

Showing up for the self: A heuristic study exploring the meaning of self-care through the lens of
Drama Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Showing up for the self: A heuristic study exploring the meaning of self-care through the lens of

Drama Therapy

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This heuristic research study aims to unearth the experiences of discovering self-care through the spaces given in drama therapy. Heuristic research has the unique ability of exploring the researcher's own experiences with the topic, while searching and promoting the possibility of new connections and meanings. The purpose of this study is to gather information on the researcher's own journey of coming to better understand self-care while attending drama therapy sessions as well as studying as a drama therapy student. I (Stephanie) will share my own personal discoveries of how the heuristic research process is a unique method for an individual to share research in a creative realm. I will present my research using the six-stages of the heuristic process and illuminate the findings and the possibilities for future studies.

Key Words: Heuristic Research Method, Self-care, drama therapy

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The creation of something new is not
accomplished by the intellect but
by the play instinct acting from inner necessity.
- Carl Jung

Chapter 1. Introduction

The self... I... me. What is the self? How might one connect to the self and what are the possibilities of caring for the self? Self-care has become a common term used among contemporary society in referring to health management, lifestyle balance, and well-being. But what does it actually mean? Monk (2011) shares a perspective that self-care could be explored as "... the way a person tends to their emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual well-being" (p. 4). Many researchers and health professionals have tried to categorize the contemporary ideas around the meaning of self-care. It is a complex concept first released on record by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1983. WHO defined self-care as the participation of activities within one's community and family as well as individually, focusing on preventing disease, limiting illness and ultimately improving health.

As the researcher, my curiosity around this concept of 'self-care' first began in the initial semester of my first year as a training drama therapist. The introduction of self-care caused me to desperately search for common rituals associated with this concept, such as being in nature, breathing, physical activity, healthy eating, and being with others. Unfortunately, my ability to approach the topic of self-care lessened and my frustrations grew. Quickly, my system became overwhelmed and was soon left with more questions than answers. It seemed as though self-care had been defined and described to include a variety of ideas but none of which were clear or directive to a feeling of wellness.

Something didn't feel just right. Ah, something didn't 'feel' right. Sela-Smith (2002) shares an insight into the type of person she is and refers to herself as the "I-who-feels" (p. 55). I (Stephanie), the researcher, identify with this statement and I am also 'one-who-feels'. There will be a combination of multi-voice perspectives throughout this research paper. That of the researcher and that of the feeler, the use of personal pronoun will represent both perspectives as they become intertwined during this process. It was through my 'feelings' that I was led down the rabbit hole of sorts. If we want to treat and improve our lives and the lives of others, how could there be so many viewpoints of this so-called caring approach? It was through this complexity that I became anxiously desperate for a deeper understanding. This heuristic research study aims to provide the necessary union of theory and self-exploration to further unpack the mysteries of self-care and open a new investigation into how drama therapy could perhaps aid in this exploration.

Primary research question

My primary research question is: “What is the experience of exploring the meaning of self-care through the lens of drama therapy”?

Subsidiary question

How could Jones’ (2007) Drama Therapy core processes influence my understanding of self-care?

Definitions

It is important to establish a clear understanding as to the terms used throughout this study. The North American Drama Therapy Association (n.d.) shares that “Drama Therapy is the intentional use of drama and/or theater processes to achieve therapeutic goals” (p. 1). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a drama therapist focuses on using multiple techniques to intentionally create a therapeutic environment in the hopes of transformation.

Assumptions and Biases

There are many assumptions and biases that I hold entering this research study. This study relies heavily on my internal knowing and intuition; therefore, being straightforward with the reader is imperative. My assumptions of self-care have been influenced by my unique position in society. My position and social locators include Métis, Caucasian, religious, middle-class, university educated, cisgender female, and feminist. My perspective is limited to a North American, more specifically Canadian upbringing, and I acknowledge that many other cultures will relate and connect to this topic in different ways and I must acknowledge my viewpoint is limited. My education and access to philosophical viewpoints and researched studies still does not remotely cover the scope of this topic and can always be questioned and improved. It is with excitement and continued curiosity that I share my exploratory journey of self-care and drama therapy with the reader. I come with my humility and passion to join in conversation with the reader about the possibilities and hopes for attention towards prioritizing one’s health- body, mind, and soul. It is with this energy that I share my process.

The only unique contribution we will
make in this world will be born of creativity.
- Brene Brown

Chapter 2. Methodology

Heuristic Model

Choice of Method.

“Self-experience is the single most important guideline in pursuing heuristic research” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 46). The fear and inadequacy I felt when trying to understand self-care led me to acknowledge the need for an inquiry that would give space to explore this internal curiosity as the researcher. The heuristic model is about studying an internalized experience. It is the process of exploration and discovery. My experience with self-care had stretched beyond my own understanding and became humiliating to acknowledge. I had no idea how I was to care for myself. The heuristic search is focused on the self and this is the objective of the research method, which complimented how the research question was also centered on the self. It seemed like a reasonable pairing: to explore the topic of the self, we must be willing to enter the self.

The word heuristic comes from the Greek term *heuriskein*, which means to find out or to discover. Clark Moustakas, who discussed his process through a published work entitled *Loneliness* in 1961, developed the heuristic methodology. Moustakas (1990) shares that his work was:

legitimized using the term heuristics to define the organized and systematic form for investigating human experience in which attention is focused inward on feeling responses of the researcher to the outward situation rather than exclusively to relations between the pieces of that outside situation (p. 59).

This method differs significantly from other methods as it places the researcher in the role of participant. This research began and continued to be led by the initial question, and this guided the study throughout the open-ended inquiry. “The process of discovery leads investigators to new images and meanings regarding human phenomena, but also to realizations relevant to their own experiences and lives” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Heuristic research method creates an ideal balance to focus on the whole of a phenomenon while investigating the meaning making within a lived experience. This method is appropriate to explore the lived experience of self-care through the shared exploration of a drama therapist because it provided a platform to investigate what this phenomenon is, how meaning is made around this phenomenon and how my own experience as a researcher influences this investigation process. “Heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner

awareness, meaning, and inspiration. When I consider an issue, problem or question, I enter into it fully” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11).

Perhaps the process of entering a question from my experience could provide a different approach to enter into a deeper conversation with the topic. What is this commonly used term ‘self-care,’ that many often refer to as a lifestyle towards a healthy balance? I am interested in this phenomenon and specifically how meaning is made in relevance to self-care. I am trying to discover the meaning of self-care. Hiles (2001) shares that there is no topic more urgent to explore in research than that of the human realm, the experiences, actions and expressions and most importantly the extraordinary moments that occur in life. Heuristic method helps to answer my research question because as Douglass and Moustakas (1985) state this method moves away from the limiting external methodological structures and focuses on the direct experience by drawing upon perceptual powers. “Heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behaviour” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 42).

This method is focused on opening an exploratory space for the research and then for the researcher to immerse themselves in the topic and breath in all aspects of the question. Kenny (2012) shares that “in the heuristic process, researchers must move between their internal worlds and the external worlds that they inhabit” (p. 8). Sela-Smith (2002) adds “Moustakas shifts from experience used as a verb that is connected to the internal self-search to experience as a noun that is connected to observation and thoughts related to the observation of an event or an experience” (pp. 71-72). The heuristic inquiry process is more about knowing than about a product produced (Kenny, 2012).

In terms of my drama therapy lens Jones (2007) states it best, “a phenomenological philosophical approach could be argued to echo through many ways of working in, and thinking about dramatherapy” (p. 72). As a student of drama therapy I have a keen interest in this topic and have myself many times questioned the meanings of self-care. My connection to this topic is the most important role as the researcher in a heuristic study. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) share that the heuristics approach uses the internal workings of the self to further explore many facets of life and its essence. This method provides the flexibility to explore essence and meaning making while incorporating my lived-experience and giving space to unearth the deeper meaning or new connection to the topic. Transformation is key.

Current Research Question.

Kenny (2012) explains that the research question begins the process and this must come from having an emotional effect that cannot be ignored by the researcher, it profoundly touches them. My current research question follows the heuristic approach of investigating a powerful experience or topic that the researcher can no longer ignore. I am interested in how we explore self-care and come to a better understanding of its essence. Perhaps, it is from the guidance of a drama therapist that this experience could be more deeply explored.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations have to be taken into account throughout the research project (Creswell, 2007). The ethical considerations within my research process stem from the realm of power, privilege and oppression to hopefully support my approach in making clear the possible risks associated with participating in this study. I have concerns surrounding the ethical considerations of gender, race, cultural diversity, education, ability, socioeconomic status, and religion, among many others, within the research process. It is important for me to make room for these ethical considerations during my investigation. I believe in transparency and as a researcher it is important to be clear about the angle at which I approach this work. Van Manen (1997) shares that “if we simply try to forget or ignore what we already ‘know,’ we may find that the presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections. It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories” (p. 47).

