

Exploration of Self-Care Through the Intentional Witness Process and the Expressive
Therapies Continuum (ETC)

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Abstract

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This qualitative arts-based heuristic research explores the concept of self-care through the frameworks of the Intentional Witness Process and the *Expressive Therapies Continuum* (ETC). The research examines the potential implications of both frameworks by assisting art therapists in finding balance and well-being. The literature review investigates the existing concepts of self-care from a philosophical, clinical, and arts-based perspective, considering the connections between self-care, self-awareness and self-knowledge. Through the lenses of arts-based methodology and Moustakas' (1990) six-step heuristic inquiry, the researcher examines her personal experience exploring various art materials and engaging in a five-week process combining both frameworks. The author investigates her personal process and resistance and further explores through her findings, the themes of emotional pain, presence and authenticity, creating a frame, self-esteem and strength. The researcher discusses her own personal transformation touching upon the notions of identity and Winnicott's (1965) concept of true-self, the importance of reflective distance found in both frameworks as a tool guiding towards self-awareness and self-knowledge; and further addresses self-care as an on-going process of self-discovery. The data is analyzed and supported through pre-existing literature in art therapy and related fields and underscores the possibilities for other professionals wishing to use both frameworks as tools for self-care, which is first and foremost an act of self-knowledge.

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Introduction

This paper is a heuristic inquiry addressing my experience of self-care through the following research question: What can I discover about self-care and about myself as an art therapist intern by entering an experience that combines the Intentional Witness Process (Allen, 1995; 2005) and the *Expressive Therapies Continuum* (ETC) (Hinz, 2009)?

Prior to my studies as a Master's student in art therapy at Concordia University, although I strived to learn about self-improvement, I seldom thought about the importance of self-care. I suppose that self-care enters ones' consciousness only when needed, when life becomes busy, overwhelming and out of balance, when we lose touch with what nourishes our being. I was drawn towards my research, as self-care was a concept I needed to get acquainted with if I planned to do more than survive my studies. I also needed to learn new ways to care for myself as an art therapy intern and as a future art therapy professional. Intuitively, I knew that the answers to this inquiry had to come from within, through exploring my own journey and psyche, and thus using heuristic and art-based methodologies in order to discover the meaning of this phenomenon became natural choices.

This idea of using self-knowledge as a guiding force, also informed my choice of frameworks, which I learned and became familiar with during the first year of my Master's. Firstly, experimenting with the Intentional Witness Process provided an opportunity to engage in a meditative and reflective art making experience. Secondly, the ETC was initially introduced as a transtheoretical model employed to better understand how clients interact with the art materials and progress through the art making process (Riccardi, Pérrier & Hinz, 2013). I became interested in knowing if reflecting on one's own art making through the lens of the ETC assessment model could provide personal knowledge regarding steps to take towards self-care. Clearly, both

modalities had the potential to creatively inform art therapists (or anyone interested in using the arts as a form of self-care) on how to achieve a life that is in balance with their needs.

Over a period of three months, I immersed myself in a process of self-care, focusing on my experience as an art therapy intern. For the first two weeks I bought a variety of art materials in order to discover and familiarize myself with their various properties. After experimenting with the materials for five weeks during three hours once a week, I engaged in an Intentional Witness Process exploring a two-fold intention: the overall intention of the study was “What can I discover about self-care and myself as an art therapy intern through exploring the ETC?” and a second intention which focused on my particular experience during that week, for example: “I will discover how I can be more present as an art therapist when facilitating a session”.

Following Pat Allen’s Intentional Witness Writing structure, I engaged in spontaneous art making and writing. After this process I assessed my experience using the ETC and an Art-Based Intervention Self-Report Questionnaire (ABI) (Snir & Regev, 2013), which has been used in studies with the ETC and wrote about my experience throughout the week, noting any changes and adjustments as well as implementing a minimum of one self-care strategy emerging from the results of the two processes. Dream incubation, an ancient practice, which uses dreams as a problem-solving technique (Barrett, 1993), and journaling, were also part of the research.

Overall, this paper is a personal investigation, which brings forth the most relevant and important findings of my experience of using the Intentional Witness Process and the ETC as tools to help promote and understand self-care as an art therapy intern.

Literature Review

The following literature review will touch upon the concepts of self-care in relation to the frameworks of the Intentional Witness Process (Based on: Pat Allen, PhD/ The Open Studio Art Process, 1995, 2005) and the assessment model of the *Expressive Therapies Continuum* (Hinz, 2009) from a philosophical and clinical perspective.

The notion and importance of self-care is not new to the human experience. Indeed, literature exploring this concept can be traced back to Ancient Greek philosophy. Plato believed that self-care emanated from the soul's desire to discover itself and thus to "know yourself". Tina Besley (2005) in her essay exploring Foucauldian notions, states that: "According to Foucault, care of the self formed one of the main rules for personal and social conduct and for the art of life in ancient Greek cities" (p.80). Although these ancient practitioners developed pluralistic approaches pertaining to self-care, it was fundamentally viewed as an ethical responsibility and "a widespread activity, a network of obligations and services to the soul" (Foucault, 1988, p.27). To this day, this ethical responsibility remains an important part of becoming and being a competent therapist. Indeed, the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2005) accounts self-care as "physical, mental, and spiritual"(p.8) and requires it as part of the regime of being a responsible therapist.

Foucault (1988), one of the most prominent postmodern French thinkers of the 20th century, further contended that self-care goes far beyond the practice of sustaining a healthy body and mind, but is rather an inner quest, which consists of deconstructing the imposed ideologies— those superficially informed by dominant culture—of who we are and how we should be. Through this quest, we can encounter our true identities, similar to Winnicott's (1965) concept of "true self": an identity that is authentic and spontaneous. By discovering our

authentic nature, we are more apt to care for ourselves without succumbing to the pressures of society.

Leaping from a philosophical view of self-care to its modern therapeutic implications, the literature reveals two main re-conceptualized versions of this discourse: on one hand we find burnout, and on the other hand self-care as a way of life, which involves sustaining well-being as a therapist. Following a clinical trial, what Burns (2000) describes as the “flip side of self-care: burnout” (p.5) dominates theoretical findings since the 1980’s. Pines and Aronson (1988) describe burnout as a state of depletion, helplessness, pervasive apathy and exhaustion in the therapist, which derive from prolonged over-investment and exposure to difficult emotional content. Pioneers in the field, Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2010) define burnout as a “hemorrhaging of the self” (p.145), and further purport that although burnout manifests itself differently in every individual, a common symptomatology includes “fatigue, frustration, disengagement, stress, depletion, helplessness, hopelessness, emotional drain, emotional exhaustion and cynicism” (p.146). Furthermore, Maslach and Leiter (1997) state that burnout is work related, which indicates a discrepancy between a person’s true nature and passion and the obligations they must fulfill every day, which infringe on a person’s self-respect, pride and self-worth.

The second re-conceptualized version of self-care is defined as the therapist’s responsibility towards his or her own well-being, and stresses the importance of this practice for therapists (Pope & Vasquez, 2005). Considering that Maslach and Leiter (1997) described burnout as a result of a lack of congruency between who one is and what one does, Baker (2003) elucidates that having and maintaining a clear sense of “self-structure” (p.45)—what Plato defined as self-knowledge—is imperative for the therapist. When one knows who they are, there

is awareness, and this can give agency to what one must do to balance inner and outer realities and more easily secure a correlation between being and doing. Maintaining cohesive personal wholeness through self-care is central to being a “good enough therapist,” due to the inherent risk in the profession of becoming enmeshed with clients’ stories. According to Figley (1995), experiencing compassion fatigue, a form of burnout due to secondary traumatic stress, is most likely to occur when one feels split-off, fragmented and overly identifies with another’s experience. Self-care through supervision and other methods assists in the therapist’s ability to regroup and differentiate their experience and needs from those of others. To maintain our sense of wholeness, Baker (2003) further describes self-care as a triad consisting of: self-awareness, or the ability of seeing oneself clearly; self-regulation, or balancing and processing emotions; and balance, or “a high-level function involving modulation and oscillation” (p.16), which allows to maintain an equilibrium in the midst of the juggling act of life.

In their article “Perspectives on Self-Care”, Williams, Richardson, Moore, Gambrel and Keeling (2010) documented a two-week journey of four therapists utilizing self-care strategies, which involved mindfulness, music, autohypnosis and spirituality. Their findings revealed the efficacy of these methods in helping to manage and reduce stress factors related to being a therapist, insight into maintaining a balanced life, and the benefit of confidently recommending these methods to their clients. Their study highlighted that as therapists, we are often called upon to assist our clients with self-care strategies, which we paradoxically have not experienced, or find little time to indulge in for ourselves.

