

PRINCIPLES OF

# Art Therapy

Foundations of Art Therapy for Feminine Leaders

Part 2



Copyright Zoe Dodds Soul-Arts.com

# Applying Art Therapy

## Key topics for discussion

Life & Death Urge

The Healing Role of Art

Art in Therapy

Accessing the Subconscious



***Art work is the voice of  
the subconscious and can  
be viewed objectively,  
offering opportunity for  
new insights and  
perspectives***





## CREATIVE PLAY

***Play provides space for insight, exploration and movement potential.***



## THERAPEUTIC SPACE

*Holding space requires a balance of ‘challenge with care’, ‘comfort with discomfort’, and always asks of the therapist an attitude of acceptance, observation and confidentiality.*



Art therapy explores the  
meanings we form...  
and how this influences  
our experiences in life



TRANSPERSONAL  
ART THERAPY

EROS &  
THANATOS

Life and  
Death  
Drives:

THE WILL TO LIVE  
AND THE WILL TO DIE





## Life (Eros)

Compassion  
Cooperation  
Optimist



## Death (Thanatos):

War, Suicide, Negative self talk,  
Smoking, Lack of self care,  
Driving fast, Going out with the  
wrong people, Drugs, Pessimism

# Developing Tolerance



Choice & Empowerment

“Therapy is often about developing a tolerance for something in a person’s life, rather than resolving or removing the problem. “

# Tolerance = Building an Immunity

Being around others – one can only choose how one responds/moderates one's experience.

To be okay with one's journey.