I consider myself privileged in many areas. Therefore, I work at being aware of my social locators and that my position as Métis, Caucasian, religious, middle-class, university educated, cisgender female, and feminist could categorize my biases into a privileged social position. There was a conscious decision to sit in my privilege throughout this process especially because the exploration focused on my experiences. Sitting in my privilege refers to the conscious effort to acknowledge who I am, where I have come from and how my experiences differ from others. This requires a vulnerability from the researcher that allows for a greater awareness as an individual. As the researcher, I have been able to attend therapy and university; this is an important acknowledgement, as many do not have these opportunities. Unfortunately, at this time, I am not fully aware of how this issue for universal access can be overcome; I still acknowledge the opportunities I have been afforded and my privilege of being in a situation to research and potentially spread knowledge. Tracy (2010) refers to the importance of acknowledging the ethics considered “situational” which refers to the assumption that every situation is unique and therefore

the researcher must continuously reflect, critique and question their ethics throughout the research process. Furthermore, relational ethics, the mindfulness of the researcher's own character, action and consequences is apparent during this study (Tracy, 2010). Ellis (2007) shares that ethics are connected to a care that "recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work" (p. 4).

Heuristic research provides ethical results, as it is the researchers priority to maintain an open minded and curious approach throughout the study. The research is always focused on the internal, intuitive search of the researcher, pushing to experience moments of transformation in relation to the question. Therefore, to maintain an ethical process is to consciously speak with humility and transparency.

Procedure

Within the method of heuristic phenomenology, it is important to state that there is no clear step-by-step process. Moustakas (1990) shares that "the researcher experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge" (p. 9). Kafle (2011) explores this well by sharing that this method does "avoid method for method's sake" and that there is not an expectation to provide any systematic requirements (p. 191). Van Manen (1997) shares a sort of structure through his 'dynamic interplay' among six research activities: committing to a phenomenon of interest, investigating the experience as it is lived, reflecting on essential themes, describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting, maintaining an academic relation to the phenomenon, and considering its parts and whole (pp. 30-31). Kafle (2011) extends this focus by requiring the researcher to "seek the essence of the tradition belonging to the phenomenological way, while also attuning his/her being towards the essence of a particular phenomenon and becoming the signpost pointing towards essential understanding of the research approach as well as essential understandings of the particular phenomenon of interest" (p. 188). The focus is towards revealing details and seemingly trivial aspects within experiences to create meaning and achieve a sense of understanding (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). The research process is led by intuition and is supported by this focus throughout the entire study.

Data Collection

Moustakas six-stage model of engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis connects closely to the theories of the human creative process, which requires reflection with knowing, dreaming, ideas, that comes through in the intuitive day to day living and

resting of the human experience (Braud & Anderson, 1998). "... Data collected through...journal writing, and a range of relevant materials, all of which is filtered through the researcher's own experience of the topic under inquiry" (Etherington, 2004, p. 50). This process of collecting data was chosen as it provided the flexibility needed during this process to easily track my intuitive thoughts "... and so we need to search everywhere in the lifeworld for lived-experience material that, upon reflective examination, might yield something of its fundamental nature" (van Manen, 1997, p. 53). My process of data collection was explored through, self-dialogue and journaling, which became the method chosen to record my experiences. This process allowed for an informal conversation between past, present and future thoughts of the topic to flow naturally. This form of data collection is "consistent with the rhythm and flow of heuristic exploration and search for meaning" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47).

Researcher's Journaling.

"My own life experiences are immediately accessible to me in a way that no one else's are" (van Manen, 1997, p. 54). An important place to start in heuristic method is to begin with the researchers own experiences. "The Moustakas method of heuristics invites the conscious, investigating self to surrender to the feelings in an experience, which carries the researcher to unknown aspects of self and the internal organizational systems not normally known in wakingstate consciousness" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 59). The journaling practice involved daily recordings of the six-stage process that will be explored further in Chapter 4 of this paper. The journaling took on a process of self-dialogue. Self-dialogue is when the researcher will enter into a dialogue with the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1990). This form of data collection allowed me as the researcher to stay true to the heuristic inquiry of leading from intuition and allowing all possibilities to flow in and out of consciousness. It also gave me the safety to bring forth many concepts that had been stuck in my unconscious. Sela-Smith (2002) shares about her own process using the heuristic method by expressing "the importance of looking past the science that shows traditional research psychology focusing on describing, defining, explaining and predicting... and move towards the leap into the unknown of the subjective experience" (p.54).

Validity

Morrow (2005) explores reliability in the qualitative research perspective by sharing that the process from where findings are derived should be explicit and repeatable as much as possible. Furthermore, the author confirms that credibility can be achieved by prolonged engagement with participant, in this case, the researcher is the participant; persistent observation in the field; through

the use of peer debriefing; and acknowledgment of researcher reflexivity (p. 252). The validity of the heuristic method cannot be “determined by correlations or statistics” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). This method is focused on meaning. Moustakas (1990) shares that it is the researcher’s responsibility to return to the collected data and confirm the accuracies of the depictions; the researcher is the judge of validity.

Kafle (2011) shares the important concepts around the quality of research through the descriptions of (a) orientation, involving the researcher in the world and stories (b) strength, the texts ability to represent the core intention of meaning (c) richness, the quality of the texts ability to narrate the meaning and (d) depth, the researcher’s ability to express the best intentions through the text. Most importantly confirming and clarifying the researcher’s biases, experiences, prejudices and positions are to be clearly stated at the forefront of the research. Kleining and Witt (2000) share rules that will lead the researcher towards discovery, firstly there needs to be an openness to change by the researcher, and secondly the topic is leading the process and as such can and may change.

Critique of Model

I do believe that a criticism of this process is its potential for one-sidedness and perhaps this is where there is a need for further exploration. Kleining and Witt (2000) share that the “data should be collected under the paradigm of maximum structural variation of perspectives” (p. 1). “Structural variations mean sampling of positions in reference to the topic, i.e. when studying an emotion, the collection of data past and present, before and after its occurrence, in different situations, from different respondents, if possible from different times and cultures, by different methods, etc.” (Kleining & Witt, 2000, p. 1).

Another criticism would be that Moustakas confirms there should be no time constraints during the exploration process. Due to the nature of this inquiry the process could not be extended past a particular date and therefore it could be criticized that the process was not fully experienced and a variety of potentials were explored or discovered.

Lastly, Giorgi (1994) argues “Moustakas’ (1990) use of “self-dialogue” in the heuristic research approach is perhaps not coherent with the phenomenological method as the focus appears to be the researcher’s own growth and self-development rather than the illumination of a phenomenon. Therefore, it must be noted that this form of research might not be considered by phenomenologists to be part of the world of ‘phenomenology inquiry’.

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence,
it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.
– Audre Lorde

Chapter 3. Literature Review

Few studies have examined the link between self-care and drama therapy. Through this lack of investigation, the aim of this review is to begin with curiosity about the current study's findings and try to better understand how self-care is defined and being used in our world today. As this study focuses on self-care, there are also themes of burnout and compassion fatigue that have come into the lens of this topic's scope. Other themes include policies, ethics and the history around self-care. The research provides a clear link between the progress made in recognizing self-care in the health field and the journey that lay ahead to implement its concepts in government, agencies, and institutions. The themes discussed throughout refer to self-care from a contemporary perspective. There have been many uses of 'caring for the self' for centuries but this exploration has focused on the most current implementations of our health care systems, social spaces, and personal relationships.

Self-care

Segall and Goldstein (1998) share that "...despite the fact that self-care is typically described as the basic of primary level of care in all societies, we know very little about lay health care beliefs and behaviors" (p. 278). This is why pulling back to gain a new perspective through studies of a heuristic approach are important. As I will argue, from the findings, of my own personal struggles with grasping onto the meaning of self-care, it has become strikingly apparent that it is not generalizable as everyone's beliefs and behaviors are individually their own. Dean (1981) shares that "self-care in its various forms, preventive, curative and rehabilitative, is neither contemporary nor reactionary. It is the basic health behavior in all societies past and present" (p. 673). Although there are aspects of self-care that reflect it is a new social movement, many argue that it is certainly not new (Green 1985; Segall and Goldstein 1998). Furthermore, Schiller and Levin (1983) shares that "self-care is not a movement in the classical use of the term" either (p.193). Segall and Goldstein (1998) expresses important aspects as to why self-care may not be working in our current medical set up, by sharing that "if self-care existed prior to the emergence of health specialists and the professionalization of medical care, and if the overwhelming proportion of everyday care is self-provided, then it is professional health care which is supplementary to self-care" (p. 281). Furthermore, the public health policy needs modification to better reflect that, though vital, professional care is supplementary to lay self-care (Levin, 1981). There is a "... need to give high priority to systematic study of self-care" (Levin, Katz and Holst, 1976, p. 49).

Self-care has been a reoccurring theme amongst my thoughts as a student of the mental health field and I am unusually in search of the meaning behind this seemingly large yet simplified concept. This search has seemed unusual for me, as it is often spoken about in such basic terms, yet when I turn inward to investigate my own self-care I become perplexed. Dean (1989) expresses that the knowledge around self-care is both large and very small. Perhaps this is because the work of self-care is extremely intimate and personal but there is a gaining popularity around its need in all aspects of our society. Searching through multiple journal articles and books there is quite a variety of discussion around self-care but neither in terms of creative arts therapies nor drama therapy. Therefore, this exploration of meaning was to gain an overall understanding of self-care throughout the health field in connection to creativity. Although there are multiple definitions in the literature, they seemingly all wrestle with the idea that there isn't a universal definition of self-care. This further promotes investigation around where self-care fits into our ideas around health and wellbeing.

