



## **Sandtray-Worldplay™: A Psychotherapeutic and transformational Sandplay Technique for Individuals, Couples, Families and Groups<sup>1</sup>**

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*This paper introduces aspects of the practice of Sandtray-Worldplay and its relationship to the pioneering work of Margaret Lowenfeld and Dora Kalff. It was first published in the Sandtray Network Journal, Winter 2002 Vol.6. No.2 , an issue that discussed different ways of responding to Margaret Lowenfeld's Worldplay, Dora Kalff's Sandplay and Gisela De Domenico's Sandtray-Worldplay. Check the Sandtray Network Website [www.sandtray.org](http://www.sandtray.org) for this journal.*

Sandtray-Worldplay™ offers people direct access to their deepest consciousness so they may align themselves with the innate wisdom of their own Psyche, be present with each moment regardless of prevailing conditions, and create an integrated, authentic life for themselves, their family, their community, humanity, nature, and the planet earth.

Sandtray-Worldplay Journeys are offered in attractive but simple healing environments to people

<sup>1</sup> This is an expanded and updated version of an article first published in 1993 in the [California Therapist](#). It is a handout for new students of Sandtray-Worldplay and Dynamic Expressive Play Therapy.

of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and circumstances. We engage in sandplay, supported by meditative reflection, centering, natural rhythmic movement, music, drama, expressive arts, travel, and explorations of nature. We journey into the depths of our individual and communal being. We explore the *growing edge of our life stream*.

*A Sandtray-Worldplay and Dynamic Expressive Play Journey* inevitably takes us directly to our Soul, our Spirit, our Ancestors, our Self, our Family and our Community. It reveals the presence of our Selves, our Life, and our Universe as we embrace the play of our consciousness in the moment.

As we experience the integrity, wholeness and wisdom that result from such play, we become more rooted in ourselves and more interested in living in familial and global community with one another and the earth. We learn how to embrace and support others on their transformational healing journey. .

### **Introducing the Tool:**

To create Worlds in the sand you need at least two waterproof trays, approximately 20 in. by 24 in. and 4 in. deep (26x28x4), with a level bottom that is painted blue. Place each tray on a waist-high work surface.<sup>2</sup> Fill the trays halfway with either moist or dry sand. Make available additional water, sand and tools. Provide an extensive collection of small man-made or natural objects (see the following section) that may be stored on shelves, in baskets, or drawers. Let them be readily available to the builder. Add other inchoate art-and construction materials and building blocks to increase the scope of expression. Do not forget candles, incense, crystals, and fresh flowers.

### **Suggestions for Sand and Trays to hold it:**

1. General Size of the tray: 20" by 24" and 3 to 4" deep. Without using peripheral vision, the

<sup>2</sup> Usually one tray is used during each session. Sometimes two or three may be used. The most that have been used by one client in one session is 14 sandtrays. You may wish to keep several extra trays on hand: these may be used for 'mucky wet' work; different colors of sand; water trays or extra trays. One very deep tray is essential if you work with pre-school children or clients who have experienced trauma.

builder can see every part of the tray. Each portion of the tray should be readily accessible to the builder for manipulation. Trays may vary in size. We do not use very small trays because of the trauma factor: many clients will not be able to use a small tray session after session because Worlds can become too 'charged' when the play space is not large enough. It is preferable to use the regular sized trays that are nearly square. You may wish to add a circular tray, 26" to 28" in diameter, which increases the sense of wholeness, i.e. the at-one-ness of all that is. It is good to have larger sandtrays for trauma work, family and couple work, (approximately 34" x 36" x 4"). The author finds a 5 to 6 square feet sandtray most helpful when working with certain individuals who need a large space to integrate many different experiences, and when working with family- and group processes.

2. Source of trays: Aside from having them made by a carpenter and ordering them from mail order houses, like Oak Hill, you may use photo developing trays. Vision Quest Images, which offers durable, shallow and deep blue plastic trays that weigh about two pounds each. [www.vision-quest.us](http://www.vision-quest.us).
3. Source of sand: 0-30 or 0-60 mesh white or natural silica sand. In California, Prime Equipment is a good source: request lapis luster, garnet, green, glass bead sands. Salix Corporation in Salt Lake City Utah offers fine orange and white sands. Their black sand tends to be 0-30 mesh, which is too rough. Request 0-100 mesh black sand.
4. Have plenty of water. Reserve extra trays for flooding- and waterplay, for 'earth play', for 'just' play inside the container, and for filling and emptying.

### **Suggestions for outfitting the Sandtray Room<sup>3</sup>:**

#### *Basics Supplies:*

1. TWO or more trays: one wet and one dry; deep; shallow; square, round etc
2. A pitcher of WATER – sink is good!
3. TOWELS or a FINGERBOWL with WATER
4. A brush to clean off the images before returning them to the shelf
5. KLEENEX
6. A CAMERA: digital with printer or a 35mm camera is preferred
7. Notepaper for notes
8. A tarp/area rug/cloth for protecting the floor from sand when the play becomes vigorous; you may also install a linoleum or tile floor; a good broom and dustpan.
9. Your reference books: mythology, religious studies, symbol books, folktales etc.

#### *Basic categories of miniature objects:*

1. Multicultural People and Humanoid Life forms: grouped together as females, males, couples, children, and social groups. Show a full range of activities, behaviors, professions, sizes, emotions, attitudes, races, cultures etc.
2. Animal and animal communities: show individual variation in color and size.
3. Plant life, reflecting the lifecycle from seed to barren branches to broken branches.
4. Natural objects of all sorts: rocks both ordinary and precious; polished and natural woods; seashells; feathers; bones; eggshells; tumble glass; dried flowers; lichen; bromeliads; etc.
5. Glass beads and marbles.
6. Environments belonging to different cultures and historical epochs: furniture, houses, monuments, hospitals, schools, fire-and police departments; churches etc.

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<sup>3</sup> See Dr De Domenico's Sandtray-Worldplay Manual and Experiential Module for further details about setting up a sandplay space. [www.Vision-Quest.us](http://www.Vision-Quest.us).

7. Transportation and communication of all kind.
8. Pre-historic and fantasy creatures of all different sizes and color.
9. Miscellaneous art material.
10. Modern and ancient miniature art sculptures; 20th century heroes and heroines and villains, cartoon figures.
11. Sand and Water tools.
12. Planetary, earth and space symbols.
13. Food, garden, kitchen items.
14. Topographical and geological symbols: caves, tunnels, arches etc.
15. Reflective surfaces and illuminating objects: mirrors, lights, candles, and torches.
16. Treasures of all kinds, including treasure boxes.
17. Magical figures: magician, sorceress, ghosts, elementals, nymphs, Gods and Goddesses, including satanic objects and personalities, etc.
18. Death objects, birth objects, tombs, wombs, incubators; war and weapons; blood; (food-dye or red play dough).
19. Fabric of different colors and textures; different colors string.
20. Religious and spiritual beings from different cultures and epochs.
21. Plastic, pewter, wooden, golden and colorful objects.
22. Fences, blocks, stones, street signs etc.
23. Broken and fragmented objects.
24. TackiWax or Stick'em for attaching objects together during play.