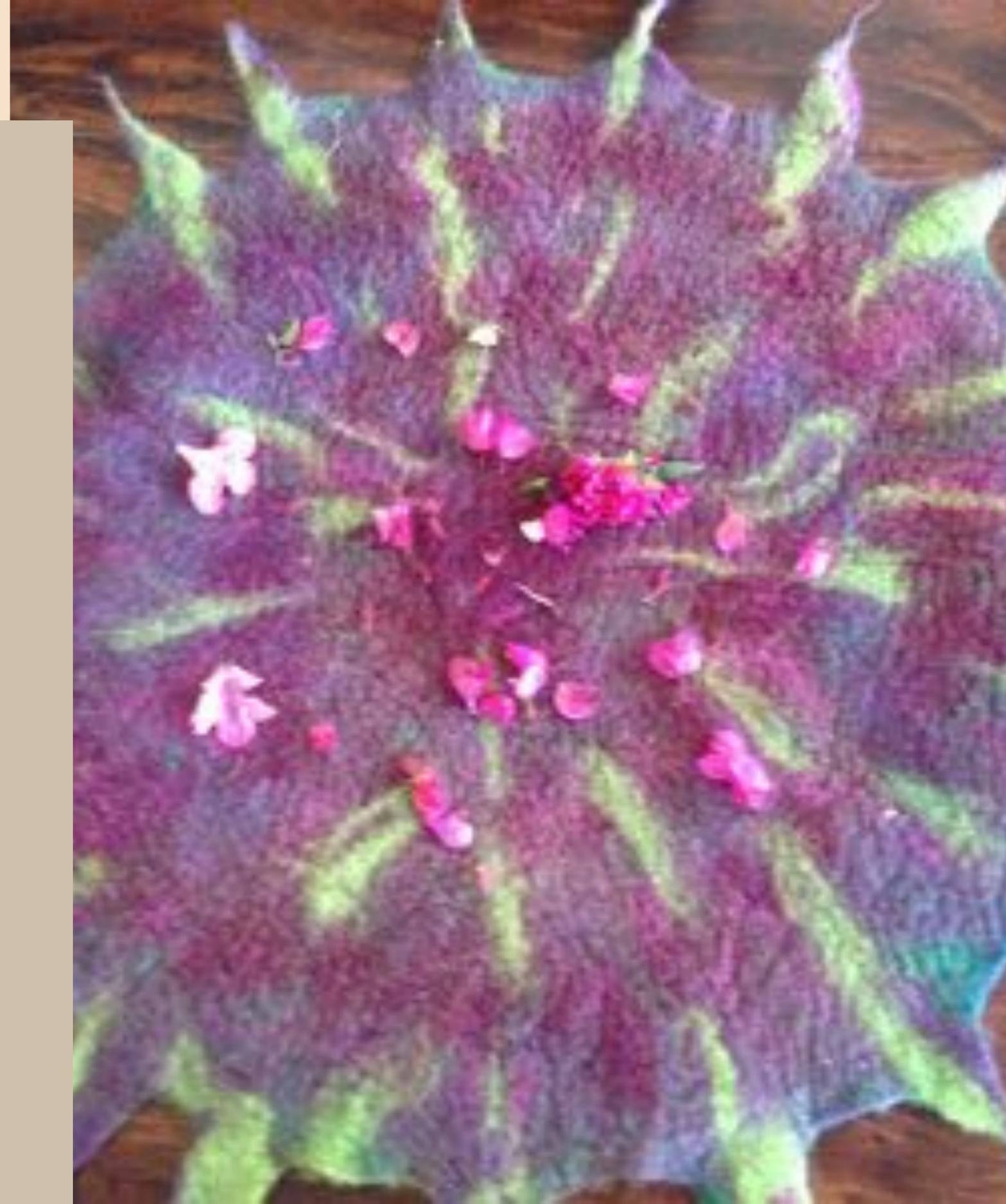


THE HEALING  
ROLE OF ART:

Experiential  
and Creative  
Arts Therapy



Art allows the space for the individual to find their own healing and own meaning, without a therapist imposing ideals onto a clients experience.





# Art allows Space

Art allows space for the subconscious to emerge, for what is unknown to surface and be explored.

Whilst creating Art  
raw emotions,  
unfiltered by the brain  
have the potential to  
present and speak the  
truth, beyond the  
distraction of words





# The Soul's Language

Art allows the intuitive brain to be activated, with symbols, colours and image, providing a language for the soul's expression.

The Healing role of art  
is the ability to  
Express Emotions  
through a variety of  
mediums without the  
need for words,  
constructed sentences  
or limiting beliefs.





# Growth through Enquiry

Growth, understanding and awareness can be generated through the exploration of two and three dimensional enquiry.

# EXPRESSION

Art provides a safe, free space, a way of expression that enables a person to connect and explore unresolved issues.

This unfolding and the process involved encourages acceptance, which leads to transformation and finally resolution or healing.



## RAW EMOTION

The art process allows the client to tap into raw emotion, unfiltered by the mind with its ideas of how they should or shouldn't feel about an issue.

A client gets a chance to express emotion that they may not realise on a conscious level they are feeling, for example anger over a loss.



## ENERGY & RELEASE

The art process can be therapeutic in how the client expresses the emotion, for example they may throw paint on violently, rip up a drawing and set fire to it or pound clay.

This process can allow the client to release the emotion and deal with it.



## SENSORY LANGUAGE

For the purpose of creating and achieving understanding, growth and awareness Art can be used as a language that doesn't necessarily need words or speech – especially at times when feeling can be better expressed as a colour, shape or image.

Art can be experienced through all the senses by the exploration of different mediums.



# WHY ART THERAPY?

:

## ART AS SOCIAL WITNESS

Art is a way of recording experience:

Social revolutions, tattoos, graffiti – a social witness of things that can not necessarily be spoken about.



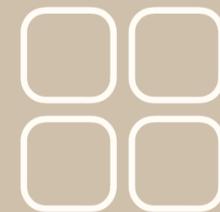
# Art in Therapy:



Concept 1:  
Experience is  
sensory

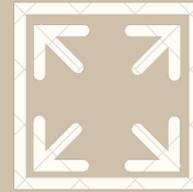


Concept 2: Words are  
only an approximation of  
lived experience



Concept 3: Intrinsic –  
capacity for art making

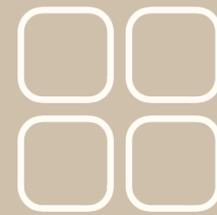
# Art in Therapy:



Concept 4:  
Capacity to use metaphor



Concept 5: Capacity to  
understand simple imagery



Concept 6:  
Comparison – verbal therapy



Concept 7: Privileging  
the unconscious



# MIRROR NEURONS:

## **Concept 1: Experience is sensory**

The qualities of the experiences with which the client is working and with the qualities of the medium, the engagement with the medium, and the product. This is what we call shared qualities in that these qualities are shared by both the experience and the art making of product.





