and to consider how a transpersonal perspective might be integrated at each stage of therapy. Thus, at the beginning phase of therapy, students compare a counseling assessment of spiritual well-being designed by Ingersoll (1998) with several art assessments that include the spiritual dimension: a free choice art piece on "What does spirituality mean to me?", Shoemaker's mandala drawing with quadrants devoted to body, mind, emotions, and spirit (Dufrene & Shoemaker, 1991), and Horovitz-Darby's Belief Art Therapy Assessment (1994).

3. Transpersonal Context, Content, Process: As a final project students focus on a particular spiritual tradition or on an art therapist whose work has enhanced their understanding of the transpersonal arena. They create three pieces of art in response to their research and articulate their understanding in a research paper. These papers must include a brief summary of their current understanding of transpersonal art therapy as well as an identified area for further inquiry.

Training the Transpersonal Art Therapist

A significant part of the training process begins with the faculty. All of the instructors in the art therapy program at Naropa University engage in some sort of spiritual practice. The diversity of practices is vast, yet the intensity of devotion is consistent. It is not unusual for the insights and searches generated from these practices to find their way into spirited classroom discussions. Beyond the classroom, once a semester, the entire school shuts down and everyone comes together for "Practice Day." This is a time for the community to gather and engage in specific contemplative practices such as sitting and walking meditation. Ongoing involvement with these practices redefines the relationship we hold with our overly analytical minds.

In many ways the attitudes we hold towards our mind the relationships we cultivate with our thoughts shape the sort of therapist we will become. Therefore, all students in the program study the psychology of meditation and develop a mindfulness meditation practice. This training is designed to develop the capacity to remain present as the mind skips about while each moment manifests and passes. This sort of discipline results in the unique quality of unconditional presence. An ever-evolving result of unconditional presence is the ability to remain open and present in the moment when engaged with clients, even when the circumstances become charged. For the first 2 years, all students in the program are immersed in both the study and practice of mindfulness meditation.

In terms of art therapy coursework, first-year students move through a developmental sequence. For example, in History and Theory of Art Therapy, they consider various approaches, teasing out the traditional and transpersonal elements of each model. They begin with Freud and end up with the influences of Ken Wilbur, James Hillman, and various world wisdom traditions such as Yoga Philosophy. For example, a psychoanalytic approach, as it is covered, walks through the significant elements of drive theory, ego psychology, self psychology, and object relations theory (Hamilton, 1989; Rubin, 1987). This discussion also involves examination of the ego's observing capacity along with the notion of evenly suspended attention, a theme that surfaces in Freud's early vision of psychoanalysis according to Mark Epstein (Scotton, Chinen & Battista, 1996). Evenly suspended attention is also a major element of meditation practice. For Epstein, suspension of the "critical faculty of the thinking mind" was an essential component of early psychoanalysis (*Ibid*, p.33). Epstein feels that this is what made two significant elements of psychoanalytic practice possible: free association for the client and evenly suspended attention for the therapist. Early on Freud asked analysts to "suspend...judgement and give impartial attention to everything there is to observe" (*Ibid*, p. 33). This is a core theme in meditation practice, a connection that Freud was not aware of but intuitively knew about.

Later in this course students also look at a cognitive model and how this approach preaches: If you want to change the way you feel, change the way you think. Various forms of cognitive distortions are examined in terms of art and mindfulness meditation practice. Thus, starting in the first year, we study different Eastern viewpoints, particularly those outlined in Buddhism and Yoga philosophy. We continue exploring these themes throughout the entire curriculum.

Training future art therapists demands a thorough understanding of current social and professional trends and where they may be leading. A sincere educational balance

must be struck between the investigation of art, psyche, and culture during the training process. However, before one can fully comprehend future trends, self-assessment and the awareness it fosters are of primary importance. Naropa University is no different from other programs in its desire to encourage an awakening of self-awareness in students. In addition to innovative art projects, this is accomplished through several avenues available to students within this unique learning environment.