Please note the categories that are missing in your sand tray room. You are not creating a 'collection of fine art'; instead you are collecting a reference library of human experiences - experiences in all planes and dimensions- experiences for young and old souls.

When you begin your collection: Get a few things in EACH category first, so your collection is diverse and complex. For pewter, gold, black, white, ethnic diversity: spray or paint ordinary objects. Later you may be able to afford these more expensive items. To add ancient images to your collection: make them out of clay/plasticine by copying the designs from art and archeological books. Michael's crafts stores have wonderful molds for human faces, hands etc.

For couple, family and group sandplay provide a rich and extensive collection of images that truly reflect the diverse experiences that arise for humans in all dimensional realities.



*Procedure for Sandtray-Worldplay therapists getting to know their images:*

When adding new objects to your collection, experience them first. What experiences arise when you spend time with them? What experiences or stories do they bring to you on different days and at different times? What do they mean to you? How does your psyche use them in sandtray play? After you have used them, look them up in a symbol or a mythology dictionary. Then, notice how your clients use them: keep a log of the type of experiences they evoke in different Worlds. You will notice that there are no short cuts to experiencing.



*Therapists and Facilitators experience their own personal sandplay (Sandtray-Worldplay) process:*

Explore your personal and professional growing edge  
 Expand your capacity to be mindfully conscious  
 Experience playful spontaneity in the moment

Sandplay evokes very deep realities. It cuts across many familial and cultural taboos as it activates the deep, primordial integrative forces of the psyche.

Whether a trained expressive, arts or play therapist or whether an accomplished verbal, behavioral, or cognitive clinician, each sandplay facilitator needs to use the sandtray for his/her own personal growth and development before integrating the tool into the play- and consultation room. Personal experience in individual journey sessions, couple sessions, family sessions, group sessions and experiential training groups is essential. Each practitioner needs the experience of using the medium by him/herself in their own playroom for at least twenty sessions – otherwise he/she has little indication that he/she is able to trust the psyche of the client-at-play.



### **Brief Overviews of the Sandplay Methods of Dr Lowenfeld, Frau Kalff and Dr De Domenico:**

**Margaret Lowenfeld M.D.** was the first to bring sandplay/sandtray-play into psychotherapy. She developed World Play, also known as the Lowenfeld World Technique, in the 1920's in London. In a tray of either wet or dry sand her clients arranged sand and/or miniatures to create a static or a moving World in the sand. At first miniatures were mostly displayed in drawers, emphasizing the importance of tactile exploration. Later some were placed on shelves. Worldplay was only one of many tools that supported the psychotherapeutic process: her methods included music play, gymnastics, art, all different indoor play modalities, Lowenfeld Mosaic, Poleidoblocs, the newspaper game, outdoor play and mess play.

An independent, creative thinker Lowenfeld founded her own Institute for Child Psychology. She was profoundly interested in the multidimensional aspects of human communication as they pertain to the psychophysical life of children and adults. She honored the healing value of both the verbal and the non-verbal components of

language and developed many creative verbal and non-verbal play techniques for communicating with children about their inner and outer experiences of being-in-the-world. Lowenfeld believed that conventional language is limited in its capacity to express the uniquely individual cognitive processes (protosystem) that inform our fundamental belief system (clusters). Clusters regulate the manner in which we interpret our condition, the manner in which we act in life, and the way we react to life.<sup>4</sup>

Lowenfeld's psycho-philosophy was influenced by the British Philosopher Collinwood. Both described the protosystem on one hand as driven by the 'epistemological drive', the drive to create meaning (to integrate experiences into units of meaning). These units of meaning become the basis of a Weltanschauung (worldview). On the other hand, the protosystem is driven by the 'homeostatic drive', the drive to resist any changes in meaning. The resistance to changing-meaning becomes the basis of a fundamental conservatism and the apparently innate resistance to change units of meaning once they have been constellated. Units of Meaning are gathered into 'clusters', i.e. into aggregates that contain bits and pieces of different experiences that are experienced as belonging together. Lowenfeld observed that these clustered units of meaning become readily visible in sandtray play.

Play is a symbolic, universal language known to the child. Its letters consists of objects or material things. Its vocabulary consists of acting upon these objects or material things intrapsychically or physically. Its grammar consists of the unique combination and sequencing of the objects in physical and/or

<sup>4</sup> Although Lowenfeld believed consensual language cannot describe clusters as such, the work of Dr De Domenico suggests that this is not the case.(see Maila Davenport's article in this STNW 2002 issue: Section, Other as Primitive vs. Other as Contemporary.) Once clusters manifest in the sandtray, are observed and fully experienced within the context of the World, it becomes possible to use ordinary language in a dynamic and unusual way: it becomes a living language, infused with the complex 'living and dynamic elements' of the clustered experiences. What escaped expression before the Sandtray-Worldplay session, now readily lends itself to verbal expression. A living language is born. This language is capable of describing the 'original clusters' and the newly revised clusters. Sandtray-Worldplay with its experiencing and sharing rituals directly activates and supports the strivings of the epistemological drive.

intrapsychic space over a period of time. The form of play tends to be ritualized.

Play language is not time-bound. It is neither static nor fixed. It is an active, ever-transforming language that so often bears no resemblance to consensual language. However, at all times it relates directly to the reality of the playing child's experience of self, his/her internal and external body experience, his/her family and social environment. This play language is created by the efforts of what Lowenfeld called the epistemological drive, the innate drive to order all human experience into meaningful patterns of understanding. Thus, play is the child's natural, given propensity and need to explain him-/herself to him-/herself. Play is a reflective, personal dialogue. When watching children play together, it soon becomes obvious to a nonintrusive observer that social play is a method of interpersonal communication that remains prominent in the life of humans long after early childhood has been left behind. Because children have not mastered verbal language, it is the "verbal" vocabulary, that is, the signs of conventional language, that is frequently inaccessible to the child who desires to communicate.

De Domenico, 1986, Chapter I.

Lowenfeld discovered this multidimensional tool (that transcends time, space and linear logic) to be ideally suited for the type of psychological thinking and meaning-making that occurs in the psychic life of children. It cuts across both conscious and 'unconscious' regions of the psyche. Dr. Lowenfeld saw that humans think in experientially vivid images, not words or archetypes and that the sandtray allowed this primordial experiential thinking process to become visible: her children were offered a tool with which they, themselves, could make sense of their experiences. In fact, when they experimented and played with their realities, they were thinking. Lowenfeld lauded such activity as an important prerequisite for healthy growth and development.

.... Lowenfeld recognized two sets of mental (thought) processes: (1) a primary, preverbal, or protosystematic mode of cognition that corresponds to Piaget's elementary symbolic mental processes and to those psychological processes that the psychoanalysts call unconscious fantasies or primary process; and (b) the secondary, conventional, reasonable, conscious, and

logical mode of cognition that uses language rather than multidimensional images and experiences as their constructs. Lowenfeld considered the World technique valuable because the World can and does give representations of both the primary system of cognition and ordering of experience and the secondary system of cognition.