## SHARED QUALITIES EXAMPLE: WORKING WITH CLAY

### THE QUALITIES OF THIS MEDIUM:

- Cool, wet and smooth; textural
- Brown, Heavy, Dry/Wet
- Thick – working with the unyielding qualities
- Messy – exploration of this

# WORKING WITH CLAY



## WORKING WITH A CLIENT:

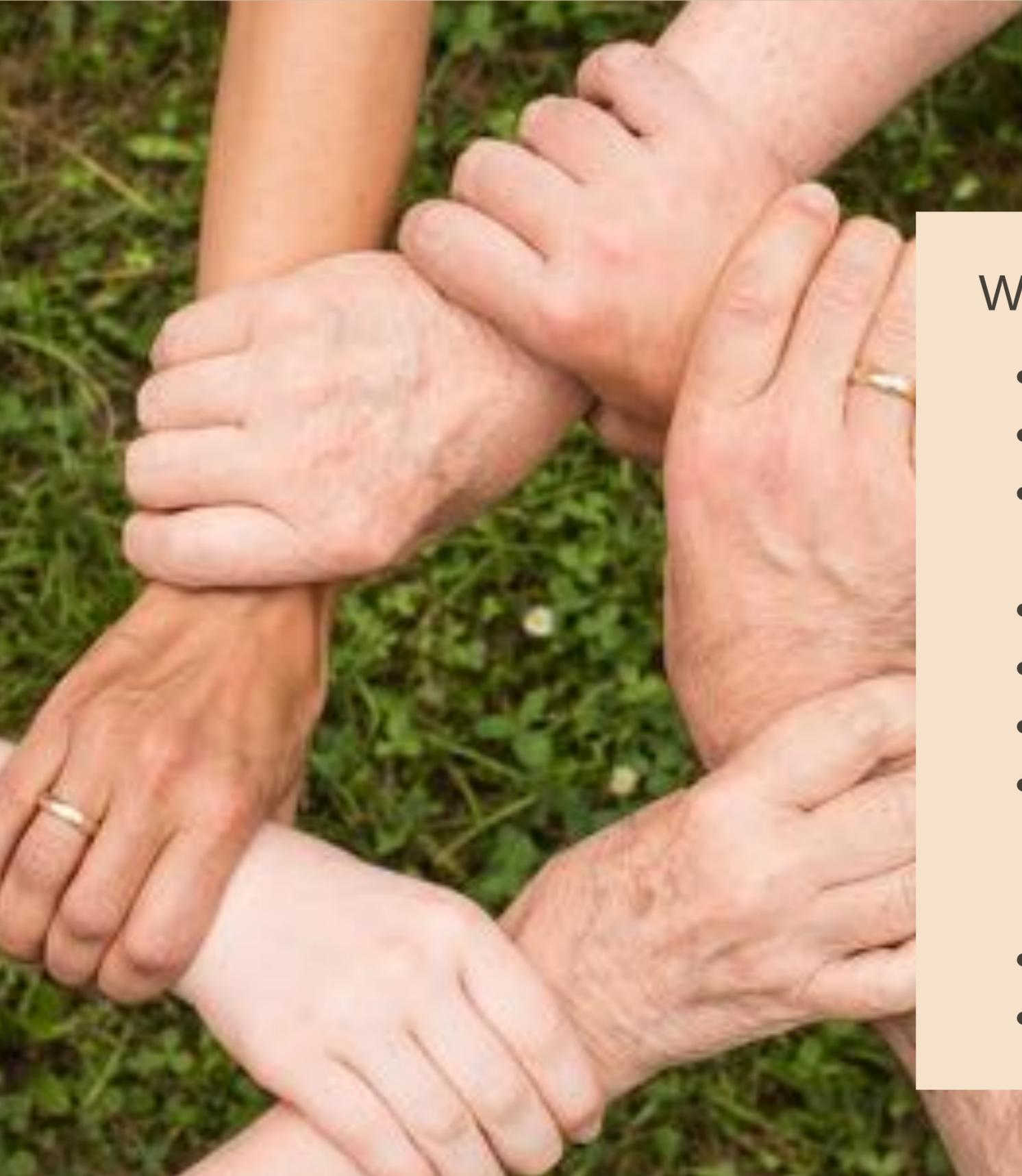
- Clay is fantastic for transformations, flexibility, to try different pathways etc.
- Clay is better not used when a client is too immersed/too traumatised, anytime when the experience is better not used where the experience will go with the person (under their nails etc)/sexual abuse (where the medium is dirty etc).