Historians have argued that nineteenth-century interest in health reform was a clear response to the social uncertainties of the time, chief among which were changes in women's working role within the family (Morantz, 1977). The social and political movements that began during the Jacksonian period were rooted in the traditional American values of self-reliant individualism, anti-elitism, popular democracy, common sense, and even nationalism (Blake 1977; Pickard and Buley 1945; Kett 1968). Self-care has become a form of pushing away from the model of 'professionals' caring and rather focuses on self-caring. Interestingly enough, Dean (1989) argues that self-care is in fact not a new concept but a new term used in health services. The author continues to add that it is the development and attitudes of over one hundred years of relating to the role of the individual. Kickbusch (1989) supports the notion that self-care is not accepted by the scientific world and has in reality "always been with us" (p. 125).

As a student who is beginning to learn the ropes of this intense field, I've grown to see the importance of self-care. Kearney et al. (2009) agree, "self-care is an essential part of the therapeutic mandate" (p. 1162). In order for us to 'help', helpers must be in tune with the self. Dean (1989) explores self-care through the "range of behavior undertaken by individuals to promote or restore their health" (p. 117). Adding to this, Schiller and Levin (1983) describe self-care as "a process whereby a layperson can function effectively on his own behalf in health promotion and prevention and in disease detection and treatment at the level of the primary health resource in the health-care system" (p.1343). Sanchez-Reilly et al. (2013) define self-care as a "cadre of activities performed

independently by an individual to promote and maintain personal well-being throughout life” (p. 1). Furthermore, the contemporary American society describes self-care as a social movement by advocates and critics (Schiller and Levin, 1983). The shift from a more medical perspective on caring for the self has transformed in society to an autonomous led caring.

If one was to continue this trend of self-care as a social movement the authors express that it would need to effect (a) policies (b) health care expectations (c) meaning of illness (d) education and (e) social learning (Schiller & Levin, 1983). Therefore, if self-care were considered a social movement it would be defined by a feeling of “we-ness and common purpose” (Schiller & Levin, 1983, p. 1344). This desire to become gathered could stem from the realities that the health system has changed into specializations of “bureaucratized, technical systems” leaving people with the feelings of being unheard and estranged (Dean, 1989, p. 118).

Kickbusch (1989) points out that the decade of self-help in the 1970s kick-started the movement towards caring for the self. Along with this movement, there was a shift to health from medicine, to prevention from a cure, perhaps even from medical care to self-care. Barnett and Copper (2009) also see self-care as a preventive strategy. Along with this idea of self-care as a social movement, ethics becomes a key component to the responsibilities practitioners hold in the world of health. How might practitioners be neglecting their clients or patients by not caring for themselves? Where do the social and ethical responsibilities lay in relationship to the meaning making of self-care? In an ethical approach to self-care, some professionals in the ‘helping’ field are met with expectations from their ethical codes such as the APA ethics code, Standard 2.06 (American Psychological Association, 2010), which focuses on personal problems and conflicts of the practitioner. In Drama Therapy, the North American Drama Therapy Association Code of Ethical Principles (North American Drama Therapy Association, 2013) upholds an expectation of competency in section (2) focusing on personal responsibilities of the practitioner to the client. Coster and Schwebel (1997) share an important side of self-care in their definition by expressing it as “the enduring quality in one’s professional functioning over time and in the face of professional and personal stressors” (p. 5). Self-care is a life-long exploration and component in a practitioners practice and lifestyle. Therefore, from these definitions how can we make sense of self-care in our own functionalities of our working life? Monk (2011) shares that self-care is about the ways in which an individual shows up, for ourselves, to replenish, nourish and care for the Self, all-the-while focusing on reducing and healing the effects of stress. Stress and burnout, the accumulation of job

stress over time, can be cited as hazards in the workplace and therefore has an important place in the conversation around self-care (Monk, 2011).

Burnout.

Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2014) share the striking metaphor of burnout by associating it to that of an “extinguished flame, which is the motivational force in the caring profession” (p. 152). The authors share that there are two types of burnout. One termed ‘meaning burnout’ when one’s calling of caring loses its purpose in someone’s life and the other ‘caring burnout’ focusing on the “attachment-involvement-separation of practitioner and client (Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison, 2014, pp 152-153). Maslach and Leiter (2008) further define burnout as a “psychological syndrome of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy, which is experienced in response to chronic job stressors” (p. 93). Maslach and Jackson (1981) explore this definition of burnout as a syndrome by adding it is an “emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind” (p. 99). Maslach and Jackson (1981) note that emotional exhaustion is also a key component to burnout and causes the worker's emotions to be worn-out. Furthermore, they state the worker can become negative and cynical of their clients as well as feeling unhappy with themselves (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Compassion Fatigue.

Figley (2002) shares that compassion fatigue is, in fact, another form of burnout (Figley, 2002). Sanchez-Reilly et al. (2013) share the idea of describing compassion fatigue as an experience that is “marked by the diminished emotional energy needed to care...” (p. 2). Figley (2002) describes compassion fatigue as the natural consequence that a person experiences or suffers from a traumatizing event. Therefore, the author also connects the concepts of compassion fatigue to that of secondary traumatic stress in the field of traumatology (Figley, 2002). Figley (2002) shares that there is significant understanding around the causes of compassion fatigue, which could now allow researchers to begin the search on how to act and implement this knowledge into many working environments, such as the health field.

Drama Therapy

How might drama therapy (DT) fit in this whole exploration? Through extensive exploration and reflection, there perhaps could be connections created around the strengths that DT holds and the needs of exploration around self-care. Where may there be a use for DT in the meaning making exploration of self-care, burnout and compassion fatigue? Jones (2007) shares that dramatherapy can provide a representation of a feeling, a way we view ourselves and a way we view

other issues. DT could play an important role in creating meaning around self-care for practitioners. Newell and MacNeil (2011) explore that self-care could include self-expression through art, cooking and the outdoors. Potentially by providing a space of play and exploration, practitioners could begin to explore their relationship to the self and the issues arising, which could prevent burnout and compassion fatigue. It is important to note there is certainly a gap in the research around the use of DT as a tool to recognize and adapt self-care for practitioners. Could DT ignite the playfulness, which may have been neglected, to begin the journey to implement self-care in a regular routine? Further exploration of this concept is needed to recognize the impact DT could have on the field of self-care for practitioners. It was important to mention burnout and compassion fatigue as they are common topics that arise when self-care is discussed. Although they are not the focus during this study, providing a space to acknowledge their connection to this topic shared an understanding of the breadth of the self-care scope.

There is a clear lack of literature on self-care and practitioners in relation to the use of drama therapy. After finding gaps throughout the literature, it confirmed the need for further exploration and the construction around the meanings of self-care and the use of drama therapy. By using a heuristic research method, I will be able to explore the need for further distinction in the meanings of self-care, through my own experience as a studying drama therapist and as a client of drama therapy. Kickbusch (1989) explains, "... when studying human actions, we must relate the actions to the meanings people attach to them, the norms they are subject to and the power of decision making available" (p. 127). As the health field continues to evolve it is so imperative to continue the search to better understand all avenues of care; self-care research as Kickbusch (1989) notes is focused on the context and the meaning rather than the individual responsibility. I am excited to present this research in a new curious perspective that may open new dialogue around self-care through drama therapy.

what more were we to do
two souls who had their fill
your love it keeps me here
you keep me wondering still

somehow it moved me
your love has powers over me
oh what dream is this
somehow it towers over me

send your love to move me
my world has powered over me
in perfect ruins
somehow towers over me

- Kwabs

Chapter 4. Six Stage Heuristic Research Model

The heuristic research method is structured with six stages that help to guide the researcher throughout the process (Moustakas, 1990). As mentioned in the methodology section, the data was collected through the heuristic phases using journaling especially through audio recordings and written notes of self-dialogue. “All heuristic research begins with the internal search to discover, with an encompassing puzzlement, a passionate desire to know, a devotion and commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one’s own identity and selfhood” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 40).

Stage 1: Initial Engagement

This first stage is about calling into question what I have found from past literature and through experience (Moustakas, 1990). I need to reach inward for tacit awareness and knowledge. Moustakas (1990) identified tacit knowledge as “the deep structure that contains the unique perceptions, feelings, intuitions, beliefs, and judgments housed in the internal frame of reference of a person that governs behaviour and determines how we interpret experience” (p. 32). What are the pieces of this topic that are unspoken? I need to now provide a space where my intuition can run freely and expose different perspectives. Heuristic research method was something that I fell into. It was not at all what I had planned on using as a research method, but through some studies and reviews and after acknowledging my relationship to the topic I had come to learn that the heuristic research method was the correct choice. The process provided the opportunity to go through my experiences and recognize that this was the only way that I could have a deeper conversation with my own process. Sela-Smith (2002) provides important insight by sharing that:

the tacit dimension of personal knowledge is that internal place where experience, feeling, and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to navigate that world. 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. This deep dimension of knowledge is under construction each time a new experience is introduced. The individual constantly compares the outer world with the inner knowledge base to evaluate and to determine what it is that is being experienced. Though some of the comparison may be explicit, it is more likely to be subliminal pondering of what fits or doesn’t fit just right (p. 60).

This was about giving myself permission to have my mind run freely and open up my intuition to come to understand where my curiosity with the experience of self-care was within me.