De Domenico, 1986, Chapter I.

Lowenfeld refused the transference model of therapy: The primary attribute of the therapist was that he/she was a trustworthy, child friendly adult who was genuinely interested in providing the child with the means to express and to understand him-/herself. Thus, in sandplay she helped children enter and explore their Worlds. She felt that the World, not the interpretive therapist, needed to confront its maker. In fact, when she asked children to introduce their Worlds and their characters to her, she validated their capacity to create, to experience, and to revise their own meanings. Whenever she honored the child as the keeper of the story-of-meaning, she learned to speak the language of the child rather than expecting the child to speak the language of the therapist. Lowenfeld shifted away from a priori classical interpretations when she conducted discussions with the child about the happenings in the child's World from the various points of view that were actually depicted in the World and had been described by the builder. She did, however use interpretive paradigms mixed with descriptions of the actual happenings in the World as described by the child when she wrote clinical notes, texts, and lectures for her students.

After the World was created, Lowenfeld spent considerable effort to engage the help of the builder in decoding the language of the World. She strove to assess what the objects used meant to the child. Rather than primarily relying on consensual symbolism, archetypal symbolism, consensual signs for the names of objects, or a specific theory concerning the interpretation of children's fantasies, she insisted on substituting the "qualities and concepts" that the child gives to the forms/images used in the making of the World. For example, she would ask the child what a horse meant to him/her. She knew well that the horse might represent a creature that moved swiftly, that was strong or free, that Daddy rode, or that was dark and frightening, and so forth. She recognized that the primary mode of cognition fuses certain aspects of the

external object with aspects of previously experienced intrapsychic or external objects, and physiological, and/or emotional states. With the aid of verbal exploration, she would “get a picture of affect, concept, memory, and experience woven into a total state”. She encouraged the infusion of personal, dynamic, living, psychological energy into the (sandtray) scene.

De Domenico, 1986, Chapter II.

Particularly useful was Lowenfeld’s concept of “E”, the neutral energy and life force that informs the way we live our conventional life. Psychological defenses, mental complexes and a priori belief systems tend to siphon off or even block the flow of “E” into the here-and-now, reducing an individual’s capacity to be present with-what-is. Blocked “E” builds up charge. It also ‘compacts’ the life force, making the individual clumsy, heavy, primitive and inflexible. Highly charged “E” is quite difficult to manage and to express in a ‘coherent’ manner. Thus, when it finds avenues of expression, it tends to explode and give rise to primitive and incoherent Worlds that show little relationship between objects and activities. With repeated play opportunities, the energy becomes more focused.<sup>5</sup> Worlds that depict coherence, interdependence, and relationships make their appearance. Lowenfeld actually described energy moving in the form of the Mandala as a most coherent and stable design.<sup>6</sup> She felt that circular movement required more nerve and muscle coordination, a sign of increased organization, co-ordination, and balance. (Lowenfeld, 1979, p.90).

Lowenfeld discovered that play with the sand, water and images released many different types of Energy obstructions. Such play allowed children the vital practice of directing and regulating the physical and symbolic expression of their life force. After using sandplay, children demonstrated increased

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<sup>5</sup> Dr De Domenico’s research corroborated Lowenfeld’s findings. De Domenico found that the management and co-ordination of ‘E’, along with the capacity to experience every phenomena fully, to create units of meaning, and to acquire the language of ones family (people) is one of the primary developmental tasks of early childhood, particularly pre-school age.

<sup>6</sup> The Mandala, the container and expression of the Self is one of the central themes of Jung’s Metapsychology and plays a prominent function in Dora Kalff’s method of sandplay.

capacity to adapt to changing circumstances, to connect with others, and to move more coherently in their physical body. Lowenfeld, however, did not solely rely on sandtray to work with Energy. She found that the children’s capacity to modulate and direct “E” significantly increased when sandplay was combined with physical activities, gymnastics, physiotherapy and other play modalities.

Although Lowenfeld resisted interpreting Worlds, she did develop a system of classifying them.<sup>7</sup>

- Realistic and Representational Worlds<sup>8</sup>
  - completely representational World: a realistic reproduction of an already known scene or event; the focus is on details and objectivity.
  - incompletely representational World: a World where some elements are not as real as others.
- Real objects used in an unreal way (idiosyncratically): the builder has no clear idea about what he/she is creating in the sandtray, even though he/she knows when the World is finished.
- Demonstration of a fantasy: a fantasy governs as the organizing principle of the World
- Mixed Worlds: a combination of the first three types of Worlds which may be subdivided into different compartment<sup>9</sup> or the random placement of images without any perceived relationship to one another.
- Primary depiction of psychophysiological Energy, “E”.

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<sup>7</sup> See De Domenico, (1999). The Legacy of Margaret Lowenfeld: The Lowenfeld World Technique and Lowenfeld Sandplay. Sandtray Network Journal. Vol. 3. No. 4.

<sup>8</sup> De Domenico found that all representational Worlds also contain representations from other dimensions: they may look conventional, but in fact are not necessarily ‘only’ conventional or ordinary Worlds.

<sup>9</sup> Lowenfeld felt that such Worlds were made by intellectually and emotionally confused children.

- going alongness: energetic patterns or image elements that moved in like ways
  - moving Worlds
  - implied movement in Worlds
  - static Worlds
- Coherent or incoherent Worlds: with reference to thematic and spatial organization<sup>10</sup>
  - Dramatic (Story) Worlds
    - with a unitary theme and continuous narration over time
    - with combined themes and various incidents narrated and acted out during one session
  - Variations in the structure of time in the World<sup>11</sup>
    - past or historical time
    - present time
    - pre-historic time
    - future time

In the 1980's John Hood-Williams taught Lowenfeld's theory and methods in the United States.<sup>12</sup> He infused them with his own Gestalt, Jungian and Kleinian perspective. Lowenfeld's original play therapy invention became known as Worldplay, the Lowenfeld World Technique, sandtray play, sandplay, sandworldplay or Sandtray-Worldplay depending on the theoretical, clinical and methodological approach of the therapist who made use of it.

**Dora Kalff**, a Swiss Jungian analyst, further developed the tradition when she, after studies with Lowenfeld, adopted Worldplay for her analytic,

<sup>10</sup> De Domenico found that most apparently incoherent Worlds are coherent when the World is experienced in the order in which it was created. See Level Three Practicum Training Manual.

<sup>11</sup> De Domenico found that all Worlds contain all the different aspects of time, including infinite time.

<sup>12</sup> De Domenico studied with J. Hood-Williams: he became her doctoral advisor and they team taught a number of workshops – opportunity arose to share her methods that resulted from her research and his methods that resulted from many years of clinical practice and the teachings of Lowenfeld.

transference therapy with children and adults.<sup>13</sup> Dora Kalff traveled widely introducing this wonderful tool and her method to therapists around the world. She used sandplay in the service of the individuation process as described by C. G. Jung and called her work sandplay therapy.<sup>14</sup>

She found that the verbal and nonverbal workings of the Jungian analysis were accelerated when adult clients in analysis used images and sand in a limiting container. Kalff appreciated how the sandtray play taps into the autonomous, (and unconscious to the Ego) healing force of the psyche, (the Self). Moreover, it promotes a regression to the preverbal matrices of consciousness. There, the wounds of inadequate mothering that resulted in the birth of a crippled and fragile ego may be healed.