# PLASTER HAND SCULPTURE: WORKING WITH ARTEFACTS

## THE QUALITIES OF THIS MEDIUM:

- Smooth and rough, textural
- Can use textures, paint, glitter etc.
- Fiddly – working with the unyielding qualities
- Messy – exploration of this



# PLASTER HAND SCULPTURE: WORKING WITH ARTEFACTS

## WORKING WITH A CLIENT:

- It is a celebration and reminder of the boundaries
- Exploration of attachment (ease of breaking etc).
- Working with broken pieces – put it in water and return to what it was etc.
- Someone who has lost a limb etc
- Hands explore communication – Stop, Caress, Grip etc
- A way of addressing change – breakages,
- Exploring metaphors of the hands – handy, know someone like the back of my hand, extend a hand of friendship etc.
- Someone wanting to cement something into themselves.
- Embedding ideas or affirmations holding private meaning



# LIMITATION OF WORDS

## CONCEPT 2:

Words as 'approximators':

Words are only an approximation of  
lived experience



# ART IS AN INNATE HUMAN INSTINCT

## **Concept 3: Intrinsic capacity for art making**

- Art is to 'make special' – ceremony, costumes etc.
- Human's are essentially aesthetic. (our homes, our dress etc).
- Art probably evolved from ceremonies, part of transcending society.
- Darwin's peacock principle: an element in sexual selection

**Creativity offers powerful visual & kinaesthetic nourishment to the psyche**



# CAPACITY TO USE METAPHOR

## CONCEPT 4:

Metaphor is a sensory map of a concept.  
It allows one to view it/observe it/explore it.



# CAPACITY TO USE METAPHOR

## **Concept 4: Metaphor & Art Therapy:**

Words can compound or deepen a behaviour and belief: when we talk about things we can create them/amplify it.

When we turn things into a metaphor we broaden it – we can visually work with it and explore it/dissect it/view it from different viewpoints instead of compounding it.



Words can be good in accepting something through their repetition, though we can't always do anything with it.

Art however can be 'physicalised' and an action can be done with it, we can turn it around/burn it/cut it up etc – and this can be healing and therapeutic.

Words can be done in 20 minutes, after that's its repetition.



# ART & METAPHOR

Words can be powerful to explore 'meaning', but when we use art we can unlock our 'unconscious', and see things that we didn't sometimes see or know previously.





# CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND SIMPLE IMAGERY

## CONCEPT 5:

We all understand visual “meaning”.

Symbols create universal responses that have meaning.

“We have the capacity to identify images as we make them in art therapy.”

This capacity begins from birth, and continues through adulthood.

Our ability to blend one experience into another, metaphor and actual; reflects shared qualities between symbols and reality.



# MIRROR NEURONS:

## **Concept 1: Experience is sensory**

It is proven with neuroscience that when we witness or view something, we experience it actually within our cells (due to mirror neurons firing). Holding the space, is about staying in a strong enough experience within ourselves, so we have the option of others being able to mirror our experience and body language etc.



We understand others by feeling, not thinking  
(through these motor neurons interplay).