Training methods are in place within the program to engage inner transformation along with preparation to address complicated social and cultural trends head on. Several areas that contribute to this form of contemplative training are studies in body awareness, meditation (the practices of Maitri and Tonglen), diversity training, and a significant, ongoing studio experience. Body electives (e.g., tai chi, hatha yoga, aikido) foster an awareness of somatic learning and knowing. In these courses, students are invited to investigate how they may use their own bodies as sources for conscious understanding, particularly when working with clients. Tracking inner somatic sensations and their origins, texture and subtle messages anchors students to their own ground.

Combined with meditation practice, personal body awareness is an invaluable tool. Connection to inner sensations can serve as a source for empathic knowing. The knowledge of the body is stunning. It has the capacity to instruct the therapist on origins of countertransference, personal limitations, burnout, and the need for self-care. In many ways somatic awareness serves as a prelude to other forms of mindful meditation practices.

Staying present and mindful of one's process without attachment or narcissistic investment requires disciplined study and application. A profound skill emerges that allows one to stay steady as the world of uncertainty comes rushing forth. When there is nothing to grab on to but the consistent reliability of the breath, presence of self remains steady. While this could easily sound simple, even idealistic, it is not. Staying present and mindful is a seemingly eternal challenge given the tireless wanderings of the thinking mind. Pema Chodron sums these ideas up in the following passage:

Instructions on mindfulness or emptiness or working with energy all point to the same thing: being right on the spot nails us. It nails us right to the point of time and space that we are in. When we stop there and don't act out, don't repress, don't blame it on anyone else, and don't blame it on ourselves, then we meet with an open-ended question that has no conceptual answer. We also encounter our heart... (Chodron, 1997, p. 3).

Part of the training, with carefully selected seasoned teachers, that fosters these skills is active participation with Maitri and Tonglen. Maitri is Sanskrit for loving kindness towards oneself. Before we can truly help others we must form a compassionate relationship with ourselves. Years of encrusted layers of unworthiness accumulate for all of us. It remains in the way, always ready to surface. Call it the inner critic, inner demons, ego defense mechanisms, whatever. The fact remains that we are not able to be effective therapists for others if we are unable to have "unconditional friendship with ourselves" (*Ibid*, p. 26).

Maitri is not about overcoming obstacles or fixing things. Rather than contracting around events labeled bad, perspective is shifted, allowing one to notice that thoughts are not solid but fluid and they have space around them. Similar to a visual image with figure and ground, thoughts act as figure as the

space or ground around the image expands and breathes. It is our choice whether we wish to identify with the thought only, or notice it as well as its spacious container of ground. This is the realm that Maitri invites us to visit over and over again. With the curiosity of a seeker, students practice this way of being with thoughts, noticing that loving kindness towards self and other is a significant tool to remaining present, compassionate, and self-aware. If this is possible with oneself, then it is possible with one's client.

Tonglen, Tibetan for sending and taking, combined with the practice of Maitri, form a transpersonal alliance that fosters profound transformation on the journey of becoming an art therapist. Tonglen moves meditative awareness beyond oneself, outward, while never abandoning one's present state. Buddhist practice acknowledges the presence of bodhichitta, which means "noble or awakened heart" (*Ibid*, p.86). Present in all beings, the gentle realm of bodhichitta is awakened when we embrace the vulnerabilities of life, mine and yours. The sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa sums up the mysterious idea of bodhichitta in the following statement: "You take it all in. You let the pain of the world touch your heart and you turn it into compassion" (*Ibid*, p 87). Tonglen practice awakens bodhichitta. Through sending and receiving we take in the suffering or joy of another and offer back compassion or positive regard. In this practice the reflex to avoid, suppress, fight, or flee is reduced and eventually reversed. There is a sense of flow that unfolds. We take in the pain of another, filter it, hold it, and offer back a sense of compassion. In fact, the word "compassion," from two Latin roots, means to suffer together.

In some ways art is a mirror image of Maitri. For example, instead of working with a human being we might work with a landscape. Art practice teaches us to enter into relationship with the subject we are painting. We penetrate this landscape, oscillating between being an experiencer and an observer. We strive to connect with our subject, to empathically inhabit it, to carefully observe it as well. We then oscillate from our focused observation to a place of subjective resonance within ourselves. This resonance produces an empathic quality of knowing our subject. From this encounter we merge subjective and objective forms of knowing which become our tools for making our painting. These are the same tools that allow us to do our work as art therapists, to respectfully inhabit the worlds of our clients and their art. This is also similar to what Robbins and Erisman (1992) refer to when they say the therapist will "take in the clients' pathology and offer them back health" (p.368). In this case what is taken in, or received from the client, and compassionately offered back is similar to bodhichitta.