Kalff posited that sandplay recapitulates the birthing and the evolution of the Self and the Ego. It activates the Self and the psychospiritual processes associated with the Self, as the Self is the gateway to the Numinous, the Spirit. Spirit is nourishment for the Soul, giving it strength, resilience, and wisdom. It heals the hungry emptiness of the Ego. Spirit also encourages the natural evolution of the Ego from its aggressive and destructive tendencies to its loving and creative tendencies.

Kalff believed Bowlby's observation that early Mother-Infant bonding creates a solid foundation for the developing personality. She, like Bowlby and others, saw the symbiotic experience of Mother-Child Unity as the prototypal experience of physical and emotional security: Mother is the Intelligence that mediates on behalf of the Child who is at-one-with-the-Mother when born. Over time the Child's Self separates out of the Mother, centers securely in the Child and becomes the Child's own Unconscious<sup>15</sup>. Then, the Child's Self continues to

<sup>13</sup> See letter and references from ISST members Kaye Bradway and Kate Amatruda in the Winter 2002 ST Network Journal issue.

<sup>14</sup> See Davenport, (2001) for a comparison between Kalff's Sandplay and De Domenico's Sandtray-Worldplay.

<sup>15</sup> De Domenico posits that although the Mother mediates for the Child, it is the Mother's Self that aligns itself with the Child's Self during the symbiotic Union: both Mother and Child have their Own Center and their Own Self from the moment of conception. The Mother participates in the awakening of the Egoic Personality. If Mother recognizes and supports the Self's expression in her child, a healthy

unfold, exerting its influence and connecting to the Child's Mind, to the Child's Body and to the Child's Spirit. A healthy Ego is said to emerge from this core Self. This implies that a healthy Ego has experienced the primordial Mother-Child unity, the at-oneness of all creation. In fact, because the Ego had been anchored in the Universal Collective, it gains empowerment to adapt to the human collective: the developing personality learns to use his/her life force in a healthy manner that takes self and others into account.

Kalff posited that the sandplay process actually repeats this normal developmental process. The therapist-client relationship mirrors the Mother-Child relationship. The awakened Therapist Self<sup>16</sup> embodies the presence of the Mother's Self that holds within Herself the Child-who-is-at-one with Her. The manifestation of the Client Self in the sandplay is witnessed by the therapist; it mirrors the Client's Self separating from the therapist's Self. As the dualistic Ego emerges in the sandtray, the therapist continues to be the benign presence (Self) that holds the client-at-play without judgment.<sup>17</sup>

What happens in the sandtray mirrors the internal constellation and evolution of the Client's Self and Ego interfacing with the therapist. This Client-Therapist mystery is the means of re-establishing and/or re-enforcing the client's own psychospiritual Ego-Self axis.<sup>18</sup>

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ego will be constellated. Both Mother's Self and the Child's Self contain all of creation, all experiences and all imaginable states of consciousness. The Self is seen as Universal Consciousness, or the Primordial Wisdom. This difference in viewpoints informs the difference in the way a Sandtray-Worldplay practitioner and a Kalffian Sandplay practitioner constellate the client-therapist relationship.

<sup>16</sup> The therapist has undergone a personal sandplay process and supervision.

<sup>17</sup> Sometimes there is a tendency by Kalff to control and regulate the emergent Shadow in the play room, in order to 'protect' the client, much like the Mother stops the Child in order to protect it from harm. De Domenico has found that it is more important to trust the client's Self here and to allow the play to continue either in the sandtray, if that is the suitable medium to express intense shadowy experiential states, or in any other suitable medium and environment. This is what is meant by 'trusting the Psyche and the Self of the Other'.

Kalff considered certain types of sandplay scenes as particularly significant stages of the therapeutic repair process:

- The manifestation of the Self is depicted using numinous symbols of wholeness that carry the aura of inner harmony, particularly the circle or spiral. At its core we have the numinous oneness of all: there is no charge, no judgment – all is. We witness 'pure being'. There is an implied place for all of creation. Loving acceptance of all-that-is radiates.
- The developing Ego emerges as vegetative-animal scenes that replay the story of the evolution of the earth beings. Power struggles and warring aggressions allow for mastering the stress of living in duality, of having to kill in order to live, and of being torn apart by the rivaling influences of the opposites. The square holds the conflict of light and shadow. The center inside the square or the square inside the circle is the Self holding the experience of being human, of being Spirit in an Ensouled Body.
- The Core Self reveals itself in the multiplicity that is one. Everyone is essential. There is room for the many manifestations of the divine. The sandplay scene is filled with 'inter-being' and unity. Conflict and duality lessen and even dissolve.
- The Ego adapts to the collective. Here we have scenes of human, animal or global community. The natural interdependence of its members is depicted. Individuals have their roles and experience themselves as part of the whole.

Dora Kalff recommended that sandplay be used only with individuals and only in the presence of a witness, trained in archetypal psychology, Kalffian

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<sup>18</sup> This schema shows Kalff's integration of the direct influences of Lowenfeld, Jung, Neumann, and Tibetan Buddhism.



methods and who had completed his/her own personal "sandplay process". Playing alone was not acceptable.

In her playroom, Kalff displayed her collection of sandplay images openly on shelves. She saw the images as symbols that were palpable manifestations of archetypal realities. The tray became the container that managed and held psychic content in a visible space. The size of the tray regulated the 'amount' of content that could be manifest at any given time. The sand was the agent that could ground and awaken the sensation function: it could be shaped when combined with water and afforded clients an immediate experience of the primordial elements of earth and water.

Unlike Lowenfeld, Kalff actively used and supported the client's transference to the therapist. The therapist-Client relationship mediated the play process. For her, the therapist was the guardian of the client's ego: he/she regulated and supported the great healing powers of "the unconscious" i.e. unspeakable, powerful manifestations of the psyche. By virtue of professional experience and training, the therapist not only provided the 'free and protected place' but actually became the empowered guardian of the client's process. Nonverbal processes became highly emphasized when Kalff recommended that any theoretical interpretations, experiential discussions of meaning and reviewing of sandscapes with the client be deferred until the transformational healing process had occurred, at times years after the conclusion of the sandplay journey. In rare instances would Kalff link the client's sandplay to the client's life situation.

While the client played, Kalff gave meaning to the World using her own understanding of archetypal psychology and Neumann's archetypal developmental psychology model. She was the 'silent collaborator', the silent, but knowing one who interpreted the play according to her experience. Thus, she was the Great Mother, who knew. This silently knowing witness stance is often used in Buddhist and other mystical teaching traditions: it exerts a healing influence over the student or the devotee who has come to be healed. It is like draping the client with a cozy security blanket.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Dr De Domenico has found that this healing stance can be easily maintained while maintaining curiosity in the client's actual experience of the World and while

Generally, Dora Kalff held the intention to keep her own stories about the meaning of each sandplay in silence until the 'review session'.