In this first phase, I had to be honest about my aggravation and irritation with self-care. It made me uncomfortable. It made me uneasy. I was annoyed with things that I had read from the previously written literature, I felt so disconnected from this idea of caring for myself. The process started here, it started in my head. I was stuck. How was I to get to my intuition? This initial engagement was all about getting to my intuition. While sitting with myself and pondering this question, I realized for me this was about listening to my body. It was through this first phase that I was able to open up this space for myself and really start listening to my body and my internal reactions when thinking about this concept of the experience of self-care through drama therapy. I began to sit and think. My first thought was about the self and care. What is this thing that I am so curious about? This self... perhaps is, 'a person' 'an individual' 'a being'. My mind jumped to the idea of care and quickly this became multilayered. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I wrote when I first became aware of my irritation and discomfort with self-care:

...Written, Journal: The idea of self-care irritates me and makes me feel as if I need to be "doing something" for myself. To say, add self-care to the list. That doesn't feel helpful. I feel a stuck-ness an in-between-ness. I know I need to.... but I am stressed, tired, anxious, worried, annoyed, concerned, avoidant, so I don't do what I know I "should." The healthy "knowing what is right" in my mind isn't the same as "emotional desires." What is the emotional need in my mind, my body, my heart, and my spirit? It always feels less connected to my morals. As if to say, "morals" is your mother pointing at you waving a "no don't do that, do this" finger and "desire" is the freedom and confidence to say, "Nah mum, I got this." Self-care has been non-existent in my life the last two years. I had many a times convinced myself that certain activities, like binge-watching Netflix, was important for taking the time to care of myself but I was avoiding something else.

What the heck is self-care, everyone gives suggestions but I'm not really into general suggestions BECAUSE WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT. It reminds me of the medical model of treating patients. Here take this drug and it will work. Believe it or not, some people don't get a beautiful high and relief from being with others, or going for a jog or creating a beautiful healthy meal. When life is busy and hectic these can be dreaded thoughts, at least they were for me. I would come home, after school and after providing therapy and I didn't want to cook, or talk or walk. I wanted to zone out. This, at the time, WAS (I think or made myself believe) caring for myself. I was physically alone, in a new place, doing things I had never imagined before. Caring for myself was a bit foreign and to be honest terrifying to face. I was using Drama Therapy as a method to help explore ways clients could care for themselves but I didn't know how to make this space for myself.

Discomfort, I felt a lot of it.

Self-care feels to me like the need we have in therapy or the reason we go. We need space, to be heard and to be seen. Hearing and seeing ourselves... now, that's vulnerable. Brene Brown has said that vulnerability is a way that we show up and be seen. I just want to show up for myself. Isn't that self-care? Instead of giving suggestions about actions of self-care, perhaps giving a space to sit in the meaning-making state would be more pertinent in discovering our true desires.

I really believe that there is no one answer to self-care. It needs a space like Drama Therapy, for every single person to explore, create, move and be in a relationship with themselves. As I reach inward I feel that self-care is a deeply personal experience and as a studying therapist I get curious about, love and connection. I feel myself needing love to begin to care for myself.

Care holds a lot of meaning for me. I don't necessarily think care is something we know how to do for ourselves. This thought is where things took off for me. Care brought me back to drama therapy. I discovered I need a creative space for exploration. It was through connecting to the openness that creativity gives me in my body, that then connected me to the understanding of what care could be for the self.

This initial engagement was opening myself to sit in the concept of self-care in a frame of curiosity and listen to what my relationship was/is. I think the relationship to the self is profound. It requires a vulnerable exploration of opening the self up. To be in relation with the self... I wonder when and how we do that in the world. I come from a place of not doing that, not having a relationship with myself these past couple of years. This was a sad realization I had to admit and share. It was through this initial stage of turning inward that I began to explore the intuitive pathways of my being. In stage one I allowed my intuition to begin to flow. Where am I being pulled? This is what I asked myself. I recognized I was being pulled towards self, care and space. Upon reflection I think these are much bigger ideas than previously discussed, the literature I explored really focused on various definitions and generalizations of what self-care is and how it is "done". By done, I am referring to the numerous suggestions individuals and professionals make to help give advice for people to accomplish a level of self-care. During this initial engagement I was uncomfortable. My own journey through this method began in this energy, sitting in a place of not understanding why people are saying this and feeling disconnected to that viewpoint. I began to question these individuals and became curious around the concept of self-care being placed in a

more individualized and personal space. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I wrote when I first became aware of connections that give birth when knowledge becomes conscious:

...Written, journal: It seems to me that when we become awakened and conscious of new possibilities in the world, this awareness becomes continually expanded. This has certainly been my experience with self-care. Once the concept was introduced into my consciousness, new connections of self-care kept popping up right in front of me on a daily basis.

Stage 2: Immersion

This second stage refers to the altering of all possibilities of meanings. This is where I began to question my experiences of self-care (Moustakas, 1990). The possibilities became endless, people, places, meetings, readings, and nature. All of these came into the research and self-dialogue began to quickly emerge. When this started I became concerned and felt inadequate. How do I know if something is actually caring? If changes aren't evident, or stress continues, is self-care still occurring? Moustakas (1990) shares that the researcher must live the question. The researcher must be in "spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues and hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension" (p. 28). This immersion stage is about opening yourself up and being alert to all the possibilities that come from this topic and all of the meanings. This can be through people, places, readings, nature, and intuitive clues. It is about being open to the possibilities that can happen to understanding this topic better. I focused on and used the tool of self-dialogue to immerse myself into the topic of self-care exploration through drama therapy. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I recorded when I first became aware of the care in self-care:

...Audio, Journal: I'm feeling emotional today. I'm thinking about... what it means, what self-care means. What it means to care for the self and I really need to be with my partner. I really need his touch and to see his face and know his physical presence. I need to be with his mind and to be in conversation with his spirit. Connecting with the other. Caring for myself... I feel that through connection.

And I need that.

During the recordings of my journals of digging around for my own understanding, and my own questions about self-care, it became clear that these frustrations have been present for quite some time. How is it that this thing that is supposed to help keep me "healthy" was ultimately bringing more negativity into my life? Why was I was annoyed with this whole concept? As I sat,

opening up with myself, remembering stories from the past two years of needing care it became obvious. Fear. I was terrified.... I felt like I didn't know what I needed, what if nothing ever makes me feel different, what if this is as good as it gets, what if I'm totally missing it, what if.... Then my intuition began to flow. I opened my mind to my body. I let my soul speak. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I recorded when I first became aware of the need for love in self-care:

...Audio, Journal: You know what we need? We need love. Caring for ourselves comes from love. Love is what fills us up. Love is what allows us to take chances. Love is what pushes us forward after so much pain and so much suffering and so much despair. Love is that light at the end of the tunnel. And thank goodness that my love was a fighter because I'm not a fighter. I had to get really honest with myself and I was not a fighter for love. I believed in love, yah I did but I was so terrified of it. And when I spoke my truth it came from a place of fear, and self-judgment and expectations of others. That's where my love brewed. It was a place that wasn't real happiness. You know. Love was stuck in this cage of what everybody wanted for me, what everybody thought I should have, what it needed to look like. But that's not love.

No. Because love is not caging yourself in. Love is not putting a label on things. Love speaks to the inner part of your soul. Mine has spoken because I had a fighter. My love was a fighter and he was so willing, and this is a gift from God, but he was so willing to push forward. He was so willing to fight for that love, to fight for the love he saw in me, that he knew he had in himself, that we could build together. Yeah. And that love, as I slowly was able to push back and pull forward and push back and pull forward, and kind of move, move and allow myself to just move in that. Without expectations without expecting anything from me knowing that I had my own love in myself but that I wasn't really caring for myself. That's where we get to back to how love is so intertwined with self-care, because it's really true, if we can't open ourselves up to love. How are we really caring for ourselves?

How do we do self-care if it's not coming from a space of love? I don't know if that's possible. I really don't know. And for myself, I was physically alone during the year, except for some times when my boyfriend could come and I was able to go home to see some family, but the majority and most of the time when I was trying to understand self-care this year it was really in lonely, isolated place. I don't know how you could care in that kind of place because I couldn't. I kept convincing myself that oh yah, taking a shower today is really caring for myself. No... that's a necessity. And you know maybe self-care is a necessity.

Yes, I think it is a necessity, it is.

Self-care is a necessity because self-care is about, I think, a space of really being who you are. It's taking away these labels, these false senses of self, these expectations and it's really tough in today's accessibility because we can reach out and see how other people are living. We can be so immersed in what society portrays as love and care and sometimes these are not the things that somebody needs. They're really not. It's about giving ourselves permission to go... I need to shut this out, I need to quiet this down and I need to breathe. I need to feel the flow of my own body and I need to speak to myself in a very loving way. And when I speak to myself in a loving way what do I say back? What is it that I say back to myself?

Because love allows for honesty. This unconditional loving space that we create for ourselves gives honesty. It was only until I could lift that kind of expectation of everyone else and this idea that people understood what I needed. How is that possible? How is that really possible that someone understands what I need? Nobody is in this mind and this body and this spirit. Nobody, I am. And so it is imperative that we be with ourselves and I think this is the beginning part of self-care. When we can be with ourselves, in a loving, open, honest, real, vulnerable space that we can learn how to keep ourselves healthy. Because that is so individualized that there is no way that we're going to make a plan that's going to work for everyone, because it's not. That's why diets don't work for everyone, and that's why exercises don't work for everyone, and work schedules don't work for everyone, and sleep patterns don't work for everyone. We are individuals. Our bodies and our minds and our spirits are made up uniquely our own. And it is this unique quality that we need to go inside ourselves and call upon to start speaking to, so we can start to listen and see what it is that we need.