For the art therapist, many self-care strategies include art making (Fish, 2012). Engaging in art making holds within its process the foundational components related to appropriate self care as investigated by Baker (2003): self-awareness, self-regulation and balance. In relation to

self-awareness, the art produced becomes a mirror of an experience. While reflecting on the process and product, the art therapist can become aware of their psyche and gain valuable personal insight. Hinz (2009) purports that “exploration of symbolic processes has the potential to expand the clients’ self-knowledge beyond that which is concretely known and immediately available” (p.165-166). The act of art making is self-regulating; it induces relaxation through instigating a psychosomatic experience and can be cathartic. Thus, self-regulation can reduce anxiety or purge what needs to be expressed. Dalley (1984) observes that art is making meaning out of our feelings by giving them form, and Malchiodi (2012) states that “Images are a bridge between mind and body and also assist levels of information processing that impact physiological and emotional changes in the body” (p.20). Connecting mind and body, and making meaning of experiences through art making can help regulate emotions by better understanding internal dynamics. Art making can assist the art therapist in maintaining a balance between their work life and personal life. Fish (2012) concurred by saying that “response art can help the therapist live and work in balance by containing difficult material from therapy” (p, 142).

Although many art therapists have their own artistic modalities that they use for self-care, two frameworks that have the potential of enriching self-care strategies are the Intentional Witness Process by Pat Allen (Based on: Pat Allen, PhD/ *The Open Studio Art Process*, 1995, 2005) and *The Expressive Therapies Continuum* (ETC) by Lisa Hinz (2009). The Intentional Witness Process involves making art through intention. The first step of the process involves creating an intention; something that the artist would like to discover through the process of art making. The second step requires setting aside intention while the artist engages in art making. In the third step, the artist describes in writing the artwork and the steps he or she took in making

the creation. The artist is then asked to dialogue with the image and to see if the experience is related to their intention. Making art, as attested in the previous paragraph, touches upon the triad of self-care proposed by Baker (2003). However, intention setting and describing the image and dialoging with the image deepen the therapeutic process. The idea of setting an intention pinpoints what one wants to discover and it is an act of discovering the language of the soul. According to Allen (2005), “Intention is how we join with the Divine and how we access our internal wisdom” (p.19). Describing an image allows for a reflective distance to take place between the art and the creator, and within this space one can think and reflect on their experience without being overwhelmed by it (Hinz, 2009). Dialoguing with the image has a transformative quality, as if the image becomes a living entity ready to dispel its knowledge by accessing other parts of the self, which might not be made conscious, as McNiff (2004) found that “personifying images, gestures and other artistic expressions enable them to act as ‘agencies’ of transformation rather than simply ‘illustrations’” (p.85).

The ETC (Hinz, 2009) is a model, which presents a continuum implementing developmental and hierarchical components we use in everyday life and in art making. The components are defined as kinesthetic, sensory, perceptual, affective, cognitive, and symbolic, with an encompassing function of creativity, or self-actualization. This framework demonstrates that the strengths and struggles a person encounters through art making is a reflection of the strengths and struggles in their lives and using the ETC as an assessment tool can provide insight into discerning whether one function may need rebalancing (Riccardi, Périer & Hinz, 2013). Reflecting on one’s own art making through the lens of the ETC assessment model can provide knowledge on steps to take towards self-care, illuminating any blockage that may be a result of the overuse of one component (Hinz, 2009). As Hinz (2009) states, when a person is

truly creative, they can use every component and are open to engaging in new experiences and learning, “A new manner of knowing oneself can prevail when creative experiences are internalized from self-actualizing growth” (p.187). Self-knowledge and creativity are two self-care strategies, which the ETC can guide one towards.

Overall, a common theme in literature regarding self-care reveals the importance of nurturing and knowing one’s self or the soul. Allen (1995) contends that “Imagination is the deepest voice of the soul and can be heard only through cultivation and careful attention” (p.3). Art is the active use of imagination and thus an important modality towards self-care.

Furthermore, using art making with the added guidance of frameworks such as the Intentional Witness Process and the ETC has the potential of improving the therapist’s overall well-being. Through intention and personal assessment, it is easier to identify what needs to be addressed, which may lead to an empowering experience where transformation can occur, as well as ward off potential burnout. According to Foucault (1988), creativity is the portal through which we can renew ourselves and give meaning to our experience, which might be the ultimate form of self-care.

Methodology

Heuristic and arts-based designs are relevant methods of inquiry for this study as both are sourced from the researcher’s experience. Heuristic inquiry suggests “a process that affirms imagination, intuition and self-reflection as valid ways on the search of knowledge and understanding” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p.41). While outlining Elliot Eisner’s work on arts-based research, Kapitan (2010) states that “artistic expression as a form of inquiry provides a medium for connecting to the self, while at the same time distances the self in order to see something from a new perspective” (p.164). The two methods combine the multiplicity of

expressions and knowledge rooted in one's experience into a synthesis, which can be rendered accessible and understood by a larger audience.

Although I have stated how both methods are useful in answering my research question, I will further elucidate on the important characteristics of both frameworks and how they apply to my study. Heuristic methodology proposes an investigation of the human experience from which questions and answers are drawn from the self, thereby having the individual become the main tool of self-discovery (Bella, 2011; Moustakas, 1990). It can be said that in most types of research one cannot separate themselves from their inquiry since we are the lenses through which information is constantly observed. Heuristic methods go a step further and look inward into one's personal experience by employing "self-awareness and self-knowledge" as well as "creative self-processes and self-discoveries" (Moustakas, 1990, p.9). This autobiographical probing of a phenomenon explores six characteristics essential to heuristic framework. These are self-dialogue, tacit knowledge, intuition, indwelling, focusing and the internal frame of reference, and they are closely related to the framework of the intentional witness process as part of my research (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16-26).

Self-dialogue may be interpreted as the initial step of heuristic inquiry. Using the self as a sounding board, the researcher engages in conversations with the phenomenon, discovering and oscillating toward and away from its many facets (Moustakas, 1990). This dialogical ebb and flow increases awareness of their inquiry in relation to the self, as the principle themes and structures are extrapolated and grasped (Moustakas, 1990). The Intentional Witness Process involves creating an image and engaging in dialogue with it. After this, the artist can ask any questions which may come to mind, for example: "What would you like to say to me? What is the meaning of the character?" By dialoguing with the image, the researcher is in fact dialoguing

between themselves and the phenomenon, gaining greater insight and facilitating a conversation that one might not normally have, thus also increasing the possibility of better understanding their research through asking different questions.

Tacit knowledge is paramount to heuristic research and was first proposed by Michael Polanyi, who stated that “we know more than we can tell,” and refers to the wealth of information we carry implicitly and cannot readily articulate; it is our felt perception, which manifests through the senses (1966/1983, p.4). The Intentional Witness Process positions art making as a way of knowing, and corresponds to my intention to discover more about self-care. The art making is a form of tacit knowledge from which the resulting forms and images will define what cannot be expressed with words (Allen, 1995).

Extracting meaning from the information that emerges through tacit knowledge requires intuition, and this is an important ingredient of the heuristic process. *Intuition* assumes the role of a translator, taking the foreign language produced by tacit knowledge and transforming it into comprehensible terms, providing foreknowledge and lucidity (Moustakas, 1990). Intuition accompanies the researcher in every step of the Intentional Witness Process by informing which art materials to choose, and by asking the right questions helps to manifest the latent content found in the artwork.

Furthermore, tacit knowledge and intuition germinate through a process of “turning inward,” also referred to as “indwelling” (Moustakas, 1990, p.24). *Indwelling*, although not a linear process, takes the pre-logical information produced by tacit knowledge and patterns of information evoked by intuition into conscious and intentional consideration, until deeper meaning and insight can occur (Moustakas, 1990). In the Intentional Witness Process, intention setting and dialoguing with the image become a form of indwelling, or a deliberate way of

understanding the image and gaining insight through peering into my own experience and its relation to the artwork.

Focusing, another essential component, is the act of narrowing down information and harnessing the essential elements by staying with the experience until greater understanding comes forth (Moustakas, 1990).