Mirror neurons appear to let us simulate not just  
other people's actions, but the intentions and  
emotions behind those actions.

## In Therapeutic Situations

Attention is given to the qualities of the 'experiences' with which the client is working as well as the qualities of the medium (both the engagement with the medium, and the product itself).

This is what is referred to as 'shared qualities' in that these qualities are shared by both the 'experience' and the 'art making' of product.



# NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

**Concept 2: Words are only an approximation  
of lived experience**

Most experts agree that 70 to 93 percent of all  
communication is nonverbal.



# Different types of nonverbal communication:

- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Touch
- Space
- Voice
- Facial expressions. The human face is extremely expressive, able to convey countless emotions
- Body movement and posture



# MEANING BEYOND WORDS



- Pay attention to inconsistencies
- What isn't been spoken?
- What does the Art & Body express?



# INTRINSIC CAPACITY

## Concept 3: Intrinsic capacity for art making

- Art is an innate human instinct.
- Darwin's peacock principle: an element in sexual selection
- Art is to 'make special' – ceremony, costumes etc.
- Human's are essentially aesthetic (our homes, our dress etc).
- Art probably evolved from ceremonies, part of transcending society
- Art is timeless & cross cultural



# METAPHOR

## **Concept 4: Capacity to use metaphor**

The subconscious understands the language of symbolism and communicates with us through images. We make meaning from the visual forms of the world and this informs our inner world.

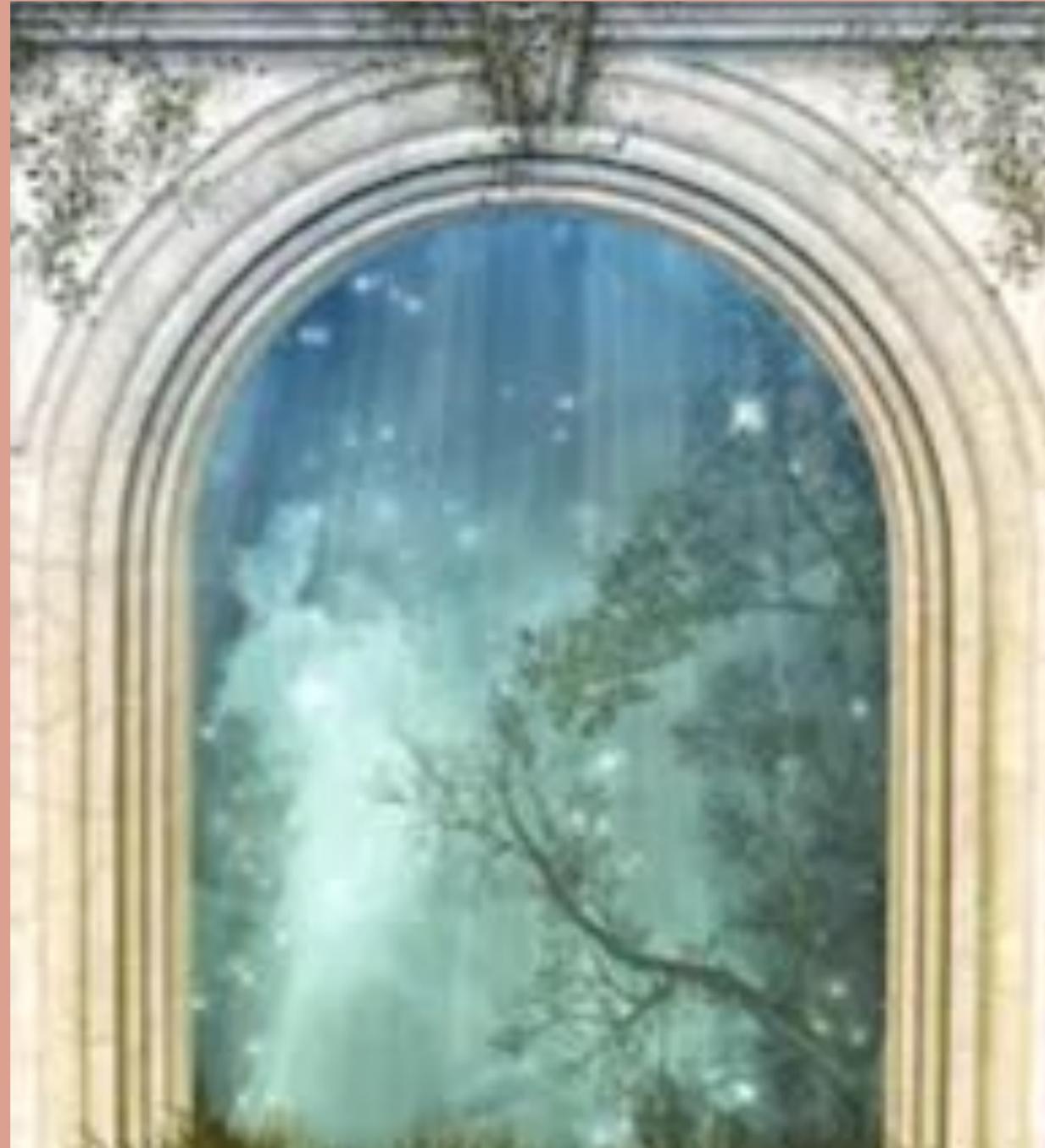
When we turn things into a metaphor we broaden it – we can visually work with it and explore it/dissect it/view it from different viewpoints we give ourselves an opportunity to connect to the meaning we have made.