However, she frequently shared the archetypal story/myth that she had projected onto a particular image in the tray with the client.<sup>20</sup>

Kalff always freely shared her own inspirational stories about her clients' sandplays with students and with general training audiences. Such stories, their underlying, archetypal theories, symbol studies and individual sandplay sessions for trainees, became the central focus of her sandplay training program. When attending the ISST sandplay conferences, the audience is receives a plethora of wonderful stories and tales that the symbologist can derive from the images, colors, elements, and shapes that are in the client's world-in-sand.

When using Dora Kalff's method of sandplay, the World-in-Sand remains more elusive to the builder, who even when deeply and silently moved by the making of the World is asked to carry the aura of mystery while the therapist knowingly holds his/her own interpretative story of the archetypal nature of the clients' sandplay experiences. It is the therapist who is the primary meaning-maker in the play room. In this way, the Kalffian client learns how to holds the mysterious edge between the known and the unknown: he/she is invited to settle into being in the Silence and to enter the cauldron of transformation that signifies entry into the uncanny Underworld. It is, in fact, the Underworld part of the Journey that is of special interest to the sandplay therapist: there the client meets the epic and often primordial challenges of the Underworld without the complications of experiencing and speaking them until he/she re-emerges into ordinary day time.<sup>21</sup>

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encouraging the client to tune into his/her own inner Knowing (Self). The practices of ST-WP are designed to help the client find means to **experience** the root of their being and their capacity to receive and work with all of Life's experiences, dark or light, destructive or constructive, joyous or painful.

<sup>20</sup> This was the author's experience when working with Dora Kalff in private session. Kalff breached her own rule of silence. For a deeper account, see (1994) De Domenico, G. *Jungian Play Therapy Techniques: a chapter in Kevin O'Connor's and Charles Schaefer's Handbook of Play Therapy, Vol. II. in the Wiley Series on Personality Processes.*

<sup>21</sup> Dr De Domenico found that it is not necessary to protect clients from the Underworld or to 'force' silence

**Dr Gisela Schubach De Domenico** developed Sandtray-Worldplay, a method that focuses on developing human consciousness from her independently conducted phenomenological research. This research with normal child and adult populations provided the fundamental basis for most of her psychotherapeutic and maturational work with children, adults, couples, families, transformational and experiential training groups. She extensively studied the work of Margaret Lowenfeld and worked with Dora Kalff and attended many ISST trainings. Her phenomenological investigations and her own experience with sandplay concurred with some, but not all of the findings and practices of Lowenfeld and Kalff.

For instance, she found that Sandtray-Worldplay is also an ideal tool in the business and educational settings: it augments respect, creativity, curiosity, independent thinking, capacity to analyze and to think through experiences. It is often unsurpassed for remediation and advanced learning. The tool brings deep satisfaction to teachers, students and business associates as it helps create a healthy balance between individualism and socialization, individual exploration and learning from others.

Most importantly, Sandtray-Worldplay methods facilitate the sense and knowledge of Self and Other to emerge. It is a most delightful tool for exploring different states of consciousness and different ways of sharing self-with-others.

Dr De Domenico found that Sandworldplay tends to harmonize the vital relationship between the psyche, soma, soul, nature and spirit<sup>22</sup>. Biographical, interpersonal, transcultural and transpersonal states/realities are accessed with equal facility. In a time when many children and adults are alienated from their innate psycho-spiritual and multicultural

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during the sandplay session. Each World contains emanations from all the different Realms of Reality. It is healing when they fill the play room completely and are verbally acknowledged. Each World contains characters imbued with different types of consciousness and different degrees of clarity. The Mystery and the Underworld always make their appearance, as the known transforms into the unknown and the mystery transforms into known. This Dance of Consciousness happens in every session and readily can become an object of client-facilitator investigation.

<sup>22</sup> Both, Lowenfeld and Kalff had the same experience.

capacities, Sandworldplay can become a vital transformational tool with which the player can freely explore the transpersonal, ancestral, interpersonal and personal realms of reality. The player can experience both the legacy and the responsibility of freely creating and freely responding to the reality of each present moment.

The methods of Sandtray-Worldplay actively support both client and therapist as they access the deepest layers of consciousness, increase their awareness of being human, actively heal old wounds through conscious and creative re-experiencing, and learn how to language experiences previously considered to be unconscious, nonexistent and inaccessible by family and society.<sup>23</sup> This method allows facilitator(s) and builder(s) to be in the numinous silence, to enter into the mystery, and to find the living language of knowing after the symbols have come to life in the sand through the efforts of the builder. Both silence and verbalization are essential: <sup>24</sup> wisdom and compassionate understanding let us know which to apply at a given moment in time.

Often playtime can be very joyous, active, loud and dynamic – words flow, stories emerge, dramas unfold – the play goes beyond the trays or the player’s body participates with dance and posturings. Sometimes the play moves to the outdoors – to be witnessed directly by Earth and Sky. There are so many possibilities. It is important to be open and available.

We know that play in the sandtray awakens the ‘different bodies of human consciousness’ and supports each player in not only accessing but also directly experiencing many different Experiential Realms. Although they all interpenetrate and interconnect, they are so often viewed as distinctly different Realities.

Different families and different cultures support different types of human sentience and different realms of reality. Sandtrayplay readily taps these

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<sup>23</sup>This process requires time, focus, curiosity, capacity to project and to use the different bodies of consciousness to experience. ST-WP Sessions may be 2-6 hrs long. The average length is about 1 ½ hours.

<sup>24</sup> See De Domenico, (1997) *Sandtray – Worldplay and Language*. *Sandtray Network News*. Vol. 1. No. 4.

different capacities and allows for visible and tactile explorations of more subtle perspectives.

During each session the Sandtray-Worldplay therapist's notices, validates and supports the builder's expanding consciousness. Using phenomenological and experiential skills, each builder is encouraged to explore and settle into the new and 'less practiced' realities.<sup>25</sup> The ego's capacities for sentience and perspective increase with each play.