Lastly, at the very core of the heuristic process lives the *internal frame of reference*, which encompasses the researcher's experience. The knowledge gathered through the research is sourced and derived from the internal frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990). As Kabala (2009) states: "The internal frame of reference is what holds all the other processes together and characterizes the unique life experiences that each researcher brings to the study. It requires continual reflection, self-scrutiny, awareness, self-dialogue, openness, and honesty" (p.17). The main purpose of the knowledge gathered from the internal frame of reference is rooted in the intention of better understanding the world and embracing the various subjective views and truths it comprises.

As proposed by Moustakas (1990), there are six methodological steps to his method. They go as follows: The first step is the *Initial engagement*: Engagement requires passion, a burning appetite to know and a compelling fascination in order to discover the meaning behind a concern (Kapitan, 2010). The second step is *Immersion*: Through indwelling and focus, the researcher creates an environment in which he or she "lives the question" (Kapitan, 2010). The third step is *Incubation*: The purpose of incubation is to let go of the process in question, which allows for the bigger picture of the process to take form. Kapitan (2010) states that through incubation, tacit knowledge works on a subconscious level during the shift of attention. The fourth step is *Illumination*: Many researchers emphasize that this stage produces a shift in

consciousness, which leads to insight and a clearer understanding of the question (Gendlin, 1962; Fenner, 1996; Kapitan, 2010). Described as the “ah ha” moment, or a breakthrough, this stage of discovery usually emerges when the researcher is in a receptive state (Kapitan, 2010). The nonsense from the data and experiences now make sense while infusing the process with new vigor and perspective. The fifth step is *Explication*: At this juncture, a new discovery is expounded through critical thinking, and it is time to bring clarity to data collected throughout the journey (Kapitan, 2010). All data that is relevant to the research is acceptable. “Working through” the information, identifying central themes and patterns, underlying concepts and analysis may take form (Kapitan, 2010). Furthermore, focus and indwelling are two integral parts of the explication phase (Moustakas, 1990). The sixth and final step is *Creative synthesis*: At the ending stage of the process, the researcher is the expert on his or her investigation, and now integrates the knowledge previously collected, transforming and synthesizing the material to create a whole (Kapitan, 2010). All of the parts related to the research topic explored in the previous steps, which have been focused on individually, now work collaboratively to illustrate a bigger picture, with this being the essence that they were meant to bring forth (Moustakas, 1990).

The theoretical concepts and phases of heuristic research help systemize the process, however they are not meant to force the researcher into adhering to a rigid procedure. The stages are often experienced in cycles, breaking away from a straightforward time line (Moustakas, 1990).

The Role of Art in Assisting the Heuristic Process

Through my research on various methodologies, I have found that heuristic inquiry is a natural complement to arts-based research. Intuition and self-knowledge enrich and expand their respective practices and find common ground in the use of tacit knowledge (Bloomgarden &

Netzer, 1998). Shaun McNiff (2008) defines arts based research as “the systematic use of the artistic expression in all of the different forms of arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both the researchers and the participants” (p.29). The hallmark of arts based research proposes that the researcher is willing to design an innovative framework to his or her research question, fashion his or her own model, and use those as tools for understanding the data that emerges (McNiff, 2008). The flexibility and originality proposed by this model allow for creative discoveries to arise. By stepping outside of the traditional research frame, novel connections can be formed; connections that also take into consideration the significance of knowledge derived from personal experience (McNiff, 2008).

As an artist and art therapist I found that using arts based methods was necessary for my research. Art making, tacit knowledge and intuition are all important parts of the art therapy process. Since I believe that my clients can learn about themselves through art making, I must also hold this as a personal truth. Carolan (2001) expresses, as art therapists, research should also engage in discovering the therapeutic possibilities of art making, and that this is part of our professional responsibility. Furthermore, the literature about self-care can provide valuable insight and information, but it cannot inform how it is best suited for my needs. As such, it is only through direct experience with the research question and trust in my own process that useful knowledge about self-care can arise.

Reliability and Validity

The principles of reliability and validity are essential to any research process as they are what ensure the quality of the study. Reliability suggests that if the same methods are replicated, identical results will ensue. On the other hand, validity ensures that the research is measuring what was intended, the theoretical construct of the overall study, while also examining its

quality. In heuristic and arts based research, validity and reliability cannot be evaluated through quantitative methods, but are evaluated by the commitment and rigor applied to the research and the researcher's ability to ascribe veracious meaning to his or her experience which is subjective in nature (Moustakas, 1990). Concerning reliability, McNiff (2011) purports:

Arts-based researchers strive for an understanding of universal conditions and predictable outcomes where possible, as well as using methods that can be repeated by others. But where science requires exact replication of results in experiments using the same conditions, the arts encourage variation and even uniqueness in both methods and outcomes. (p.387)

For this study, the use of pre-existing frameworks (Intentional Witness Process and the ETC) helped ensure reliability and validity. Both methods provided a structure and external frames of reference as valuable parameters to guide the process. From this engagement, a new framework emerged and although the knowledge gathered is personal in nature and cannot be generalized, other researchers could process their own journey towards self-care using the steps described in this study. Furthermore, in order to establish the validity of the data and results, I exchanged with other experts in the field such as my supervisor Janis Timm-Bottos, Pat Allen and Maria Riccardi. Data triangulation was also implemented, by collecting information from multiple sources such as journals, art making, the ABI scale, the Intentional Witness Process, the ETC and literature, as a way to avoid an unequal experience of the phenomenon and to embrace the multiple forms of portrayal that may surface (Kleining & Witt, 2000).

Assumptions and Biases

Heuristic research is especially susceptible to being influenced by the researcher's biases, assumptions and values, as the main tool of investigation is the individual's experience.

Wittgenstein (1953) purports that in qualitative research; the subjective interpretation of the inquiry will be distilled through the researcher's perspective and thus can never be fully objective. Reflexive practices in research indicate that unbiased research does not exist thus naming and including them in the study constitutes responsible research practices and are essential in maintaining validity (Mantzoukas, 1995).

Personal biases are formed by our cultural heritage and upbringing. Thus, being a middle-class Caucasian female, I questioned how my personal history and the cultural context might influence my underlying beliefs on self-care and how they might impact the course of the study. First and foremost, delving into the matter of privilege, oppression and power: the topic of self-care caters to an audience of privilege, like myself. I realized that I thought everyone should engage in self-care as a vehicle of self-understanding and that the Intentional Witness Process and ETC could assist most in their quest. This biased generalization did not take into account the multiple ways people approach self-care and might create a one sided discourse. Indeed, this study presents one possibility among many others.

I conclude that arts-based heuristic methodologies were best suited for my research questions. However, due to the multiple sources of data collection and the creative and explorative nature of the heuristic processes, checking in and referring back to the main purpose and frameworks of the study was useful. Another forewarning reported in the literature can seem paradoxical: although heuristic methodology focuses on one's own experience, it is not about the self; restricted and withdrawn, it is about the experience and one's relation to it (Moustakas, 1990). The emphasis of acknowledging a post-modern concept of self as one that is in flux, co-constructed through, informed by and imbedded in language, culture, society, contextual fields and interpersonal relationships, is primordial (Gergen, 2009). Although heuristic methodologies

propose a journey towards self-knowledge, and arts-based research requires art making (birthed from the self), both are relational, immersive and co-authored through a wider dialogue. As John-Steiner (2000) states in her work *Creative Collaborations*: “Generative ideas emerge from joint thinking, from significant conversations, and from sustained, shared struggles to achieve new insights by patterns in thought” (p.3).

Research Process

My Experience with Heuristic Methodology

Perhaps the most accurate and honest way to describe my experience with the heuristic process is an entanglement of excitement and resistance. The idea of living my research question and the possibilities this journey of self-discovery could generate charged my experience with energy and creativity. This momentum however, was also held back by the reins of resistance; the fear of feeling exposed or perhaps more importantly, encountering parts of myself that I was still blind to and reluctant to acknowledge. As Sela-Smith (2002) shares, engaging in an “inward focus” investigation often reveals a process where, “The internal orientation is difficult to maintain. It can open long-buried wounds; it can lead to feeling terrified, to feeling hurt, to feeling angry. It can result in major life changes when the researcher may not feel ready to make those changes”(p.80).