# CONNECTING WITH CLIENTS

WORDS CAN BE POWERFUL TO  
EXPLORE 'MEANING', AS WE USE  
ART WE CAN UNLOCK OUR  
'UNCONSCIOUS', AND SEE  
THINGS THAT WE DIDN'T  
SOMETIMES SEE OR KNOW  
PREVIOUSLY.

"WHO ARE WE WITHOUT OUR  
STORY?"





# Witnessing the Art

Often we don't  
experience what we  
aren't looking for.

Perhaps there is  
something more  
important we need to  
hear/see.



# UNIVERSAL IMAGERY

## **Concept 5: Capacity to understand simple imagery**

- Symbols: universal signs have meaning and we have the capacity to identify images and makes images in art therapy. We all understand visual “meaning”. This capacity begins in a young baby (we are born with it) and it continues through adulthood.
- We have the ability to blend one experience into another, seeing shared qualities between symbols and reality: metaphor and actual. We don't have the vocabulary to describe everything in life, but symbols, images and metaphors can. Sometimes we have much greater nuance (that intuitive, innate sense, subtle meaning/difference) with images than sound.



# VERBAL THERAPY

## Concept 6: Comparison – verbal therapy

- “It feels like this” – the action of “up stroke, up stroke”.
- We use the ‘language of the art’ to explore the experience, as opposed to using the ‘art work as a reference’. How the client makes sense of this is where the insight may appear. You did this line here.... Is that relevant? If we were to extend this line, how would that look like?
- We use the ‘Art’ to process things. Counsellor’s use the ‘Story’ to process the art work etc





# VISUAL MEANING

When one receives contradictory evidence – neuroscience proves we will believe what we see, over what we hear.

We are more inclined to believe something when we 'see' something in a process, rather than when we are 'talking' about with someone.



# ACCESSING THE UNCONSCIOUS

## **Concept 7: Privileging the unconscious**

- A different part of your brain is used when we do art, compared to when we talk.
- Different mediums are used to stimulate different areas of the brain.
- We can work with different parts of the artwork (story) also. We allow the client to re-engage with their artwork from that experience. This accesses & activates different parts of the brain.



# The language of Art Therapists



PHENOMENOLOGY

---

That which is “perceived”



NOESIS

---

Nature of ones experience



NOEMA

---

Interpretation of experience



# The Healing Elements of Art Therapy



## EXPRESSION

---

*Freedom of & experience of  
expression*



## MEANING MAKING

---

Insights generated through  
reflection



## PRESENCE

---

Client & Therapist's therapeutic  
presence