Tonglen, according to Chodron, opens the space of the heart, irrigating dry areas within dark emotions. It shortens the distance between me and you, self and other, subject and object by receiving, breathing in pain and exhaling, offering back the intention that all beings be free of suffering. Breathing in the anguish of another reminds us that it is ours too. Through empathy and tonglen we transform these awarenesses into a new kind of knowing. Both crack us open. Tonglen unravels the burden of thickened layers of skin, protective armor that eventually softens. An awakened heart acknowledges that there is unity in diversity, that our true nature is to be found in such practices of maitri and tonglen (*Ibid*).

The Art Studio

Holding all of the above is a consistent commitment to the art studio. It is here that students and faculty can "lean in

to” the range of emotions stimulated by the profound alchemy of contemplative and transpersonal ideas. Our belief is that all questions about art therapy can be investigated, perhaps answered, by active involvement with the art process. Forming a devotional relationship with the imagination (McNiff, 1992; Watkins, 1984) fosters a point of convergence where art, meditation, and body awareness dovetail.

The art studio is a place to study. It is a sanctuary for self-learning, support, and partnership. When students enter the studio they begin to engage the practice of mindfulness. They are less concerned with outcome and result and embrace the process of making, of wakeful participation and relationship. When they stand before a white canvas or are confronted with an unformed piece of moist clay they are in a real sense facing their own mind. They are looking into a very personal mirror. They are cultivating an openness to receiving teachings from the image as well as their art process. They are open to the imaginal, that expansive and mysterious domain of which they are part. They are learning to trust their bodies, their sensations, their impulses and intuitions. They are learning to witness and befriend the obstacles of mind and body, to investigate their tightness and tensions, the ways in which they constrict their flow of energy. These very obstacles prove to be the catalysts that foster a more wakeful, alive state of being. In the studio students work at cultivating the attitude of not trying to fix or judge. They explore the distinctions between effort, striving, and effortlessness. They are encouraged to investigate the ways they inhibit their vitality and spontaneity. Learning to distinguish between clear perception and the analyzing mind, between intuition and intellect become important precursors for understanding creative and healing experiences. The environment of the studio and the art process becomes the foundation from which to appreciate and learn how to genuinely be with oneself and others. After all, it is the genuine authenticity of the student that will determine his or her effectiveness as a therapist. The studio is where such challenges of empathy and intimacy can be explored, where the importance of boundaries and metaphorical edges can be discerned.

As faculty and students, our particular discipline is art therapy. While mastering a discipline often seems to be the focus of one's journey, opening to the journey itself is the true discipline. In some fundamental way students engaged in contemplative education are learning what it means to be open, gentle, and effective with others, the world around them, and themselves.

Meditation is an important part of this training. Although the meditation taught as part of this training program comes out of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the technique is not exclusive to any tradition. It is simply sitting with your self. It is a human activity. The style of meditation is described as "mixing mind with space," or mindfulness-awareness practice. There is no goal. One is not trying to achieve a particular state of concentration or bliss. The whole approach is to simply be who we are, wholeheartedly without confusion or distraction. When we mix mind with space we are learning about transpersonal experience as well. Basically, we sit quietly and follow our breath, paying attention to our posture, our sensations, and emotions. Each time we breathe out we practice letting go. We let go of our continuously arising experience and the tendency to hold onto the wildness of our mind. Our thoughts and preoccupations, our mental distractions dissolve into space as we breathe out. Our mindfulness becomes expansive. This practice fosters an awareness of our physical, emotional, and spiritual environment. We appreciate that we are more than the body that confines and defines who we are. As students practicing meditation we are learning to "tame our mind." We allow our

ups and downs, our emotional upheavals, our together moments and moments of falling apart to become part of the landscape. A renowned Zen teacher in this country, Suzuki Roshi, once spoke of the best way to tame a horse, the horse of one's wild mind, is to give it broad pasture.