Through my journey I felt that my ambivalence was a paradox. How can I be magnetically drawn to a topic and methodology and yet feel reluctant to fully engage in the process? To this question I found answers through the heuristic process, which requires the actor to look deep within and, to extract personal knowledge from a self yet unknown. I started to make meaning of the process through a therapeutic lens. Resistance is at the very foundation of Freud’s (1904) psychoanalytic theory, and is defined as the challenge one must overcome in

order to bring to consciousness repressed unconscious material. This process of uncovering also involved tacit knowledge, which is a concept present at the very core of heuristic research. Although tacit knowledge is a non-conscious involving a pre-verbal acquisition of knowledge or know-how and not repressed material, it still requires self-observation in order to understand personal schemas and frames of reference (Edwards & Jacobs, 2003). This process can be confronting when deep ingrained biases and ways of being are encountered. Sela-Smith (2012) purports that “Tacit knowledge is a continually growing, multileveled, deep-structural organization that exists for the most part outside of ordinary awareness and is the foundation on which all other knowledge stands”(p.60).

In many ways, heuristic methodology is a process that brings forth what is outside of our awareness, whether it is unconscious material or uncovering tacit knowledge. Both concepts are already part of one’s experience and through this methodology we can discover how they connect to the whole, the inter-subjective field of life, making the implicit explicit.

In my experience, the personal material had to pass through the gate-keeper of resistance before it could be readily accessed. Resistance was an unexpected factor, one that seemed inherent to heuristic self-inquiry yet seldom discussed in the literature. I felt relieved when I encountered Sela-Smith’s (2002) article “Heuristic Research: A Review and Critique of Moustakas's Method”, as she touched upon the theme of resistance enlightening my experience. In her article, Sela-Smith (2002) critiques the fact that many researchers following the heuristic model, and even Moustakas himself, fail in self-inquiry because they are not deeply connected to their subject on a feeling level. Sela-Smith (2002) refers to Wilber’s (1997) four quadrants as a basis for her critique, which states that for any knowledge system to be unabbreviated, the investigator should delve into each quadrant; she reports the following:

I believe that as Moustakas dissociated from the Upper Left quadrant of the “I-who-feels”, and replaced it with the “observation of the self responding to feeling” from the Upper Right quadrant, he ignored this most significant validity claim to knowledge. This denial did reappear as a massive, jolting contradiction in his method. (p.85)

Sela-Smith (2002) further contends that the confusion experienced by some researchers who undertake heuristic inquiry is due to Moustakas foregoing “his own self-search process because of resistance”(p.84), and thus could not fulfill its purpose. For a qualitative study to be deemed successful it should bring comprehension to otherwise confusing situations (Eisner,1991).

It is a very challenging task to delve into resistance and fully understand what lies beneath. Riding through the storm usually facilitates understanding and makes it a lived, and not only thought of, experience.

While I can attest that the theme of resistance was lacking in my understanding of the heuristic model and in the reading of the methodology and process proposed by Moustakas, perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that the context and social perspectives have also changed. Through a constructivist paradigm Golafshani (2003) purports:

“The constructivist notion, that reality is changing whether the observer wishes it or not (Hippis, 1993), is an indication of multiple possibly diverse constructions of reality. Constructivism values multiple realities that people have in their minds” (p.604).

Perhaps Moustakas and Sela-Smith had a different experience of the heuristic process, which are connected and yet unique to their personal world-view and internal frame of reference. Their merging of data reveals richness in their points of conversion and differentiation.

Through my own experience, I can vouch that any transformation birthed from within was met with some form of resistance before new learning could emerge. As McNiff (2008) states:

The artistic responses to the dream and the feelings of discomfort it evokes transform my relationship to the experience and take it to a new place. Making the effort to interact with the experience in different ways is thus a prerequisite for new learning. (p.390)

Although McNiff (2008) relates his experience to dreams, his testimony can apply to many situations, which lead towards self-discovery and self-awareness and ultimately, change. Through this process, the simple act of acknowledging my resistance, as it surfaced allowed me to move forward with the study and every time I faced my inner struggle, learning awaited. To my surprise, I discovered that I resisted the process of trusting myself, and my experience as a worthy point of reference. Leaving behind the quest for external validation and the quest for the 'right' method, I had to surrender and believe in my own process. Although encountering resistance was uncomfortable and at times it presented an overwhelming struggle, it allowed the research process to become a more authentic and transformative one.

This remodeling is a work in progress, the process of change seems to have its own time and agenda, an unraveling, which has its own pace and reasons to be respected. This ongoing metamorphosis did not follow the time frame given to complete my research or progress in a linear fashion following the stages presented by Moustakas. For example, the phases of illumination and incubation found their way into every stage. Another important part of using the heuristic methodology is being open to the unknown, which required a letting go of many conclusions I had previously made about self-care and about myself in relation to the process. Venturing into new and sometimes ambiguous territories required trusting that I was exactly

where I should be, in this moment and that all of the information I needed for the research would emerge through experience and engagement. The flux between structure and openness within the structure, at times leaping outside of the given frame, and making meaning of the process in relation to my research question required concentration and acceptance.

Initial engagement. As previously stated, my interest for self-care was ignited in the first year of the Master's degree in art therapy. Since starting the program, I have found that in order to be emotionally available for clients, I needed to feel grounded and well-balanced within myself. Being an art therapist requires being available and attuned to the client, holding a sacred and therapeutic space for the process to unfold, thus resembling the role of what Winnicott (1960) describes as a "good enough mother". Negotiating my personal life, the demands of being a Master's student and being fully present as an art therapist intern was testing at times. As I explored this struggle, I intuitively knew that the solution to becoming a better art therapist was connected to self-care and yet it could not equate to having the perfect well-balanced life, dispelling the illusion that to be a good therapist I had to have everything together.

The initial engagement to the notion of self-care already initiated a paradigm shift, from looking outwards to looking inwards, from peering into a hope of perfection to embracing authenticity. My research question started to take form, through a process of discovering what self-care was not. Self-care was not solely based on an exterior process or pampering. I began to question the type of self-care I needed to discover in order to feel engaged as an art therapist intern. At this point, I was also co-facilitating an Intentional Witness Process in a community art studio once a month and I had attended an ETC workshop in Montreal. I noticed that when I facilitated the Intentional Witness Process I felt grounded throughout the week, clearer about my role as an art therapy intern and more centered. During the ETC workshop, another important

learning experience occurred, I gained insight into my own way of working with art materials and a way of being through experiencing the art-based self-assessment. This served to guide me towards art making activities that contributed to my well-being. Both modalities had been important guides during the first year of my Master's, these two experiences ignited a strong desire to understand and discover how they could further contribute to self-care and if so how. They had already provided me with the support I needed to reconnect with my experience and ground myself in the present. Furthermore, I found that self-care was a topic that was seldom researched, yet held primary importance in my own practice as an art therapy intern.

Immersion. The immersion stage is one where the researcher actively engages in a process of living the research question (Moustakas, 1990). The first steps of the immersion phase consisted of familiarizing myself with self-care literature and corresponding and/or meeting with experts of the two modalities which are the heart of my research question. I exchanged emails with Pat Allen, the creator of the Intentional Witness Process, to help formulate and guide my intention and asked for feedback on the structure I planned to use for my research. Intention, which is the guiding force of the process, appears simple, yet takes thought and consideration to master. Allen (2005) conveys that, "Intention is our direct statement of what it is we hope to receive through our images, is the first step of art as a spiritual path" (p.7). I asked Pat Allen for clarity in elaborating an intention, which consolidated the Intentional Witness Process and the ETC as a form of self-care. Through our exchange, Allen generously assisted me towards creating a two-fold intention, which became the organizing structure of my process. I also met with Maria Riccardi, an art therapist practicing in Montreal. Maria has in-depth knowledge of the ETC, having worked closely with Liza Hinz (the author of *the Expressive Therapies Continuum* (2009)), completing a Master's thesis on the subject and regularly facilitates ETC workshops.

Maria assisted me in better understanding the possibilities of the ETC, in relation to self-care, and through our conversations I was able to clarify how I would apply the ETC in my study. Maria also inspired me to start the research with a preliminary process of discovering the various types of materials. She also shared many resources such as articles and the ABI self-report scale, which I used throughout the process. The initial part of the immersion was not only understanding and making sense of the literature on self-care, but also establishing a trustworthy framework to support the lived experience.