Generally the dimensions of reality that are experienced during World-building are:

- 1) Uniquely individual/idiosyncratic realm
- 2) Familial and social/conventional realm
- 3) Ancestral realm
- 4) Archetypal human realm
- 5) Transpersonal/elemental soul (Nature) realm
- 6) Universal/energetic (Spirit) realm

We can experience these aspects of Reality with seven vehicles/bodies of consciousness/awareness. De Domenico believes that these comprise the sentience of our "Inner Knowing" or the "Core Self":

- 1) Physical consciousness
- 2) Emotional consciousness
- 3) Cognitive consciousness (idiosyncratic, communal "conventional" meaning-making processes and belief systems)
- 4) Temporal consciousness extending through all time (memory, intuition and awareness of the Now)
- 5) Voice consciousness (enlivening through sounding and storytelling)
- 6) Soul body consciousness (elemental and animistic consciousness such as mineral, plant, animal consciousness)
- 7) Spirit body consciousness (energy, light, mystical and universal consciousness)

Some of these experiential states can be verbally expressed. Some cannot. The skilled therapist/facilitator knows how to deepen the

<sup>25</sup> For some this may be familial or psychosocial realities, for others it may be the ancestral, archetypal, Soul-Nature or Spirit Realities.

builder's experiential awareness. Through co-experiencing, curiosity and asking to be taught how to experience the different dimensional realities that are activated during the worldplayprocess, the therapist encourages clients to trust their experience. By willingly entering into all experiences with the client, the facilitator normalizes all experiences that arise in the sandtray: they are part of Life – they can be met and they can be played with. Clients gain practice in using their innate capacities. Increased competence in being conscious and increased awareness of the magnitude and the subtlety of reality allows clients to deploy more of their consciousness to explore and direct their lives.

This approach of creative exploration and experimentation allows children of all ages access to the possibility of becoming a creative, responsible, fulfilled and kind human being. It is transformative and healing. It may be readily applied in many different ways and in many different settings.

De Domenico teaches the methods of Sandtray-Worldplay, in a six level introductory program. All courses are experiential in nature, as the mind needs to bear witness to what the body, soul, heart and spirit experience.

#### **Some basic guidelines for how to use Sandtray – Worldplay™:**

**Sand and/or objects** may be used spontaneously to freely create images or Worlds in the tray. The resulting creations correspond to the idiosyncratic, uniquely individual realities of the builder and are not to be viewed as having to necessarily correspond to either social or outer world realities. At no time are the images in the sand expected to meet theoretical, clinical, realistic, spiritual, educational or artistic standards of any kind. All creations need to be explored by the creator in order to be fully understood. <sup>26</sup>

**Images and Worlds in the sand** are not viewed from a psychopathological perspective. Dr De Domenico has noticed that psyche teaches clients how to experience, to embrace and to work with all aspects of life as a human being on the planet earth.

<sup>26</sup> Then, they may be hermeneutically translated into any professional, psychological, mythological languaging system, including DSM-IV, Kalfian language, Kleinian language, Piagetian language, Lowenfeldian language and any of the diverse cultural languages used by families and groups.

In fact, often sandtray shows us what a person may or may not want to do with their problems. Frequently a World shows both the real 'problem' and the path of resolution.<sup>27</sup> In Sandtray-Worldplay, the therapist receives the client's creations with an alert, but non-judgmental attitude and a type of "benign indifference". Yet, Worlds are honored as deeply meaningful expressions of their creator's psyche – they are explorations and teachings that are imminently relevant to our lives, i.e. both to the life of the client-journeyer and the life of the witness-therapist. Again: The therapist/facilitator is actively interested in learning more about them and honors them as significant, phenomenological realities – there is no interest in cataloging or interpreting them, as we look for the being with the experiential realities that appear in the here-and-now.

Like Lowenfeld, we see Sandplay as a manifestation of the natural, verbally independent, multidimensional image thinking process, which underlies all creative human endeavors. As such, its applications are unlimited. There is no right or wrong way of building Worlds. There ARE different ways of working with them.

We have developed many different ways – in fact, clients and facilitators continually learn new methods of using sandplay. Our transformational, educational, communal and psychotherapeutic Sandtray-Worldplay methods attempt to explore all the different ways in which physical play with sand, water, images and other tools can facilitate personal and interpersonal growth and development through the direct manifestation of soul and spirit, heart and mind.

### **Indications for Sandtray-Worldplay in the therapeutic, counseling setting:**

The sandtray may be used as a helpful adjunct to the psychotherapeutic counseling process, whenever a person can still play freely and spontaneously. It has been helpful in the treatment, of the following

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<sup>27</sup> Dr De Domenico refers to this revelation as the 'growing edge', or the actual place of growth and development, which may, on the surface, have little to do with the 'presenting problems' of the client.

conditions: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, including Multiple Personality and other Dissociative Disorders; Learning and Developmental Disorders; Adjustment Disorders; Life Changes; Self-Esteem and Depersonalization Problems; Borderline States; Social-Emotional Disorders; Couple and Relationship Problems; Psychosomatics and terminal illness, dying, and mourning; difficulties pertaining to transformational, individuation and spiritual crises.

It is wonderfully effective when people are under stress or in the midst of a traumatic episode - only when the facilitator can go beyond the 50 minute paradigm and support full experiencing and dynamic play.

### **Contraindications:**

Psychophysiological development at a pre-18 month developmental level makes it more difficult to work with the sandtray: floor play, outdoor sandplay, elemental play and sandbox play are often indicated.

Generally, the greatest limitation to the use of the sandtray is the therapist's own countertransference and inability to safely and wholeheartedly "hold", "contain" and further certain psychological experiences depicted in the sandtray. In such instances, the therapist (regardless of his/her theoretical orientation) interprets the client's World, is not actively interested in the experiences depicted/dramatized in the World, or simply wants to change the client's play patterns. In all cases the therapist fails to honor the client's World as it is.

**At times clients refuse to use the sandtray: their bodies move away from the tray and the images. This is an indication that it is best to use other expressive modalities. Refusal or 'resistance' to play in the sandtray is of no particular diagnostic significance.**

It simply means that other expressive, didactic or verbal modalities will be of greater benefit to our client at this time. Follow the client.

### Phases of a Sandtray Session: A simplified schema for the beginning ST-WP Therapist.<sup>28</sup>

1. *Introduction to the medium:* The therapist shows the client the materials that may be worked with. He/she is instructed to either work with the sand for a while and to see what will happen, or to do whatever he/she is prompted to do. The simple advise, "Follow your heart" is a helpful mandate.



Unless the client has different preferences, the witness sits across from the builder, leaving adequate space for the builder to approach the emergent World from any angle and any side

<sup>28</sup> See the Sandtray-Worldplay Manual, the experiential Home Study Course and the two Videos for more information about the various phases of the Session. Many different builder-witness interactions are explored in Levels 1-6 Sandtray-Worldplay Trainings. The phases of the ST-WP session derive directly from Dr De Domenico's original sandplay research with normal pre-school children. Over the years, the ST-WP protocol has been used and adapted by many different students of Sandtray-Worldplay and sandplay to suit the psychophosophy and practice of the individual therapist-facilitator.

2. *Free-and spontaneous playing/building phase:* Here the client builds or plays with the materials provided. The therapist stays out of the way and does not initiate interactions, either physically or verbally. The builder is instructed to let the therapist know when this phase is completed. Revisions of the World are welcomed at any time during the process. Multiple trays may be used, as well as adjacent desk or floor space. All play during the session is viewed as interconnected.



3. *Builder experiencing phase:* Having finished the World, the builder silently stands or sits in front of the images in the sandtray. He/she is welcomed to "own" the World, to make any adjustments and to let it move him/her. Here the builder gets to know the World. The World confronts the maker. After a period of silent reflection and silent being-with-the-World, the builder is welcomed to share any associations with the therapist. Verbal sharing, although desirable, is not necessary. When sharing occurs, the facilitator becomes a 'verbal mirror' and encourages more in depth experiencing.
4. *Client-therapist joint experiencing phase:* Here the therapist joins the client in front of the sandplay and requests to be taken into the World.