It was through self-dialogue that I recognized myself as the drama therapist and as the client of drama therapy who had actually explored self-care many times before. Once I began dialoguing with the experience of self-care I became aware of these two roles I had played. This was a unique position I had been in. This is why the heuristic method is so imperative to this study because it was only through this method that I could recognize my own experience of how a drama therapist could aid in the understanding and discovery of self-care. I am by no means confirming or suggesting that what I did will work for everyone, with that said; I do think something powerful occurred in the therapy space. Due to the impact it made on my experience, there is a great probability that it could also impact others.

How could a drama therapist aid in the experience of self-care? It was through the space that drama therapist creates that self-care could be explored. This happens by having a space, specifically for you. Self-care is about the self. Drama therapy gives you a space for yourself. It also gives a different freedom than other therapy spaces provide as it welcomes and encourages

creativity. I am so profoundly in awe of the therapeutic strengths and transformations that creativity can bring to us. That is the role of drama therapy. It must hold all of these creative spaces for the client. The client body, spirit, rhythm, vision, voice and creativity can fill up the space.

Stage 3: Incubation

Stage 3 focuses on the researcher retreating from the intense focus of the question (Moustakas, 1990). Stepping away from this research was a difficult task. Researching this topic became an extremely personal and emotional process. I felt connected to this discovery, and desperate to find the essence and discover what I couldn't yet see that I needed to better understand this experience of self-care. With that said, the method requires a separation period. It was imperative to walk away, to not think about this topic, to surrender to the possibilities that the universe was bringing to the consciousness. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I wrote when I first became aware of my difficulty being in this space of self-care:

...Written, journal: I found it difficult to sit in a space of self-care today. I thought about so many things I had to deal with and get done. Paying parking tickets, contacting a jeweler, confirming a shipment, paying the visa, doing groceries, planning a meal, laundry, cleaning, the list goes on. Self-care went to the back burner. Today I had this felt sense that consciousness is so important in this journey towards caring for ourselves. When I became filled up with the things that I "had/needed" to do, I went into auto-mode as I call it. At times we can do things in a zone of routine and knowing, but not always in a consciously present way.

Time has also been a requirement for me.

And time is not something we are willing to slow down and give up.... Oh because this would mean "selfish" behavior. Time is a MAJOR factor in self-care. To know ourselves takes dedicated time set aside for this task, it DERSEVES YOUR FULL ATTENTION and it needs it and yes, I'm exhausted and annoyed by it. But it's like anything you work for, you dedicate yourself to it and that dedication it upheld by the drama therapist.

Time and space. Space and time.

To separate from this topic was more difficult than I had previously anticipated. I felt a pull for endless digging. I realized I needed to get into nature. I needed to move outside of myself and my external spaces. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I recorded when I first became aware of my body and nature's connection:

...Audio, journal: Swimming today and doing flips in the pool and letting myself float to the surface. This feeling like your heart is dropping,

invigorating your whole body. Being with the wind, the sky, the water. The conversations we had without saying a word. Being in relations with myself. Being free. Needing to be with me, to sit in that vulnerable space of just me.

How do I see myself when I can't see myself?

I feel my body. My body speaks to me in nature.

Stage 4: Illumination

Stage 4 spoke to the deepest part of this process, it was about the break-through to a conscious awareness. It requires the researcher to acknowledge new awareness and modification of an old understanding (Moustakas, 1990). There was this moment when I began to think about my own process in drama therapy and my own drama therapist. This realization created a link as to why, for me, a drama therapist is a pivotal part of the experience of self-care discovery. It felt like my body was desperate for release, but safety and understanding and a sense of being met was so crucial to this, that only came once I was able to let go and see that someone was willing to open the gates of the unknown with me. In the drama therapy sessions for myself, it was the only space that I stopped thinking. It was the only space now looking back, through reflection and through a lot of self-dialogue that I thought, wow, I don't need to 'know' here. This is something I have constantly, over the last two years, been so wrapped up in. I kept saying to myself, I don't know. I don't know what that means. I don't know how to do that. I don't know what's working for me. Nothing ever felt right, or felt really good. Nothing was improving my health and I continued to feel sporadic and out of control. Drama therapy was the break through. It was in a creative space where I was encouraged to stop thinking, I was encouraged to stop planning, and I was encouraged to just be. I was encouraged to journey. The important part about this was that the drama therapist provided a containing force. Emunah (1994) shares:

Containment does not imply suppression, but rather mastery over one's a motion, enabling one to release strong feelings through appropriate and acceptable channels. Individuals need to experience emotional expression and emotional containment concurrently, in small doses, until they begin to recognize and trust the level at which they can tolerate the influx and discharge a feeling. In sum, drama therapy is an active and creative form of psychotherapy that engages a person strengths and potentialities, accesses and embraces the persons

buried woundedness, and enables the practice and rehearsal of new life stances (p.32).

The therapy was profoundly personal; there were a lot of moments, now looking back, that I was going through something. The drama therapist was containing a framework and that containment was necessary for safety. What I've learned through this self-dialogue and really immersing myself into the topic was that self-care is about love. From journeying inwards to the self I found, love connectedness. This connectedness breaks down to be about relationships. "The use of drama in and as therapy leads to a process that emphasizes relationship, and aspect of life that warrants -for all of us- the deepest possible level of examination and understanding" (Emunah, 1994, p. 33). The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I recorded when I first became aware of the connection between drama therapy and self-care:

...Audio, Journal: I think why Drama therapy can lend itself so beautifully to discovering self-care is because we really need to get out of our heads and get into the rest of our body because our mind isn't the only teller. Our body as a whole is and there are so many other parts that need to speak and Drama therapy gives this kind of space to let every part of the body speak and take up space and explore and learn and come to know. I think that this journey of understanding the meaning of the experience of self-care also comes back to how do we engage with the world and how do we engage with ourselves. I think we are often in relation with others a lot, on a daily basis, there is a verbal or visual or physical, spiritual, unconscious conversation happening with other people but I wonder what kind of conversations we're having with ourselves and so when we kind of pull this big magnifying glass back, it gets blurry, so let's just take it away.

Instead of zoning in, how can we look at this massive picture that's of us, that's of me, how can I look at this and begin to understand how I do that search. So how do I go about engaging with the world and engaging with myself, how do I do that? Am I a physical person? Do I physically have to get out there and explore, how do I do that with myself then? Am I a verbal person? Am I a visual person? Am I an intellectual person? Do I come with concepts and ideas? Do I need to feel? Do I need to know it in my body? Do I need to taste it in my mouth? These are all ways of engaging with knowing and this is crucial to the understanding of self-care. Because we need to be in conversation with the self and how can we do that if we don't even know how to be in conversation? And how do we then take in this connectedness? Dialogue and conversation, as I define it, is hearing and talking. So dialogue and conversation is being able to give out and being able to take in. And this is what we need to constantly be doing with ourselves, we need to allow ourselves to speak and then we need to take in information.

We need to allow ourselves to give out and we need to allow ourselves to give in. So until we really understand how we do that, how can we fully, wholly, as Brene Brown says Wholehearted living... how do we do that? How do we fully take that in? Because I believe that we can, I believe that's possible. It's just terrifying because if we've never been in a space like that with ourselves or the world before it's scary to think that we don't know how to do that. Just saying aloud, I don't know is a super vulnerable state, because there's no space for that anymore in the world. There's no space to go I don't know and mean that in a very genuine way. And that's the kind of space I've been sitting in for two years, this very confusing, blurry, don't know left from right or up from down. Just not knowing what is going on. And I think that that confusion is really nestled in fear and that fear comes from having to know and it not being acceptable if you don't know. So once we are able to sit in that, I think this whole idea of having a drama therapist is that we need someone there. The journey is definitely yours, and the journey that I went on was definitely mine. By no means was that journey about this other person. That other person and especially with a drama therapist, I was able to project every bloody thing from my past and just fill them up with all of the things that I needed to get out. And I didn't even know. I didn't know what was happening during the process because it was so unconscious but that's what needed to happen. I needed to project and play and create and not know. I needed to not understand what was happening, I needed to let go of that. I needed to say, No, nope, we're just whatever, we're just going to run around here and that running around actually lead me, to running around in my life.

The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I recorded when I first became aware of the intuition in each of us:

...Audio, journal: I think that there is a powerful voice inside of us that we silence quiet often and I really believe that is the space of intuition. Of knowing but not being able to explain and so much of our world and even with this research, I have to back up what it is that I feel and I get stuck because it's this space of felt-sense and that's why I think drama therapy is so powerful. It explores this felt-sense; it gets into our bodies it allows for rules to let go. No one is sitting across from you, asking you to say it perfectly. What we're doing is inviting you to get up and move and allow your body to tell the story because I believe trauma lives in the body and that although a slow process and yes it takes such a beautiful, kind and gentle therapeutic alliance it is in that space that we can give ourselves permission to really tell our story. And I think about these past two years with my clients and that I went in to every session, not knowing what the heck drama therapy looked like, not really knowing what exercise was going to be perfect. No I went in there with a solid foundation that I knew I could give the client the space they needed. I believe so profoundly in my soul that I could meet them. It is creating a space for people to show up, with no masks, no labels, and no judgment.