Having set a foundation, the true immersion consisted of going through and experiencing first-hand the various steps. The first step involved a two-week process of exploring with a variety of different art materials and documenting what they evoked. Consciously discovering the art materials was an important part of the research because they are the primary tools and at the very foundation of the art therapy profession. As Snir and Reveg (2013) purport, in their article “A Dialog With Five Art Materials: Creators Share Their Art Making Experiences”:

Art materials serve as the basic components of the language spoken in the process of art therapy. The dialog created with the help of the materials creates a window to the inner experiences and as a result, an encounter between the client engaged in the art and the therapist and within the artist him or herself (Sotto, 2008). (p. 94)

Although the art materials are central to any arts-based interventions, I had never assessed my own experience using various media. I have always spontaneously engaged in art making, gravitating towards what is most comfortable and following my intuition and preferences. I delved into the research activity to discover how I used materials in order to gain understanding as to how they could assist me and other therapists in knowing more about self-care. I explored the five commonly used art materials that Snir & Reveg (2013) used in their

study: felt-tipped markers, oil pastels, gouache paint, finger paint and clay, writing my observations before and after the exploratory sessions.

Although discovering the materials was a useful exercise, the heartbeat of the immersion process drummed through engaging with the Intentional Witness Process. The five-week immersion allowed me to truly surrender to the process. The intentions were attuned to my needs as they arose and insights gained, filled me with aliveness. Resistance, my old friend, did come to visit, but I learned to accept the skeptic's presence, and moved inwards, forwards, backwards, upwards, or wherever the process led me. I kept a journal of the events throughout the week and the self-care strategies implemented in order to document the felt experience before and after the self-care. Furthermore, when an event became very challenging, I engaged in dream incubation. Dream incubation, an ancient process, is now used to find novel solutions to a problem through dreaming. The method requires the dreamer to hold and focus their attention or question in their mind before falling asleep (Barrett, 1993).

Incubation. According to Moustakas (1990), the period of incubation requires retreating from the research. Creating this space “enables the inner tacit dimension to reach its full possibilities” (p.28). At this point, the researcher is not abandoning the research in question, but allowing the information acquired to reorganize and take new form (Sela-Smith, 2002). First, I thought that surrendering to this stage of the process would be the most difficult part, especially considering the timeline required to write and complete the research. The incubation phase presented itself a week earlier than expected; I had previously planned six weeks of experimenting with the Intentional Witness Process, however, after the fifth week I felt satiated by my research topic. I welcomed a break in order to digest and accepted a timely invitation to go to New York for a week with friends who were not familiar with art therapy or my research

topic. Although I could physically separate from the research by removing myself from familiar surroundings, I found it impossible to totally extract myself from the research question. Initially, I thought of this phase as a separation, however it became a time for deep introspection and maturation of the knowledge already acquired. Although no great illumination emerged, I found that this stage allowed me to regain interest and to approach my research feeling rejuvenated. I looked forward to coming home and continuing the process with new insight and a fresh perspective.

Illumination. In my experience of the heuristic process, illumination did not occur in one jolting moment where all the knowledge acquired metamorphosed into a new perspective on the topic. Illumination presented itself as a series of mini breakthroughs; these fragments when assembled created a deeper understanding of self-care and revealed hidden aspects, which were previously outside of my awareness. These moments usually came to me while walking: sudden bursts of understanding accelerated my pace so I could reach my destination and write down the information. After such moments, I often found myself in awe, simply sitting to assimilate and reorganize these new meaningful interpretations. As Moustakas (1990) states: “Illumination opens the door to a new awareness, a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or an altogether new discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness”(p.30).

I began to notice a common theme, which weaved together the true nature of my research towards self-care, which was the quest for inner knowledge and knowing the self, myself, as an art therapy intern. Although this theme was very clear and present in the initial investigation (literature review, methodology and initial engagement), I had to discover it through art making. Heuristic self-inquiry provided the necessary coming together of the cognitive and the emotional

to create new meaning. Perhaps one of the most beautiful and dreadful discoveries was to acknowledge that the resistance I experienced during my research related to my inner critic and perfectionism. As I engaged with my research, I started making connections with Winnicott's (1960) theory of "true and false self" which purports that when someone is in touch with their true self and simply "being", they are spontaneous and authentic. Looking outwards for validation and the perfect theory to bring into the art therapy room, was not sustainable and soon led to confusion and feelings of being out of balance. I was not listening or engaging with myself, trusting my own intuitive intelligence resulting in self-doubt and frustration. These symptoms are what led me towards self-care, and the remedy was in discovering myself. As Pat Allen states "Contents of our mind, when left unexamined, exert a strong influence over our behavior. The unexamined contents are a source of our resistance to living fully and joyful" (1995, p.60). This realization further relates to Maslach and Leiter's (1997) conceptualization of burnout stated in the literature review, which they convey as a misalignment between being and doing. This new-found knowledge was central to my process to better understand self-care and other interrelated themes which are developed more thoroughly in the following sections pertaining to findings and discussion.

Explication. The explication phase according to Moustakas (1990) is when the researcher focuses on the overall lived experience in order to extract its meaning. Through exploring the data using many vantage points, the researcher reaches the essence of the experience. The explication phase of my heuristic journey came from consolidating the moments of illumination and trying to comprehend how they fit into my research question: observing, undoing and rebuilding outdated modes of thinking and inviting new meaningful interpretations and feelings to emerge. When I reached the phase of explication, I was able to articulate what I

had previously experienced and created new meaningful links to theories and concepts, which have been touched upon in the previous step.

Creative Synthesis. The final step of heuristic methodology involves a crystallization of the knowledge gathered during the process. In my experience, the overwhelming amount of information generated from the heuristic research through art making and personal reflection was challenging to consolidate. The data presented different possibilities all worthy of investigation. Through writing this paper, it became evident that these possibilities were pieces of a puzzle, each contributing or leading to the full picture of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the essence of the heuristic inquiry should encompass and move outside the limits of the research and expand from the data collected into a new perspective (Moustakas, 1990). I found it challenging to extract what was important to me in my experience versus what was important to the research and the broader community. Intuitively, I knew that the essence of the paper would differ from my initial expectations. At the beginning of my journey, my biases revealed that I unconsciously wanted to explore self-care to become the perfect art therapist. Instead, the proposed frameworks led to a road of authenticity and self-awareness, i.e. trusting the self to facilitate the implementation of good care. I found it difficult to surrender to my findings, believing that great illumination would come from a cognitive experience, avoiding an emotional tone. However, it was through the dynamic interaction of cognition and emotions -that the creative synthesis of this transformative experience was communicated.

Findings

Overview

The data collected for this research comes from the following: my experience of engaging in a two-week exploration with five art materials inspired by Snir and Reveg's (2013)

study “A Dialog With Five Art Materials: Creators Share Their Art Making Experiences”; engaging in a five-week process, three hours a week, with the Intentions Witness Process; reflecting on my experience using the ETC and assessing the outcome using the ABI self-report scale; journaling; personal notes from dream incubation exercises and finally, documenting self-care strategies. The data can be considered the artifact, the objects that have been found and given shape through my own personal excavation. As Moustakas (1990) states, the data for the research is created from the researcher’s experience and engagement in the process of self-exploration.

With all of the data collected, the next step required finding a way to analyze the data to make meaning of the material in relation to my research question. While reviewing the data, the essence of the research emanated from the five-week Intentional Witness Process. As previously mentioned the Intentional Witness Process brings together and incorporates in its framework the main underpinnings of heuristic methodology such as indwelling, intuition, tacit knowledge, self-dialogue and tapping into one’s internal frame of reference as a guide. Furthermore, the Intentional Witness Process comprises in its undertaking the important element of arts-based research, as the investigator is involved in art making and discovering knowledge through the art making process and the final product. Despite focusing on the five-week journey, the main challenge was to extract the essence of the phenomenon without conceptualizing the data in relation to the theoretical underpinnings previously researched. It took some distancing from the work in order to gain a greater understanding of the overall process and not simply convey the contents.

I was inspired by Paillé and Mucchielli’s (2012) qualitative data analysis process, which proposes a step-by-step method of finding the main themes of the study, defining the themes,

extrapolating their properties and their conditions (noticing how they manifest in the research). The five main themes, which came to light, were *emotional pain, presence and authenticity, creating a frame, self-esteem and strength*. The following will discuss the images in relation to the themes, which emanated during the creative synthesis, which then relate to my experience of self-care.

Themes and Images

Emotional pain (Figure 1 & 2). *Troy* (Figure 1 & 2) came to life during the first Intentional Witness Process with the intent of investigating “What can I discover about self-care and myself as an art therapy intern through exploring the ETC?” Initially, I was surprised that this mystical being presented working through emotional pain as a form of self-care in the context of this study. The connection became more obvious when considering that experiencing strong personal emotions is inherent to our profession, as expressed by Hill (2009): “An occupational hazard of being a helper is that the helping process stirs up personal issues that might otherwise lay dormant” (p.17). *Troy*, with his pins and needles, provided me with the gift of insight and transformation by accessing the areas I tended to avoid which made my experience as an art therapy intern more challenging.