Client and therapist enter the World. They experience the World from the perspective of the builder, rather than from the perspective of the therapist. To that end, the builder is asked to create the experiences contained in the World and its characters in the therapist.



During this phase, therapist and client develop and use a common-language-of-experience. When this happens, both can support the enlivening of the World and its Beings: they are in the World, not outside the World. The more they experience, the more they share about the World and the more they learn about the laws and the circumstances that govern the World. Both are moved by the World and the characters in the World.

During the exchange, the client remains the expert about the World itself and about the World's particular relevance to his/her daily

life. Interpretation according to classical psychotherapeutic paradigms is **not** cultivated. The client holds the creative license.



5. *Reflecting phase:* Here the builder, after having experienced the Ways-of-the-World, comes out of the World.



Builder is asked what he/she thinks and/or feels the message of the play is. He/she is asked to ponder the wisdom, which his/her own inner Self has offered during the play process and in the final World. Work is done around discovering practical ways of applying the World's teachings to the daily life of the client.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> During this phase of the session, the therapist observes and uses appropriate opportunities for sharing relevant archetypal stories, myths, spiritual traditions, philosophies, psychological methods, physical exercises, and other supportive informative details that will readily

6. *Photographing phase:* The client is asked how he/she wishes the sandplay to be photographed. One photo is offered to the client. Other photos go into the journey file and may be used in later sessions. Clients always have access to their photos and the facilitator's notes. Many clients actually receive xeroxed copies of the facilitator's notes.



7. *Dismantling phase:* Worlds are usually dismantled **after** the client has left the room. Facilitators do not handle a client's World in front of the builder. This is a violation of boundaries. If Worlds need dismantling in the presence of their maker, the client is asked to remove the first 4 or 5 objects from the World: this effectively breaks the unity of the World and joint dismantling can proceed without a sense of violation. The client, however, may disassemble his/her World whenever it pleases: it will be considered part of the play and the expression of intrapsychic experiences.<sup>30</sup>
8. *Therapist/Facilitator reflective and recovery phase:* It is good to leave at least 15-20 minutes between client sessions, so that the facilitator may reflect on the session, the way the play impacts his/her understanding of the client, and the manner in which he/she is personally impacted by the client's play

support and reinforce the client in applying newly-found insights and wisdom.

<sup>30</sup> The ability to dissolve and let go of a World is considered to be a very important life skill.

process. At this time it is essential to confront counter-transference issues and to receive the client's teachings/gifts about Self, relationship and life: a time of personal growth.

### Types of Worlds

Different Worldbuilding processes make use of builder-facilitator interactions – facilitators practice different methods of supporting the transformational play process during trainings.

1. *Moving and dramatic Worlds:* These types of scenes are constantly changing and moving. They tell a story as they go along. Often there is no "Final Static Scene" to look at. Instead, the tray may look quite chaotic at the end. Here it is necessary to experience the changing World as it is happening. Processing of such a World occurs during the play and afterwards in form of remembering.
2. *Static Worlds:* In these Worlds there are minimal revisions and little movement. Sand is formed, objects are placed,<sup>31</sup> and they tend to remain there. The final World readily becomes the focus for processing and experiencing.
3. *Worlds built in silence:* Some people create Worlds in utter silence. The therapist honors this silence at all times. At the end of the play period clients are invited to share. Occasionally Worlds remain in silence.
4. *Worlds built while talking:* Other clients create Worlds in a talkative manner. The therapist responds to them in such a way that he/she does not introduce new ideas or deflects from the World building process.

<sup>31</sup> Sometimes the sand is ignored. Other times the images may be ignored when clients shape the sand or use it to create original designs.

5. *Multiple Worlds*: The client builds more than one sandtray during the session.
6. *Mixed media Worlds*: The client uses movement, song, floor play, costume play, puppet play, clay etc in conjunction with the Worldplay materials. This type of work is reminiscent of Richard Wagner's operas, where he developed the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or the 'total work of art'.
7. *Individual Worlds*: One person builds a World in the sandtray.
8. *Couple Worlds*: Two people build one World in one sandtray.
9. *Family Worlds*: One family builds one World in a sandtray, see discussion below.
10. *Group Worlds*: One group builds one World in a sandtray, see discussion below.
11. *Other Classifications*: De Domenico finds other ways of classifying Worlds not helpful. Readers may look up other clinicians' attempts to classify Worlds. (Buehler, 1951, Lowenfeld, 1979, De Domenico, 2000). ST-WP focuses more on understanding the nature of the psychological, physical and spiritual experiences portrayed in the World. Such awareness usually lends itself to diagnosing clients and formulating appropriate treatment plans for each client when clinicians use ST-WP in traditional clinical mental health settings.

#### **Types of Sandtray-Worldplay Sandplay Sessions:**

1. *Free and spontaneous play*: Here the client builds without any instructions or interventions by the therapist/facilitator.<sup>32</sup>
2. *Therapist directed sand play*<sup>33</sup>: The therapist assigns a topic, an experience, or

<sup>32</sup> Lowenfeld and Kalff encouraged this type of session with individual clients. However, they used a different protocol for conducting the session.

an interaction to be worked on during the session. For example: "Show me what it is like when you wake up depressed in the morning; show me what happens when you soil your pants; or show me what happened when you two had that big out of control fight last week."

3. *Therapist directed elaborations of freely and spontaneously built Worlds*:<sup>34</sup> During processing and experiencing a sandplay clients often detail experiences that are not specifically shown in the World itself. The therapist may ask for another scene that depicts these experiences or a scene that elaborates upon one or two figures in a given sandtray.
4. *Therapist-built teaching Worlds*:<sup>35</sup> The communication process between therapist and client may be enhanced when the therapist uses sand and figures to show and support verbal statements, interactions and/or teachings to the client. It deepens understanding and a more fruitful therapeutic dialogue may result.
5. *Group sandtray sessions*:<sup>36</sup> Sandtrays may be used in small group, couple, family, and filial therapy situations. These are three basic variants to choose from:
  - a. *Each person builds his/her own World*: Here the goal is to allow each person to reveal their own unique experiences and to create

<sup>33</sup> Lowenfeld also used therapist directed play to facilitate her understanding of client's experience out in the world-at-large. Kalff did not.

<sup>34</sup> Neither Lowenfeld or Kalff use these types of sandplays.

<sup>35</sup> Neither Lowenfeld or Kalff use these types of sandplays.

<sup>36</sup> Neither Lowenfeld or Kalff used these types of sandplays. Lowenfeld used group and individual sandplay rooms. However, each child always had his/her own therapist-facilitator in the room. John Hood-Williams, Lowenfeld trained, conducted some sandplay sessions with families. Lois Carey, Kalff trained, conducts family sandplay sessions.



free and spontaneously in the presence of a significant other (s) or peers. Ego and self-esteem building are one of the major goals.