Being with a drama therapist in therapy was beyond the most powerful experience I had because it was actually a space for the first time that I was in conversation with myself. And that conversation wasn't in my head, it wasn't in my voice, it wasn't pre-planned, it was through embodiment and play and release and movement and sitting in the not knowing that so many painful realities that I had pushed deep inside of me, came. They came loud and clear and they came like a boulder down a cliff. And it actually knocked me out and caused an illness.

This is where I really believe that when we suppress, when we lose sight of ourselves. We are scrambling to keep up and create who we are supposed to be, that we actually fall further away from ourselves. Instead I think ultimately what we are trying to do is just be who we are. Just living in that space of who we are. And that for me is what self-care is. Therefore, how can we do self-care unless we know what the self is? I did not know what the self was at that time.

It was basically devastating to my body to come to these extremely vulnerable places and face the realities of things that I think had for so long suppressed and was so scared of, that I didn't know how to be in conversation with myself. In desperately trying to simplify and simplify and simplify and simplify this idea of self-care, I came to see that it's a lot bigger than one answer and I think that's where we are getting lost again in putting self-care into a category because it's not, it's about being our self. How can we do that? I think we have to do that first by reconnecting with who the self is. And I really believe that drama therapy has this space that we need that's unique because it's so flexible to each person, we need that flexibility as we are all different and individual and we cannot be cared for in the same way and this is where self-care needs to start.

Stage 5: Explication

Stage 5 required the researcher to fully examine what had awakened throughout this process and to ensure it is specific (Moustakas, 1990). It is about looking for a more complete vision of key ingredients that have been discovered. I discovered that being with the self is sacred. It is sitting in the humility that the 'I' is me, and it is one small but important piece to the journey and the 'I' must always be on the journey. 'I' becomes the self; the self is complex, made up of many facets and layers.

This only happened because I turned inward. Many moments throughout this research have been challenged by fear, by expectations, by perfection. When I finally gave up and turned inward I was able to come to myself, it was only then that I found the self in self-care. Opening the space for my heart and soul to speak, as the research requires, to lean into your intuition. This voice had to be

heard. This voice had been silenced throughout my daily life. It was in rare moments in therapy, in the play, in the creation, in the state of just being that this intuition had spoken. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I wrote when I first became aware of the need for relationships in self-care:

...Written, journal: I'm feeling down about the separation that occurs in life. I think that there's this, potentially, this beautiful connection we make with our mothers and our fathers and our caregivers when we're young and this connection can create the ability to care for ourselves. Through that relationship we learn to be in relationship with ourselves. The caring that we get from that relationship can be similar to the way we care for ourselves. And I wonder about this kind of separation that happens when we get to an age, it's like breast feeding, and realizing that the breast is not our own, there's this separation and pull that oh, breast and baby are separate. It feels that way, the pulling away from the relationship for me with the mother, it's kind of this need to be distanced yet knowing that that unconditional love is there, but needing to pull away and that there is this kind of growing into your own. There's this separation that can occur because there has been a space for the self to develop.

I also feel a new sort of comfort that comes with having a life partner. I feel this new evolution that, it's supposed to be this way, that we're supposed to be born and be loved and attach and then we leave that nest because we have all the tools to build our own nest and there's this distancing that you feel and it's necessary and it's kind of hard and it feels awkward and strange but it's necessary because there's this other unconditional love that's there and that's yours and you have to open up to that. That is actually a big learning of self-care because to me it seems a lot like connection, connection to ourselves and how we're connecting to others and things. How do we connect to movement? How do we connect to the body? How do we connect to our aches and our pains and our feelings of goodness?

How do we connect to things that have meant so much to us and things that we let go?

The things that we put on our body. Things we put in our space? How do we connect to the food and nutrition that we eat, that we fill our bodies with? How do we connect to all of these things that we are in relations with? How do we connect?

Lastly I have come to discover that from relationships I found childhood. The process had returned me to my purest, innocence of ourselves and our imagination. Stage 5 brought me to a rootedness that self-care has in connection. The word connection comes from the root word, connect

and this comes from the Latin words, con meaning together and nectere meaning bind so when we join them it creates the word connectere. Another word that came from my idea of connection was being in relation, especially this idea of being in relation with the self. The word relation comes from the Latin word referre meaning bring back. So there is this simplifying piece of discovery, to bind together and to bring back. Perhaps connection creates a space for us to go back to this place of coming together, together not only as a people but to our self. The following is the excerpt from one of the journal entries I wrote when I first became aware of the universal connections:

...Written, journal: Funny how the universe shows us signs if we are willing to take notice. The full moon is in Capricorn tonight. This all about letting go of what is not serving us anymore. I started today crying, and full of emotion. My vibrations must have known the shift that I was consciously so unaware of. These emotions made me dig deep and face vulnerable space in order to change. Maybe this is all really bigger than us. What if we reach out to be in relations with ourselves and speak to the deeper parts of ourselves?

Stage 6: Creative Synthesis

Stage six is a creative reflection of the process (Moustakas, 1990). During my search and investigation, I came across many inspiring moments, but one in particular hit my heart. It was a piece by poet Nayyirah Waheed (2013) and read:

be easy.
take your time.
you are coming
home.
to yourself
- the becoming | wing (p. 1).

In an article interviewing Waheed (2013), she refers to the writing of poetry, I think its one of the ways my soul communicates with me. I was lifted, this spoke to the essence of self-care for me. In a way my soul communicates with me. That is consciousness. This led me to the creative synthesis; I had to create a poem that could speak to my discoveries around the experience of self-care through the help of a drama therapist – that being in connection with the other and the self, it was me being with me:

there

you are
one beautifully
free
being
there you've been
you were
you are
unseen
unheard
unfelt
Tell me, how is it for me to see you?
wandering about
Free flowing

now
soul bursting spirit
breathing in the truth
spreading the comfort
holding true to your profound
essence
your space
sacred
My energy, it is connected
It runs
Towards you and
Back through me

I'm hesitant
its like you were lost
hm.
the beautiful being
the whole you

you were right
It was me,
who was lost
all the voices in my head couldn't find you

inward,
the signs were there
the visions I had
came
future becoming present
the I and me
being filled and still

all possibilities remain possible
all love coming from love
all connection filled with connecting
all relationships being of relations
all me of me
all I in I

- the self's care

My own exploration held me away from health, in the medical, biological perspective psychologically but towards a spiritual space inside of the subconscious parts of the being. Through the use of heuristic research exploration there was a continuous encouragement for personal discovery and deep connection to the topic that ultimately allowed for the truth seeking parts of the being to emerge.

I've been waiting for you
We've been waiting for you
Have faith in this moment
Stand and show who you are
- Idris Elba, Thabo & George the Poet

Chapter 5. Findings

At the beginning of this research I was focused on my question of the experience of exploring the meaning of self-care through the lens of drama therapy. Throughout the inquiry my focus had shifted to the impact self-care has on our overall well-being and that through reflection of my own process, it has shown self-care in a profoundly personal light. It is defined as a process, but it is not one to be generalized. My process of Moustakas' six-stage model led me to a transformational perspective. "If something is growing within the self that creates a story of self-transformation, then self-transformation is an expected outcome of this method" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 70). Beginning this process, I had been confused and uneasy about the current concepts shared about self-care. Throughout this inquiry I discovered through self-dialogue, internalized questioning and reflection on my process through drama therapy that self-care could be better explored if promoted as an individual process. After this exploration I have shifted to see the value in the current approaches to self-care. Everything must have a beginning, and to begin to explore self-care as a process of activities and exercises has logic and perhaps even success. I think in some cases going beyond the surface approach could be valuable. By surface approach I am referring to the lack of digging and investigation in troubling and suffering moments. To dig deeper is frightening but to learn it is necessary.

With that said, perhaps it is time to dispose of self-care as just activities and exercise. Instead focusing on a deep processing of digging and discovery into the self, love, connection, relationships and childhood. I now recognize through this research and self-exploration that when I was given a space of creativity I began to go back to forgotten spaces inside myself and learn about my internal compass. These spaces of love, connection, relationships and childhood were brought back into my awareness, to not only be commonly heard terms but important themes in my life. I began to wonder how did we first see someone interact with themselves? How did people interact with me? By forming a space of creative exploration and projection, as Drama Therapy does, there is a possibility to see and be with the self as a complex whole creation.

I am curious about the possibilities of drama therapy and self-care. I feel a strong pull towards the potential transformations that could come from this pairing. My own process provides insight into the internal transformations that could occur. Drama therapy provided the space to access creativity and begin the exploration to enter myself. Brene Brown shares on a podcast discussing creativity that "now I absolutely understand personally and professionally from the data, that there is no such things as non-creative people, there are just people who use their creativity and

people who don't and unused creativity is not benign" (Gilbert, 2016). This piece of research supports that individuals have an opportunity to invite these unused pieces of themselves to begin a new exploration within and I believe this is an important piece of the self-care puzzle.