For this creation I gravitated towards clay. This visceral and malleable material can lead to regression and can evoke strong emotions. As Cathy Moon reports (2010), “Clay can also foster transformation. It can serve as a repository for intense feelings or a means for reparation through reconstruction” (p.17). Instinctively, choosing clay coincided with the transformative qualities of the heuristic process and the insight I wished to gain on self-care as an art-therapy intern. Reflecting on the theme of emotional pain, working through personal struggles and being in contact with issues that are difficult in nature, are paramount to self-care. When the therapist is

present and available to her own struggle, there is space to be present to the struggles of others without the risk of over-identifying with their issues and thus maintaining the appropriate boundaries, essential to our profession.

Working through emotional pain is directly related to the concept of self-awareness, which is proposed by Baker (2003) as an essential component of self-care:

If we are not adequately self-aware, we risk acting out repressed and thereby unprocessed and unmanaged-emotions and needs in ways that are indirect, irresponsible, and potentially harmful and costly to our self, personally and professionally, and to our patients, family, and others. (p.14)

Although I was initially taken back by my creation, as it reflected my own unsettling feelings, I now realize how the process supported and guided me towards identifying and working through my struggles as a self-care strategy while engaging in a secure and safe process. Creating a space within myself for these self-discoveries, in turn allowed me to be more attuned and present in the art therapy setting.

Presence and authenticity (Figure 3). The themes of presence and authenticity naturally emerged from the previous experience of being self-aware and present to my personal struggles. When creating *Flower Bundle* (Figure 3) the information gathered through this process led to the discovery that presence requires authenticity. This awakening addresses the insight I gained in the illumination phase concerning perfectionism and seeking external validation, which undoubtedly made it difficult for me to embrace my authentic self. This integration brought forth the understanding that through self-acceptance internal validation occurs, the internal critic which was previously analyzing my performance could be silenced, and thus I felt free and more

grounded in the here and now, the only space where one can truly be in contact with oneself (Trope & Liberman, 2009).

The art making process mirrored the experience of coming into my own authentic light. Although initially, I was charmed and delighted by my creation (Figure 3) because it was aesthetically pleasing, when I engaged in dialoguing with the image I realized that I had buried my voice. In the act of wrapping, I covered myself in the fabric of how I thought I should be as a therapist. Looking for a better therapist version of me, searching for the correct response carried me away from the present moment. In the process of making *Flower Bundle* (Figure 3), I was simultaneously integrating and merging the split-off parts of my professional identity. As Moon (2010) expresses: “Working with fibers has a strong tactile component and often involves activities that stress integration and coming together (Seiden, 2001)” (p.22). Engaging in self-care through art making facilitated this awareness.

Carl Rogers (1966) emphasized the importance of authenticity in his work, which he referred to as genuineness:

Genuineness in therapy means that the therapist is his actual self during his encounter with his client. Without facade, he openly has the feelings and attitudes that are flowing in him at the moment. This involves self-awareness; that is, the therapist's feelings are available to him to his awareness - and he is able to live them, to experience them in the relationship, and to communicate them if they persist. The therapist encounters his client directly, meeting him person to person. He is being himself, not denying himself. (p.185)

I resonated with Rogers’ theory on genuineness as it was intimately linked to the journey, authenticity and presence paved through the Intentional Witness Process. Through my writing I further elaborated that “Presence and authenticity can be recognized by the therapist’s ability to

be attuned to the client. Not trying to guide the therapy session or fit it neatly into a specific model but allowing the client to lead the therapy session and being the author of their experience.”

Creating a frame (Figure 4). Continuing on this journey, all experiences seemed to create the groundwork for the following insight to blossom. The theme of creating a frame intuitively connected to the previous process of being in touch with emotional pain, being authentic and present and refers to the therapeutic frame and container. The process of creating a frame is best construed through a clear sense of self, which is born from authenticity. The artwork *Frame Me!* (Figure 4) came to life from the intention of discovering how I could authentically hold a frame as an art therapy intern. Creating boxes within boxes, the image expressed that these containers were little harbors of peace from chaos, which was created by the swirling movement of a pen. While witnessing the image I noticed that the frame, a physical, psychological and emotional structure functioned as containment; it is what safely holds and regulates strong emotions. Clear and concise boundaries are its conditions of existence. As an art therapist, holding a consistent frame attests that you are reliable as a therapist (i.e. on time, the sessions respect the time agreed upon, the session ends on time, etc.), which is essential to the building of the therapeutic alliance.

The Intentional Witness Process helped me to empathetically witness my struggle concerning the maintenance of an inner and outer frame, guiding me towards the importance of structure. The oil pastels reflected the paradox of being in and out of control. As Snir & Regev (2013) attest “Oil pastels are associated with temperamental, strenuous work and are suitable for powerful expression of anger and emotions. This material encourages emotional involvement, but also enables a sense of control (Hinz, 2006; Moon, 2010)” (p.95). The oil pastels’ unique

properties reflected the importance of holding the frame in therapy, both (pastel and frame) hold strong emotional content, which can be contained, regulated and transformed. As Moon (2010) expresses, "...art materials provide options for seeking out private and psychological space, while the session room serves as a container for the development of the relationship between client and therapist" (p.202). Both, materials and the environment facilitate emotional expression and transformation. In the context of art therapy, the artwork and the therapist provide a frame that can assist in containing affect and reflecting the content back to the client, thus providing an opportunity for the participants to name and articulate their emotions. According to Douglass (2007) this is an essential part of the therapeutic process. The theme of creating a frame is two-fold: it represents the therapeutic frame requiring consistent conditions to be honored which are detailed in the therapeutic contract and the less visible aspects of the frame, which pertains to containment and internal boundaries of the therapist.

Self-esteem (Figure 5). Experimenting with the intention of self-confidence as an art therapist intern, I became aware that the true nature of my investigation was self-esteem. Rogers (1959) conceptualized self-esteem through self-worth, which can be defined as a person who harnesses self-acceptance, through unconditional positive regard and thus is in a positive state of openness towards themselves and others. Through my life experience, I thought that self-esteem was a fluid and flexible state of being, which is harnessed from one's inner knowledge and adapts to present circumstances. Self-esteem was an experience of self-love, a feeling of worthiness and self-acceptance. Upon reflection, self-esteem is also intertwined and closely linked to the concepts of self-awareness, authenticity and containment, and Winnicott's (1960) concept of true self, which is rooted in authenticity. To be authentic requires self-esteem, which

relies on self-awareness and trusting that one is able to contain their emotions and be an active agent of change in their life.

Through exploring this intention it soon became clear that as an art therapy intern, I was seeking to embody a theory, to be perfect, instead of being fluid and adapting theory to my own personality. The mask, *Born in Canada, Made in Japan* (Figure 5), which I recycled and embellished, related to this journey towards cultivating self-esteem. As Moon (2010) shares, the act of transforming old discarded materials into novel pieces of art also transforms the art maker, as the art maker starts to trust and gain confidence in his or her abilities throughout the process.

This was reflected in my search for an outside structure to follow without taking notice of my own powerful inner resources. My inner critic seemed to have mellowed throughout the week and I noticed that my clients were also more at ease. I accepted making mistakes and thus I had more freedom and felt more confident as an art therapy intern. The choice of materials and the interactions with the materials clearly embodied my struggle. Beautifying the mask, giving it a new lease on life, accepting and playing with the unexpected mess, gathering various materials and turning them into a new masterpiece was an empowering moment of personal realization.

Strength (Figure 6). Looking at the image *Structure and Rupture* (Figure 6), my initial intention of discovering how I could best facilitate art therapy with families evoked the themes of strength and resilience. Strength in relation to the family constellation refers to how families persevere when in difficulty, to the courage they harness in the face of adversity and their willingness to change. Resilience was in fact finding the support needed to transform maladaptive intergenerational coping mechanisms or ways of being. The heart in the middle of the drawing represents the importance of love and reminded me of a quote which declared that love is what holds everything together. By reflecting on the artwork and acknowledging the use

of personal family pictures, it became clear that I was unintentionally excavating my own journey. As Moon (2010) states, the use of photography, especially viewing oneself in different contexts at different times, is an act of consolidating, discovering and exploring identity. Furthermore, the writing on the tape, “The Tears that Washed Away the Mask” seemed particularly important and clearly identified to me the metamorphosis undertaken during the various stages of the heuristic process. A peeling away of different layers or masks in order to honor my authentic self, personally and professionally, was the most unexpected form of self-care.