- b. *A group tray is created:* Here everyone participates in creating one World. You see how the members of the team create a relationship, i.e. how they combine their uniquely individual experiences and perspectives to create a common World. Relationship issues that deal with the relationship itself are best worked on in a joint tray where the relationship reveals itself.
- c. *One person builds and the other person observes:* Here the aim is to teach partners to honor each other's unique individuality, creativity and to allow the other to communicate without interfering, changing or stopping the expression. Boundary issues are best experienced and worked on using this way of structuring the sandtray session.

### Conclusion:

Sandtray-Worldplay Methods offer significant changes in the protocol of Lowenfeldian and Kalfjian sandtray/sandplay sessions.<sup>37</sup> This, in part, is due to the hermeneutic and phenomenological psychophilosophical basis of the work and the extensive observational research with normal populations that have preceded its implementation.

ST-WP's core emphasis remains the harnessing of complete consciousness, whether this be for psychotherapeutic purposes, educational purposes, or community building purposes. Although Sandtray-Worldplay readily embraces many aspects of Lowenfeldian and Kalfjian practice, it has a wider

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<sup>37</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to compare and contrast the ideologies of other schools of thoughts who have made use of the sandtray. Yet, the ST-WP method also exhibits some affinity with the manner in which Gestalt, Kleinian, Voice Dialogue, and Dramatic Art Therapists use sandplay. For a discussion of Goesta Harding and the Erica Method see the author's doctoral dissertation. (De Domenico, 1986.)

vision and a broader base. Thus, its applications are more flexible and more far-reaching.

The method does in fact introduce a simpler and more collaborative view of the therapist-client relationship.

In ST-WP the therapeutic transference to the therapist is not based on the belief that the therapist is the expert, the authority, the 'fixer' or the transformer. A natural and wholesome relationship between client and therapist can support the constellation of a therapeutic transference between the egoic self of the client and the Self that resides within the client. We often refer to that alliance as the 'little self' trusting the 'big Self' or the 'Part that knows'. This is possible because there is no human who does not have a fully functioning Self.

The aim is to help the client, even in the beginning stages of the therapy, to take full responsibility for his/her journey. The therapist relates to the client and supports and midwives this journey. Although the facilitator teaches the client empowering experiencing skills when conducting the various phases of the sandplay session, the primary learning that is reinforced is that the source of wisdom and healing lies within the client Self: the Self directs the play; the Self implants wisdom and reality into the play; the Self informs the way the client experiences his/her own play. The client initiates the facilitator, who in entering into the 'animated and projected World' before them validates the client's capacity to use consciousness and to establish an active relationship to the enduring wisdom of psyche (Self).

When this happens in the play room, it will also happen in his/her daily life. The playroom becomes the laboratory of the world: every bit of wisdom and understanding gained can be used to inform the way the client approaches and lives his/her life. In this way, the client's ego may transfer its positive regard and attention to the Source within.<sup>38</sup> The therapist becomes the appropriate externally sourced resource and support.

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<sup>38</sup> We may call the Source within the Self, the Center, God, Buddha or by whatever name. The name does not matter. The experience of connecting to the Source is more important. It will not take long before the client learns to look at daily life happenings using the same point of view.

The client has a natural tendency to project Self onto the therapist: in this type of therapy the client learns that the Self creates the World outside itself. As the Ego projects itself into the images, characters, landscapes and actions that arise in the World, it slowly remembers its Source in the Self. After a while, it becomes more obvious to the client that the very same Ego that projects stories into the World also projects stories onto the therapist, mother, father etc. The client learns about the nature of projections and owns him/herself as the origin of the projections. This creates a sense of freedom and builds a sense of responsibility.

ST-WP theory acknowledges that exactly the same process occurs in the therapist: the therapist's Self and Ego project themselves into the images, characters, and happenings in the client's sandtray, thereby enlivening them.

We try to still this tendency once we enter into the client free-associative part of the builder experiencing phase.<sup>39</sup> Once the Client World becomes the mutual field of projection, it is easy enough for the therapist to step back and to allow the client's psyche (and Ego) to take the lead by initiating the therapist into the nature of the World. The client is the expert now. The therapist has become the student. Now, the therapist, in turn goes beyond the confines of his/her Ego and accesses the deepest part of his/her own psyche to experience the realities of the World in the way they are experienced and shared by the client.<sup>40</sup> This creates the experience of 'going-along' with the client. The therapist is both active and receptive as he/she supports the client's experience, asks questions and maintains a compassionate interest in all that arises.

A special therapeutic/transformational partnership is formed: Both, therapist and client, are sentient beings. Both have worked to meet one another in the World of the client. An energetic connection is established between them. Both are equal. Both

<sup>39</sup> Equally, the therapist's Ego projects its own personal and professional stories onto the client. This tendency needs to be checked during the entire session.

<sup>40</sup> At the level of the psyche, we are now dealing with client and therapist accessing what the author call the *communal psyche*: at this level consciousness is sufficiently inclusive that given enough time, all phenomena can be transmitted and communally shared between two or more people.

experience the World in the sand and both receive one another. At this point of union, they mutually participate in the healing process and are ready to tell and experience any stories or story fragments that arise. Even though, the client psyche is the source of the wisdom that arises as the World is built, experienced and shared, it is the manifestation of that wisdom in the World and the therapist's willingness to acknowledge and to dialogue within the context of that wisdom, that creates the truly intimate healing bond between client and therapist.<sup>41</sup>



### The Oakland Sandtray-Worldplay Studio

#### Sandtray Mail Order Houses to help you get started:

These merchants carry sandtrays, sand, miniatures and/or books.

1. Uniquity: 215 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Galt, CA 95632. (209) 745-2111.
2. Vision Quest Images: 1946 Clemens Rd, Oakland, CA 94602. (510) 530-1383. [sandworldplay@rcn.com](mailto:sandworldplay@rcn.com) and [www.Vision-Quest.us](http://www.Vision-Quest.us)
3. Jurassic Playground, Salix Corporation, Utah. Colored Sands. (801) 531-8600.
4. Sandtastic. PO Box 1621, Niagara Falls, NY 14302. Colored Sands. [www.sandtastic.com/index.html](http://www.sandtastic.com/index.html)
5. Black Beauty Reed Minerals: 0/60 or 0/90 black slag. 1011 Mumma R., Wormleysburg, PA. 17043. (717) 763-4200.

<sup>41</sup> This bond cements the healing and growth processes that have been activated because the therapist embraced the client's deepest view of him/herself and Life. This is a very sacred moment in the work.

6. The Sandtray Network Journal at  
[www.sandtray.org](http://www.sandtray.org).

7. The Association of Play Therapy: 2050 N  
Winery Ave #101. Fresno, CA 93703. (559) 252-  
2278. [info@a4pt.org](mailto:info@a4pt.org). and [www.a4pt.org](http://www.a4pt.org).

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## Bibliography of Sandtray-Worldplay

### Sandtray-Worldplay Teaching Videos:

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