Once we can enter into our creative spaces, externally and internally we can begin to know ourselves in a completely new or forgotten way. Brene Brown goes on to further explain her findings on creativity that "there is a lot of shame around creativity, people don't think of themselves as creative, they think creativity is self-indulgent, they don't think it is productive enough, they don't understand what it means, it was shut down in them as children for those folks, when I say unused creativity is not benign what I really mean is that it metastasizes into resentment, grief, heartbreak; people sit on that creativity or they deny it and it festers" (Gilbert, 2016). This outlook is similar to my insights around how I feel about self-care and drama therapy. For me, it was about the creativity. It was through the creativity, and playing that I was able to go beyond my consciousness to open spaces I had long forgotten. Spaces that were neglected, shamed, shut down, belittled and criticised.

I had to go through this process to understand the complexity of defining something that is so individualized. I believe that self-care is a phenomenon still but perhaps it isn't a movement. I believe it is an ancient way of being with the self and fulfilling a wholeness. The top words that appeared during my self-dialoguing process were love and connection, relationship and childhood, as shown in Appendix A. I found this powerful. These words individually may not mean much, but when they are viewed together they can create value in an individual's life, in their desires, needs and overall well-being. The value comes from the interconnectedness of these themes. Love led to connectedness, then to relationships, then to childhood. These themes were like a blossoming flower, the beauty of the outside only led to more exquisiteness on the inside. The layers together make a magnificent entity.

It became evident from reflecting on this heuristic research process that what I found was profoundly deeper than I could have expected. It was a personal spiritual journey with myself. To be given an opportunity to look inward in this fast pace, ever-evolving world, slowing down and being with the self was new and transformative. I have gained insight into the power of my craft, drama therapy, and the importance of the continued research and exposure this field deserves. This journey sent me down an important investigation of the self. Only knowing my own self, this is the smallest sample size possible to conduct and yet it is still important. I now know that a shift can occur with one person. Although at this time, I am sharing my findings, I believe in the process of the heuristic

research, and verify that I am continuously finding insights into this journey of self-care. I currently continue on this path of openness, and find great consolation in the potential of further exploration of self-care and drama therapy topics.

Contributions to Drama Therapy

“The discovery and communication of meaning in Dramatherapy is a key concept within my discussion of how Dramatherapy is effective for clients” (Jones, 1996, p. 13). An element of drama therapy that prominently appeared during my self-dialogue and through reflection of my own drama therapy was the concept of projection. Jones (2007) shares, dramatic projection allows for the inner form of emotional states to become connected with external forms. Projection is our outward expression of inner feelings. He continues to share that there are nine core processes occurring during drama therapy and one of these is projection (Jones, 2007). Projective identification was a reoccurring theme of my experience with self-care in drama therapy. Projective identification is when a person feels feelings that another person is not able to access themselves. The concepts that encompass drama therapy were not at the forefront of my curiosity when this research process began. It was only once the self-dialogue started about my experiences, as a drama therapy client was I able to recognize the essential role projection played during the sessions.

This heuristic research process allows for shifts and new concepts to present themselves throughout the investigation. The presentation of projection shared a deeper connection between drama therapy and exploring self-care. During my drama therapy sessions, I projected constantly throughout the process. Through this process, I was able to become conscious of my experiences and self-care. I began to see how love, connection, relationships and childhood entered being with the other and ultimately with or not with myself.

After studying Moustakas’ work, Sela-Smith (2002) concluded key components intrinsic to heuristic inquiry include the researchers reference to a passionate concern causing the reaching inward for tacit awareness, surrender to the question, there is self-search. The research has led to a transformation with my experience of being in conversation with self-care. It has led me to a new space to be with the self, inside of me. It has given me a renewed sense of advocacy in the realm of mental health and care. This research has acknowledged for me that the space of therapy and the space for self-care are one in the same. Drama therapy is a space of transformation and I believe self-care is also about the ever-evolving self. Moustakas (1990) explains that to “permit an inward life of the question to grow, in such a way that a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is realized” (p. 31).

The investigation of self-care has sat in the space of drama therapy seamlessly. I strongly envision the potential of much enlightenment with this pairing. Using the perspective of drama therapy, Emunah (1994) a drama therapist explains, transformation and freedom in that "a heightened self-awareness is a necessary foundation to authentic freedom and transformation" (p. 16). This transformation is possible in the space of drama therapy. I found in the therapy space the necessary safety to be vulnerable. It was through this vulnerability that this transformation occurred. Emunah (1994) expresses that:

the desire for growth emerges out of a sense of safety, just as healthy infants take risks when they sense the reassuring presence of their parents. We dared to move forward when there is a secure base from which to operate, and when retreat to this face is always possible. Without the secure base, the desire to grow is obstructed (p. 28).

Drama therapy brought me back to this playful exploratory space. My actions did not need to make sense and through that unlimited possibilities entered the therapy space. In the therapy space there was a consistent movement towards a loving presence, this desire showed me my need for connectedness. In this connectedness with others I also open a space of connection with myself. There is a sense of feeling seen. Harnden (2014) shares "I see you seeing me-therefore I am" (p. 132). It was in this drama therapy space, this creative space that I found myself racing all the way back to my childhood. It was here that I began to remember long forgotten experiences. I remembered how I was loved, connected and in relationship with the other. I also realized then, that I did not see the other be in relationship with themselves. How can we know what we do not know? How could I have ever expected myself to adapt seamlessly to caring for myself, if I had never watched the other do this? I am not confirming that a person's abilities are solely taught or that it must be learned. I am instead speculating that my lack of learning, seeing and knowing self-care could contribute to my fear, expectations and need to perfectly care for myself now.

Limitations

The beauty of this research has been its ability to marry the topics effortlessly. I have found that self-care has needed a process that encourages free-flowing thoughts and intuitive inner-guides. With this said, as with all research, there are limitations. Djuraskovic and Arthur (2010) share that an important component of the heuristic process is that it has little to no control or limits on the procedures. Furthermore, creative freedom is normally deemed a positive aspect of the process but it has the potential to cause undeveloped research. Therefore, many could criticize the legitimacy of

this process but I again state the importance for multiple research perspectives and the need to learn and approach understanding from many avenues. I trust that this method shared findings that can now be further explored and investigated through different research methodology lenses.

When you are taking on creativity
you are taking on soul work,
this is not about what we do
this is about who we are
-Brene Brown

Chapter 7. Future Research

Creativity has such profound impacts on our growth and development as human beings and I am grateful for the opportunity to use the capacities of creativity and its powers in the research realm. My hope for further research is that we continue to speak from a creative perspective to give a deeper breadth of the creativity that lives in each of us and the ways in which it can change the world. Most importantly this research has provided me with an expanded scope of the potential topics and space for curiosities of future studies. It is this new found hope that excites the possibility of self-care expanding into the research realm as further studies would greatly impact not only the world of psychology and health but the world of individualization.

Given that the definition of self-care doesn't seem to really fit one concrete definition, future studies could explore the societal impacts of stripping away individual care. I also believe that a continued search towards an individualized viewpoint of self-care and its impacts on individualized health could help to orchestrate policies and regulations in workplaces and therapy programs. I am curious about future studies investigating how or if self-care is taken on in an individualized way and what the success rates might be of someone changing their lifestyle. If someone were to define where they would like their life-style to be, how might drama therapy give a new space to explore the potential new perspectives of self-care?

This research has opened a curiosity around the powers that drama therapy can lend to the discovery of self-care. It feels as though there is a natural connection between drama therapy and self-care. There is a flow that the two share. This space of drama therapy and self-care could be further explored to better understand the potential impacts of using these discoveries, as they are both eternally changing. There is a freedom unlike anything other therapy space that I believe could be interesting if further explored with the topic of self-care. O'Neill and Lambert (1982) explore that drama involves "contact, communication and the negotiation of meaning" (p. 13). This correlates with the exploration of self-care. There is a need for flexibility to explore.

Grollman (2013):

discusses that self-care be acknowledged as a political act. Wherein we need to be push back against unhealthy working environments. Places where discrimination, harassment and undermined are not clearly concerned about the health and well-being of individuals, therefore it is the individuals that need to make the first move in demanding the priority of their healthy. And I fully believe that if we begin to acknowledge and create space for self-

care to be put into action, individuals will be better workers, happier better and live more fulfilling lives in all dimensions of their world (p. 1).

When I am afraid to speak is when I speak.
That is when it is most important.
- Nayyirah Waheed

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This heuristic research process was filled at times with overwhelming emotions and discomfort from my own realizations. A constant thought: how could I possibly put into words the feelings or connectedness and transformation I am having with the topic? Stern (1985) shares that: language can have an alienating effect on self-experience when what is experienced at the level of core and intersubjective relatedness is not able to be verbalized. The nonverbalized global experiences are then sent underground into a misnamed and poorly understood existence, and the verbal becomes accepted in awareness while what is experienced is out of awareness (p. 175).

It was terrifying to share these findings. Stern (1985) further shares that language can cause a lack of representation from the individual's experience where what is talked about is not what is experienced. This exploration required honesty from myself that I wasn't sure I was willing to present. I had to show up in this research process. It was like having to show up in exploring self-care.