Although deeply personal in nature, embodying my research question through art making allowed me to deepen my understanding of the importance of self-care through knowing the self. The research took an unexpected path, which helped me be more present, engaged and confident during the subsequent sessions with clients. As Hill (2009) expresses, gaining an in-depth understanding of the helping process through personal experience, can facilitate helpers in better assessing and understanding their responses with clients and thus guide them towards taking actions and making decisions that are more objective and better informed.

Discussion

The heuristic research method required commitment and dedication to better understand the phenomenon of self-care as an art therapy intern using the Intentional Witness Process and the ETC. What I discovered through the process was deeply personal, challenging and transformative. Through setting weekly intentions and the artwork, as well as other data collected and analyzed, I found myself navigating uncharted waters and inner dimensions. The themes of emotional pain, presence and authenticity, creating a frame, self-esteem and strength, held within their exploration various keys to unlocking my true-self as an art-therapist intern,

which I define as a state that is attuned to the present moment, authentic, flexible and fluid. Each tool and framework contributed to opening up different pathways which all led to greater self-knowledge revealing aspects of my self, which needed tending.

During this rigorous experiment, the Intentional Witness Process provided an excellent framework as the very nature of the process derives knowledge from one's internal frame of reference, and was the guiding and binding force of the research.

The Intentional Witness Process ensured the activation of almost all levels of image formation and processing of the ETC model. As Lusebrink et al. (2012) state, "The sequence of the first three levels (Kinesthetic/Sensory, Perceptual/Affective and Cognitive/Symbolic) reflects the mental and graphical development in progression from simple to more complex levels of information processing (Lusebrink, 2004, 2010)" (p.77). Reflective distance is the key that unlocks the Perceptual/Affective level and the emergent function of the Cognitive/Symbolic level (Lusebrink, 1990). Reflective distance facilitates the assimilation of processing functions, as Lusebrink (1990) reports "The internalization and abstraction of perceptual and affective schemata lead to the following cognitive and symbolic level"(p.93). Hinz (2009) describes reflective distance as a space to ponder and reflect on an experience, which equates to the witnessing component of the Intentional Witness Process. Witnessing requires the creator to examine, resound and assimilate their creative process and the final product.

Another important discovery was the role of the ETC in discovering what self-care strategy to employ. As previously mentioned, the Intentional Witness Process, through my lived experience and theoretical findings, activates almost every level of the ETC continuum. Therefore focusing on a specific component, —over-using or under-using it as a gauge, proved challenging in creating a self-care strategy. Indeed, my initial expectation was to see glaring

differences in the various levels of the continuum. For example, over-using the kinesthetic would lead to a sensory self-care activity. Due to this complexity, most self-care strategies were created through an amalgamation of intuition and referring to the healing dimension of every component presented in the ETC.

Furthermore, choosing a self-care strategy for the entire week, right after the Intentional Witness Process felt too constrictive, as I discovered that my needs for self-care were not static but more in flux with my experience in the here and now. Rather than having a set procedure, checking in with myself to monitor my experience throughout the week helped me discover accessible and realistic self-care strategies to implement. For example, if I felt tension, walking instead taking the bus to a session or focusing on my breathing helped relieve stress and helped me to relax.

Another discovery connected inherent properties of the media and art making to the inner conflict I was experiencing. The art making stage of the Intentional Witness Process was approached in a spontaneous manner and the materials chosen were guided by my intuition, however when analyzing the data it became clear that the materials brought important insight. The benefits of discovering the power of materials as a means to facilitate and comprehend the art therapy process was two-fold: it guided me towards more attuned self-care interventions and developed my understanding of their therapeutic potential in art therapy which is also conceptualized in Snir and Regev's (2013) research exploring the potential therapeutic properties of various art materials.

Overall the findings point to how the frameworks, art materials, became various roads to explore and become more intimate with my Self. Eisner (1998) states that "different forms of art put me in the world in different ways. They speak to the different aspects of my nature and

help me discover the variety of experiences I am capable of having’’ (p.65). Which is also applicable to the various frameworks applied in this research.

Self-knowledge and awareness are life-long quests, and are the centre of any self-care practice. According to Foucault (1988) “As there are different forms of care, there are different forms of self”(p.22). Knowing the self allows the appropriate self-care strategies to emerge in order to experience and maintain a balance, and self-care is also an act of self-knowledge. Foucault (1988) further highlights that the Self in self-care is the not only the soul, but also holds within it the concept of identity. This statement embraces the heart of my journey, unveiling my identity as an art-therapist, finding authenticity through care, which in fact not a static but rather a fluid state of being grounded in the present. The self-care I experienced through my study was not a specific strategy in of itself, but rather the act of engaging in self-discovery, which is an ongoing process. The words ‘self’ and ‘care’ are linked by a hyphen and through my process the hyphen came to represent different self-care strategies and acted as a bridge between ‘knowing’ oneself and ‘caring’ for oneself.

Conclusion

The heuristic process led me on a journey of self-discovery, which is the purpose of the methodology: finding the answers to a question through inner wisdom, and yet this also became the basis of the study’s initial inquiry. Through the combined frameworks of the Intentional Witness Process and the ETC as well as the initial exploration of art materials and the ABI self-report scales, I learned how to be a more attuned and present art-therapist through self-awareness. The challenging and exciting part of this venture existed in the very nature of self-exploration and art making, as I worked through my own resistance to unearth implicit knowledge and unconscious processes. I now realize that the process led me to uncover my own identity as an

art therapist, through self-attunement, rather than constantly searching for an outside source of reference.

Paradoxically, although the findings are deeply personal as they were initiated from a process of self-search, from this place I have found that they extend forward into the world, connecting to other theories, and that the process itself could be replicated by anyone who is inspired by its potential.

Further Recommendations

Through this inquiry a new framework emerged by combining the exploration of art materials, the Intentional Witness Process, the ETC and the ABI self-report scale. Although still at its initial stages, this new combinations of strategies would have to be explored in depth with other co-researchers in order to create a self-care intervention. This might be particularly appropriate for art therapy students in their first year of studies since they are starting a new adventure, finding their footing and defining their professional identity as art therapists, which from my experience may require knowledge of self and of care. Another recommendation for future research would be to investigate how both frameworks contribute to self-actualization as a form of self-care.

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Appendices



Figure 1: Troy. The master alchimizer.



Figure 2: Troy. The master alchimizer.



Figure 3: Flower Bundle.

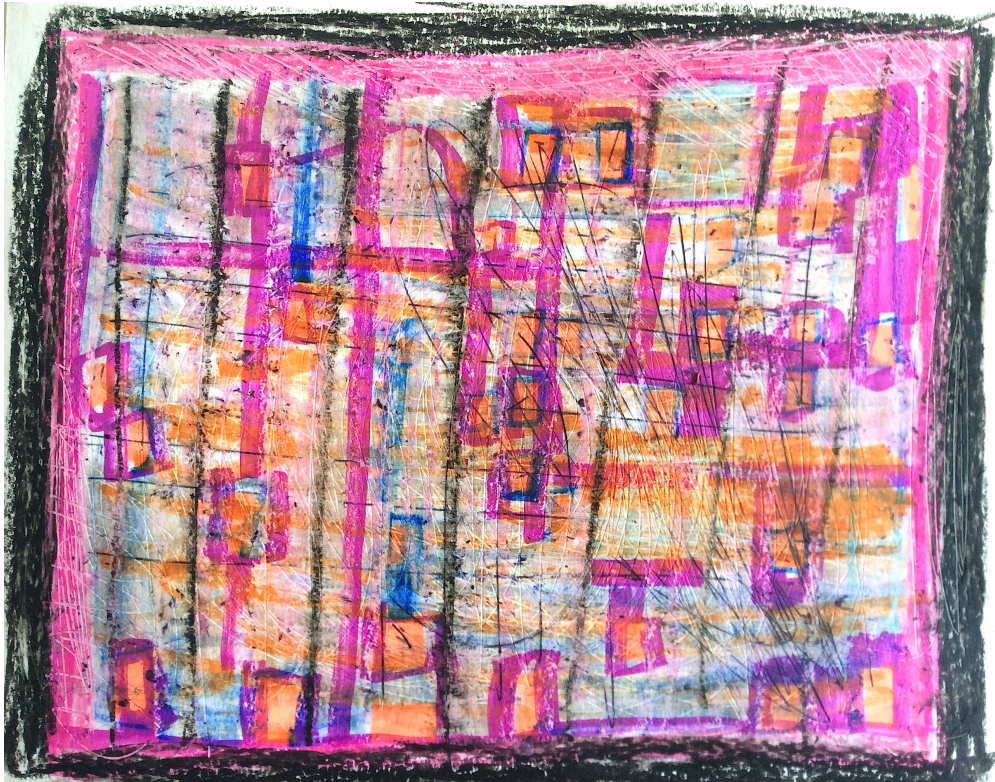


Figure 4: Frame Me!