The white piece of paper, the blank canvas is also that large pasture. What we are learning is to trust and build confidence in our basic state of mind. This is where creativity, the practice of meditation, and artistic activity all come together. These practices are illusive yet they offer the very source for cultivating creative relationship, whether it is working in the art studio or working with others. When we face that blank canvas or the person before us, there is total uncertainty and also tremendous freedom. To work in this way is very challenging. It is here, in the present moment, where technique and the knowledge that we have acquired become available to us. We know what to do. We have the confidence to meet what is before us with vitality and freshness. It is as if we are doing what we have always done, yet for the very first time.

This is the work we do in the art studio. One such instance of learning to embrace and trust the art process happened during a process painting session. A student found herself hating the colors brown and yellow. She had no idea why she was experiencing such strong emotion. She was encouraged to pay close attention to her feelings while at the same time to continue painting. Although the urge was to immediately alleviate herself of the pain, she was told that perhaps such feelings were messengers ready to present something new and revealing to her. Just as in meditation she was encouraged to simply be with her experience. In gently allowing herself to touch uncomfortable sensations, to be with her somatic experience, she began to paint images of a house. Only later did she realize that the colors brown and yellow were the colors of the house she lived in as a child. It was a house, when growing up, where she was very much alone and sad. Later she spoke of having painted the isolation of her childhood, and now the isolation she frequently experienced as an adult.

Applications of Contemplative Education Outside the Art Studio

I. Observation: Body-Speech-Mind

As a way to provide an opportunity for this kind of engaged attention, students at Naropa University are required to take a Clinical Observation class in the semester before internship placement. The purpose of this class is to give the students, through a 75-hour on-site practicum, the opportunity to put into practice all they have learned in theory through their art therapy, transpersonal, contemplative, and clinical courses. While class time and site experiences are spent in understanding assessment, group dynamics, transference, and counter-transference, the emphasis is on deepening the students' observational or "attention" skills while they are with clients.

Specific techniques, such as the body-speech-mind-practice, are utilized for training students to improve and humanize their observational skills. Developed at Naropa by Rabin and Walker (1987), body-speech-mind is used as a format to facilitate client write-ups and case presentations. The purpose of this practice is to allow space for students to experience their clients as "people" and not as "cases." As Wegela (n.d.) describes it:

The exhaustive description of the person focuses attention on the client instead of one's own thoughts or interpretations, very much like reading a good character's description in a novel. This brings the person's presence in the room and allows the listeners to put themselves in the client's place and also to better understand the therapist's predicament. (p. 1)

Students are introduced to this practice in their first year as a way to form solid, compassionate observational skills. It is used in Clinical Observation class discussions as a way to vividly enliven both the client and the student's relationship with the client. By its very nature body-speech-mind avoids the "clinification syndrome" (Allen, 1992) because it focuses on a phenomenological, humanizing practice of describing rather than on reductionistic models of interpretation. However, because students are asked to notice and describe the smallest details presented by the client, body-speech-mind is taught as a practice and not as a replacement for the more conventional assessment tools.

Generally speaking, body-speech-mind refers to three aspects of the person's existence. The body aspect addresses the physical and somatic themes observed. It involves a literal description of what we see in the actual physical presentation of the client; his or her size and ethnicity, what he or she is wearing and how he or she is groomed. It involves the smallest detail in what we see, including how facial expressions might reflect what is being experienced internally. The movements and gestures of our client and his or her posture are also observed and noted. Is the posture sturdy, fragile, loose? The body aspect also includes a description of the client's environment. Where does he or she live? What is his or her life like? How does he or she engage with the environment?

The speech aspect is that of exchange, or how the client communicates with the world; how he or she manifests various forms of communication. It might describe the level or quality of energy that is expressed to the world as well as a literal description of what is said and with what tone, modulation, and speed, etc. Does the client express boldly, directly, cautiously, quietly? At what point does the tone or modulation of speech change? What is the style of communication? Does he or she tell stories or get right to the point? Does she speak at people or to people? How does she relate to you and others in her life?