It had become clear to me that perhaps the conversation around self-care isn't about a generalized definition and suggested activities and exercises. Maybe we have to challenge that notion and we need to begin to look at self-care as an individualized journey. Self-care is something that needs to be taken on by a single person, in their own unique way as their own discoveries are going to look different than anyone else's could. In this research I am left with a lot of curiosity around how drama therapy can give the needed space to start exploring self-care on an individual basis. As with many things in our lives, if we approach it in a generalized way, I am not sure how successful, healthy or happy we will be. How can we generalize self-care when we aren't looking at someone's childhood, traumas, relationships, environments, culture, etc.? I believe what I have discovered is that self-care is complex and I don't think one definition will be able to define this. Emunah (1994) shares:

In accordance with the humanistic psychology, the healthy parts of the person are always witnessed, highlighted, and developed in drama therapy. With all clients, including those who have been badly traumatized, a pilot light of health remains, and it is for this light, however dim, that the therapist reaches (p. 28)

Lastly, I will conclude this process with a statement that encompasses my desire to advocate for the individual courage to fight for your own discovery of what self-care is for you. As I read Dr. Shefali's (2016) quote it touched at the essence of why I believe drama therapy exploration in self-care is essential... "one of our greatest desires in life, is to be seen, to be understood, to be approved, the irony is this: the less we give this to ourselves, the less we will receive it from others" (p.1).

Thank you.

May this awaken your own journey of self-care.

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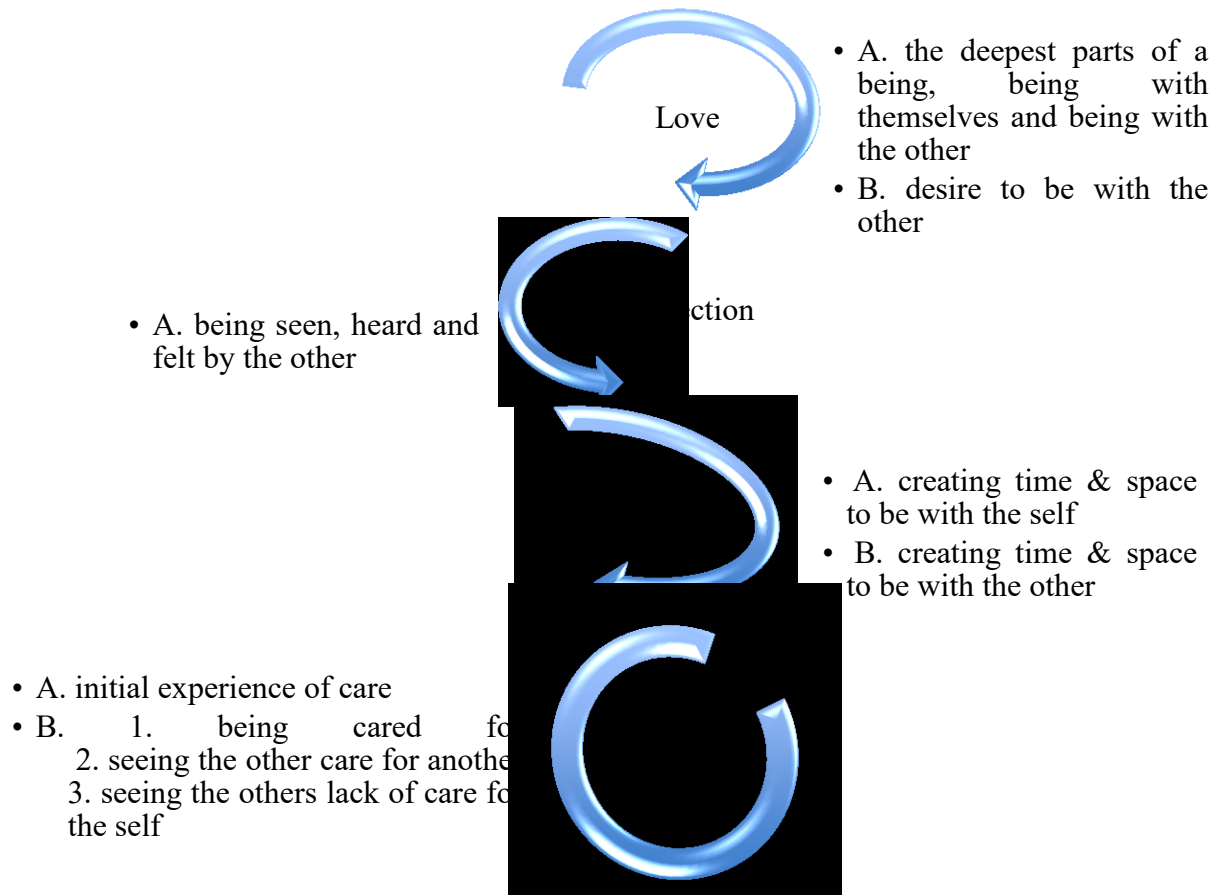
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APPENDIX A: Themes

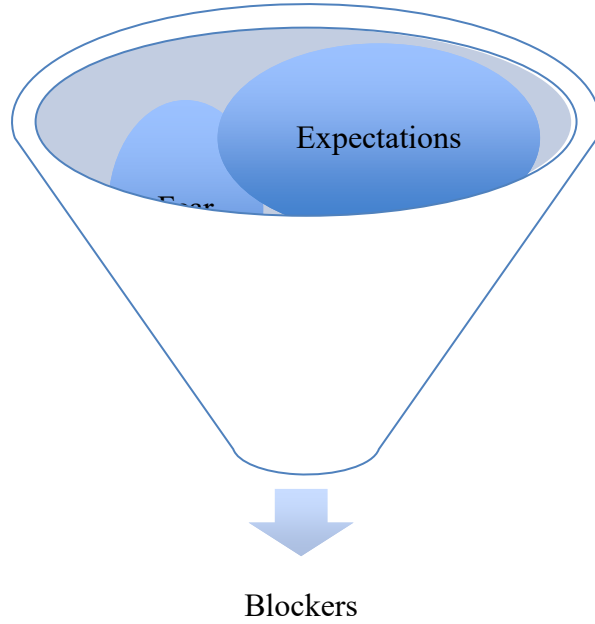
The birth of self-care:



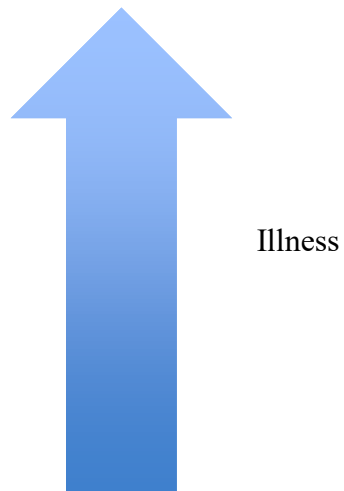
[This is a visual representation of the references made on pages 34 and 35.]

APPENDIX B: Themes

Blockers of self-care:



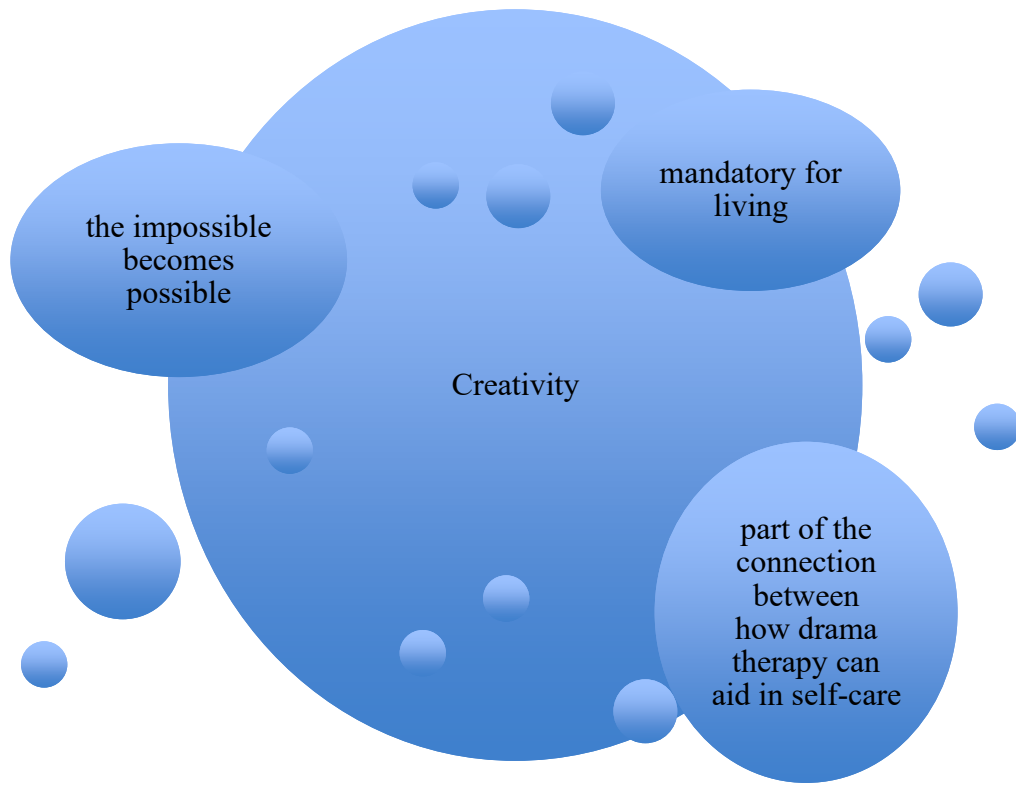
Lack of self-care caused:



[This is a visual representation of the references made on page 28]

APPENDIX C: Themes

Discovery of Creativity:



[This is a visual representation of the references made on pages 24, 34, 35]