Figure 5: Born in Canada. Made in Japan.



Figure 6: Structure and Rupture.

The Intention/ Witness Writing Process

(Based on: Pat Allen, PhD/ The Open Studio Art Process)

Before Intention: Settle into your chair, notice your body sitting in the chair, slowing inhale, exhale, relax, become present to the moment. Allow your mind to settle and allow an intention to form. Notice your body. Breathe into any tension and let it go. Sometimes it comes quickly, and sometimes you may need to free write to notice things that claim your attention and distract you from being present. (5 minutes)

START by writing your intention in the present tense, first person, without using the word “want”). Your intention could be based on deepening your understanding of issues of your role as an art therapist or it could be an intention to understand a therapeutic question. (Example: I explore this (name the issue) regarding working with my client. I explore my identity as an art therapist. I learn something about my role as ... I would like to understand my limitations... I would like further clarification about how to ...etc.) The sentence can be very specific or it can be a general intention and it can simply be not quite goal directed at all, i.e., “I release the tension I have been feeling in my shoulders.”

NEXT, Set aside your Intention and for the next 45 minutes or so Make Art. Allow yourself to be drawn to a material or an image or simply begin with a mark. (10 minutes) When you are finished, “witness” your art work in front of you by free writing: You might include some of the following:

First, sit quietly for a few moments, simply notice what you see, take it in without naming or evaluating what you see.

THEN... Describe what you see (Describe the actual image i.e. there is a man sitting on the steps; name colors i.e. there is a predominance of orange and green, and Describe the steps of how you made the image/product i.e. after cutting through the page, I cut out the red balloon, then I pressed it down and glued it.

Write down what is coming up for you in the moment. Locate self in the present moment, your energy, emotion, boredom, hunger, etc. Write down random feelings. (It’s cold in here, I’m hungry, this is stupid, etc.) Give an honest assessment.

Optional: “dialogue with the image,” ask a question, listen for a response. Write down what freely enters your mind. Thank your image for dialoging with you.

REREAD your original intention. Connect this process with your original intention? Jot down any connections you may have.

**Not applicable to the study. Possible adaptation may include choosing and reading a sentence to yourself. Choose a sentence or a paragraph to read to the group.*

Remember this is a NO-COMMENT ZONE. Learn to listen, and to briefly hold this intentionally inclusive, non-judgmental space for yourself and your learning community.

Allen, P. (1995). Art is a way of knowing. Boston, MA. Shambhala.

Allen, P. (2005). Art is a spiritual path: Engaging the sacred through the practice of art and writing. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Expressive Therapies Continuum

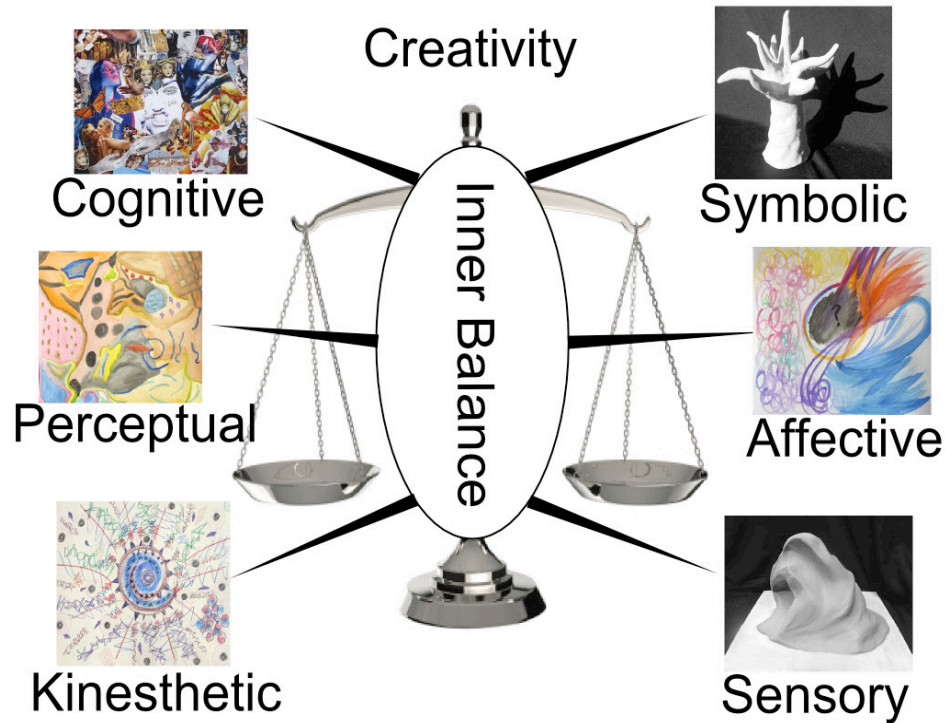


Figure 7: The ETC: Image from Riccardi, M., Périer, C., & Hinz, L.D. (2013). The expressive therapies continuum: A unifying framework for all therapists! *Official bulletin: Québec Art Therapy association*, 31(2), 9-11

Art-Based Intervention self- report questionnaire (ABI)

Below are some statements that people use to describe their art-making experience. For each part please rate your experiences according to the instructions.

Part I: Try to recall your feelings and thoughts in the moments *before* beginning your work. Circle the number that best describes your experience.

1=Not true **4=In the middle between True and Not True** **7=Very much true**

7	6	5	4	3	2	1	1. I was upset at the prospect of getting dirty during the task.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2. I was reluctant to participate in the task.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	3. I was curious about the creative task.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	4. I was glad to have an opportunity to engage in a creative task.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	5. I was excited to begin the creative task.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	6. I had ideas about what I would want to make.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	7. I felt confident that whatever I chose to do would go well.

Part II: Now try to remember your feelings and thoughts while you were doing the creative task. Circle the number that best fits your experience during the art making.

1=Not true **4=In the middle between True and Not True** **7=Very much true**

7	6	5	4	3	2	1	8. I felt that I could keep on going for hours.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	9. I knew exactly how to handle the art materials.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	10. I felt that I wasn't being creative.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	11. I had a difficult time executing my ideas.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	12. I felt that I wasn't good at this kind of activity.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	13. I was able to let go and flow with my creativity.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	14. Working on my art project released any tension I might have had.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	15. I learned about myself in the process.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	16. I felt that I was able to easily make a nice and aesthetic product.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	17. I encountered many technical difficulties in performing the art task.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	18. I had a hard time sitting still and wanted to get up and move around.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	19. I enjoyed the art task process.

7	6	5	4	3	2	1	20. I found it pleasant to create.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	21. Working on my art project provided me with a sense of inner peace and warmth.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	22. While I was creating, I came up with all kinds of ideas for my art project.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	23. I felt limited
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	24. It took me some time to understand how to work with the art materials.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	25. I felt that it was OK for me to make mistakes during the process.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	26. I felt playful with the materials.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	27. Working and creating gave me a sense of confidence.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	28. I find that this type of activity makes me concentrate.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	29. I felt that the work was a therapeutic activity.

Part III: The following statements deal with your thoughts and reactions towards the artistic product you have made. Circle the number that best indicates your experience after the art task was completed.

**1=Not true
much true**

4=In the middle between True and Not True

7=Very

7	6	5	4	3	2	1	30. I wanted to keep what I had made.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	31. I was excited about what I had created.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	32. I was surprised by what I had made.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	33. I wasn't satisfied with what I had made.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	34. I completed the task with a sense of satisfaction.
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	35. I was not interested in the final art product.

Part IV: Finally, in light of your experience with the art material, please describe your attitude towards this material.

**1=Not true
much true**

4=In the middle between True and Not True

7=Very

7	6	5	4	3	2	1	36. Material is pleasant to work with
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	37. User-friendly material
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	38. The material has a soothing effect
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	39. A powerful material
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	40. Material communicates cold detachment
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	41. Flat material, lacks depth

Snir, S. & Regev, D. (2013) ABI – Art-based intervention questionnaire. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 40, p.338-346