And finally, the mind aspect of this awareness practice is how the client thinks and makes sense of his world. The mind is reflected and revealed through the body and speech. The therapist is trying to describe the underlying thoughts, obsessions, or fears that explain the way the client presents himself or herself. How does the client think? What does he or she think about? Is he or she an intuitive thinker or an analytic thinker? Do thoughts come across clearly or disorganized? How would his mind be described? As cloudy, loose, crowded, dark or spacious? The therapist may want to notice as well what happens to his or her mind when with the client. Does his or her mind wander? Does she or he become confused or clear?

The intention of the body-speech-mind discipline is to direct our awareness more fully and unequivocally towards the person with whom we are sitting. Fine-tuning our awareness enables us to see and appreciate the phenomenal world more clearly as we develop an aesthetic attitude (Franklin, 1990) for our client. The outcome of this form of attention is to cultivate an openness to one's inner process and the client's world. We become more like curious observers than analysts of data. We

are better able to drop our judgements and suspend our interpretations and truly see what and who is before us.

The body-speech-mind discipline asks that attention be focused both externally and internally. We are not just to focus our attention on the client, but must also be aware of what is happening within ourselves. So the attention continuously moves from a narrow focus to a more panoramic view (Speeth, 1982). We are able to hold, at the same time, what we see and what we feel. In this way we get a clearer picture, and this cultivates compassion both for our self and our client. In the Buddhist tradition this is referred to as inviting the qualities of "intrinsic health" (Trungpa, 1979) to manifest in the therapeutic relationship (Wegela, 1988).

The following art process (Wallingford, 1999) illustrates how body-speech-mind observation can cultivate compassion.

Students are randomly given an object to draw. The object may be something as beautiful as a flower, as ordinary as a stone, or as unappealing as a broken piece of plastic. Students must accept what object they receive. Whatever object is received, it is to be considered their "client." As they draw it they are asked to be aware of what comes up for them in the process of "being with" their object. They are to make notes of what they see and how they feel about this object. The focus is not so much about making a detailed drawing but on true seeing of the object. One student learned a lot about herself and the potential for future counter-transference issues as she spent time looking at and drawing an eggbeater. What began as an unpleasant experience turned into something quite different. Through observing the eggbeater and her projections, she found an opening of acceptance, allowing a state of compassion to manifest. This is what she had to say about her "client/eggbeater" along with her process.

I don't like this eggbeater. It is silvery with straight angles and sharp edges – violence – it's difficult to draw and I am bored. I must breathe a lot to draw. I feel dizzy and I'm confused. I must look-see-really see. I must slow down and take time, be patient—my life is the opposite right now—it stirs me up, beats me, whips my emotions. It inspires no color, black and white only. It is defined by soft shadows and hard straight edges...still I'm repulsed by it's simplicity...hmmmmmm? And my life too. BIG SIGH. Breathe. Yet it has soft shadows. I'm beginning to calm down and listen to its softness and the process says-----SLOW DOWN and really look. Really spend time with me.

This example illustrates how engaging the "artist's eye" with a client has the potential to produce a deepening of the therapeutic relationship as well as illuminating all the complexities inherent in the relationship. Body-speech-mind discipline, as developed at Naropa University, parallels the

process of creating art as a form of true seeing. This is in large part why it is of particular importance to the art therapist in training. The use of body-speech-mind, not unlike the artmaking process, is a way to train us to see and appreciate the smallest details in our experience with others. We are able to look and see a little deeper where we can discover the varied textures, colors, and shapes of the subject before us. Ultimately, it is a way to uncover the intrinsic health and beauty that is inherent in ourselves and our clients.

II Warrior Exams

One of the most profound elements of contemplative education originates from a long history of debate and oral tradition within Tibetan culture. At Naropa University there has been a distillation of this tradition into an evaluation process called "Warrior Exams." This thoughtful method of examination assesses three levels of knowledge—the factual (objective information from readings and discussions), the integrated (how numerous ideas from multiple sources dovetail and connect), and the secret level (those subjective, contemplative searches that probe deeper levels of meaning and foster inner awakening around a question).

Students are given a list of 15–20 questions 2 to 3 weeks ahead of time. They prepare for each question, contemplating the three levels of knowledge. On the day of the exam everyone will answer one randomly chosen question. This is an arduous task as all questions, which are intentionally open-ended and divergent in nature, must be studied.

During the exam everyone sits in a circle, creating a supportive container. Two people step forward. One picks a question to answer; the other facilitates the full answering of the question by being fully present, carefully listening, and intervening when appropriate to support the process of unfolding the answer. When finished, two more students are selected from a collection of names in a bowl until everyone has had a chance to answer and facilitate one question. What is most difficult to convey here is that the exam atmosphere is gentle, suffused with mutual respect and camaraderie. Scoring is based on several factors, some of which are not usually a part of an exam process. For example, one could be forgetful and draw a complete blank at first and still remain in a state of equipoise. This is part of the answer. Everyone present shares in the search for meaning, realizing that this information is alive inside of them as they excavate these three levels of knowledge.

We would also like to note that this style of examination is deeply rooted in cultural practices that deserve careful study. We advise the reader who may be intrigued with this practice that it takes careful preparation and exposure to these methods before assuming one is able to conduct this sort of exam in the classroom.

III Group Training

Another example of contemplative education occurs within the student art therapy training group that is part of the Group Dynamics class. Zealous students come to the circle without a table between them, no art supplies before them, thinking they will learn to control or fix the chaos and continuous movement of assumptions that naturally exists within groups. Students are fixed on their fears and expectations of the group experience, wanting specifics on how to handle this chaos. A bell, often used in spiritual traditions as a gentle reminder to come back to the present moment, is placed in the center of the circle. It is used by anyone who wishes to bring the group back to a place of

contemplation, a place of breath. This may happen during conflict as well as what seems to be a "dull" moment in the group. The bell offers a pathway of sound, through breath, back to the present moment. It allows all those present to find that place of letting go, ever so gently, of their expectations, frustrations, or boredom.

In Boulder we have the foothills that rise up into the Colorado blue sky and it is from here that the hang gliders run and jump off into thin air, soaring above the prairie grasses, leaving the safety of land behind them. We can imagine how this jump is both thrilling and scary, a metaphor that is suitable for a student training group. The instructor who leads a training group never knows where the winds will take her and yet with gentle skill she or he trusts that the wind has a direction. The instructor must be willing to let go of agendas to hold a "here and now" perspective that fits easily with a contemplative approach to education.

It is also a goal of the instructor as a group leader to encourage students to hang glide with him or her, to jump off the edge each day, and to trust that safety is something within them and also something beyond them, greater than the group as a whole. They begin to learn that the risks they take are not measured by a yard stick, but are honored as individual moments of hang gliding.

Each group has its own purpose, its own internal evolutionary process. The instructor comes into an already formed group that has class history and apparent cohesion to help them deepen their understanding of risk, self-regulation, and the capacity to sit with tension within an environment of multirelationships. The goal is to come into each group time without expectation or preconceived ideas about where the group will go. Trusting that the group has its own timing, its own drift of wind, is a key element of holding a contemplative perspective.

Although group dynamics is taught in several formats within the class, students realize that the student training group is a process of stretching to become honestly present with whatever they are feeling, from ambivalence, to revulsion and frustration, to enjoyment, and even to amazement. They learn the skill of moving or gliding simultaneously between the complex dynamics of group life and their personal inner life by paying attention to their breath and taking notice of their feelings without judgment. Most of all they learn that they do not always have to control a group to have a productive group. They can glide, but they can also be present.

Supported by a contemplative practice, the students learn the importance of "showing up"; they practice staying in the moment and letting go of the usual fears and expectations that threaten to paralyze evolving students and inhibit an evolving group. With probing insight, McClure (1998) writes on transpersonal elements of group dynamics by using chaos theory as a model of group development. This holotropic perspective further illuminates the transpersonal experience in which each individual in the group reflects the whole. A group of many individuals makes this whole much bigger than the sum of its parts.

McClure divides groups into either regressive or generative groups. Generative groups lead to transpersonal material and have unity or cohesion and explore their group purpose. The group members can be "empowered to extraordinary acts of courage, creativity, and compassion" (*Ibid*, p. 203). On the other hand, regressive groups are typically stuck in the early stages of the group and exhibit avoidance of conflict and dissent, abdicate responsibility for the group and depend on the leader for direction, and display group narcissism and psychic numbing (*Ibid*, p. 165).

Another important aspect of the training group is experiencing how to incorporate art materials into the process,

how students feel without them and with them, and how they move between them. Here we can take notice of Winnicott's transitional space, where potentiality is felt or "where chaos enfolds into order and order enfolds into chaos" (*Ibid.*, p. 58), a process that clearly matches the deconstructing/constructing that we do naturally as art therapists. Navigating the movement between voice and image-making is an important feature of any art therapy group since "the transition between the different activities in the art psychotherapy group is where tensions mostly occur" (Skaife & Huet, 1998, p. 18). An example of this would be that some students want to make art, even think they should make art in the training group. Other students pull back from making art, feeling the power of the unmanifested image that makes them visible and the work it takes to bring forth an image that represents them in the moment. Talking about this is challenging in a group because not all the members are ready at the same time to separate from their images through words (Shaverien, 1992, p. 85). Students may surprise themselves by becoming protective of their images, perhaps hiding them from the group. At the same time, other students become curious about voice in an art therapy group, realizing that the image has been a place of hiding for them and they want to finally speak. This tension between the opposites is a still point, a place to learn respect for each other, for the images, and for the individual and group process. In the training group, the moments between the voice and the image could be described as a transpersonal moment because this is where we grapple with a still-point that holds the above and the beyond with the deepest depths of our internal being. We could view this tension as resistance, or we could view it as a place of potentiality by putting our agendas aside, sitting with the tension and the confusion, and slowing down to take notice.

Through the use of awareness training, the use of the bell, and allowing for an open process within the group, this still-point appears in the silences before, during, and after making art and holds the tension where students can begin to embrace and acknowledge the power of group life. They begin to glide in and out of moments of silence, experiencing such feelings as anxiety, conflict, trust, and compassion. John Davis, the former director of the Transpersonal Department at Naropa University said "It is through engaging or 'dialoguing' with this silence that illustrates how the transpersonal perspective works to integrate critical and contemplative thinking" (Davis, 1995).

Conclusion

Just outside the art therapy office at Naropa University hangs an original oil painting called "Immanence and Becoming" which was created in 1923 by Florence Cane, one of art therapy's pioneers and author of an important book called *The Artist in Each of Us* (1951) (Figure I). In vivid primary colors Cane has depicted a small figure in a lotus flower held tenderly by a very large figure seated in a cross-legged meditation pose. In the words of the artist, "This painting developed from the idea of the small self in the state of becoming and the greater self, or universal being, as in the state of Immanence, being eternally the same." Donated to our program during its opening semester by Florence Cane's daughter, Denver artist and art therapist, Mary Cane Robinson, the painting reminds us of a sometimes overlooked aspect of our art therapy lineage. Here was a New York artist and educator whose solid grounding in artistic discipline coupled with a thirst for self-knowledge and self-transcendence, a woman interested in both Western psychology (Freudian and

Jungian analysis) and Eastern meditation, a woman for whom art and spirituality were natural companions.

Like Cane, we at Naropa work to include the transpersonal in our definition of art therapy. It is our goal as faculty members to help students appreciate their inherent wisdom. This perspective, in many ways, is a radical shift in both teaching and learning. Practicing meditation, a direct path to cultivating this understanding, allows one to form an open relationship with one's mind rather than intellect only. The subjects of God and/or Spirit often come up in this atmosphere and are appreciated for their numinous guidance. Transpersonal experiences are not uncommon; they are just not usually given voice in the classroom, with clients, or with ourselves. The practice of creating art can hold the same vast properties and experiences as the transpersonal perspective. Art materials and the studio teach us to let go to mix mind with space, to allow images to move, like the breath, without judgement. By attending to both the internal and external experiences of both therapist and client, while holding the awareness that there is something greater containing the therapeutic moment, students and faculty learn to accept the challenge of ambivalence, panic, and emptiness. This greater container is the transpersonal viewpoint that embraces the perspective of world wisdom traditions. It is in that present moment that two people are engaged within a rare partnership that affects each of them as mutual contributors to this search for wholeness. It is also where compassion and health are found. Learning skills to examine and befriend our state of mind is the work of knowing our self (Franklin, 1999). Students who embrace this practice leave our program with this attitude intact, along with the tools to continue this journey. Because of the ability to stay present with all manifestations of their active minds, they can work effectively with others.

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