# Working with Symbols

Practioner Guide to using Symbols  with Clients

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Feminine Embodiment Practitioner Templates

# Understanding Symbols

Our world is full of symbols.

Symbols are important because they facilitate communication and identification of ideas, concepts and subconscious beliefs. The symbolic realm can speak to us of issues unaddressed or needing resolving.

Symbols can reflect to us the places we seek refuge.

Within our inner world, a symbol can represent to us our place in the world, our sense of belonging in the cosmos and our understanding of life's meaning.

Symbols reflect the language of the Subconscious, and can be used to explore things that are not currently understood in the conscious mind.

Symbolic consciousness is a way of working with symbols that allows their meaning and energy into our consciousness, to facilitate exploration, expression and change.

Through working with symbols our clients can have access to the energy and meaning that comes from their inner world.

Symbols can be explored with clients in dreams, meditation, art and 3D figurines. They can be used in one on one sessions and group experiences: in altas, sandtrays, constellations, on top of therapeutic art and in sharing circles.

# Introduction

Our subconsious expresses itself through the language of symbols and consequent meaning-making over one's lifetime.

Symbols become significant to us as our 'inner meanings' are projected onto them. Our subconscious mind stores images connected to birth, death, marriage, intimacy, family and various life transitions.

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# How to facilitate with Symbols in Feminine Embodiment Sessions:

The meaning we attribute to symbols is personal to us. As a practitioner it is not our place to impose our own meanings of symbols on to our clients, but rather to assist them in finding their own meaning.

Our meanings & projections will be based on previous experience, our conditioning, societal values, family upbringing, cultural context and our own unique interpretation of events and objects.

Symbols can represent to our clients:

- Yearnings & Longings we are not acknowledging or voicing.
- Things that repulse or outrage us.
- Unspoken thoughts, feelings or desires

**Symbolic language, whether in dreams, fantasies or sandplay work, allow messages which might be too powerful or too painful to face, to be acknowledged and integrated over time.**

# Goals/Objectives

- Symbols can speak to us of role and purpose & can be a reference to where we source our passion & place in the world.
- The symbolic realm can assist us in identifying insecurities, our shadow & where we are battling with life.
- Symbols can speak to us of harmony, connection & hope.
- Symbols reflect our relationships to life itself, in all her shapes and forms.
- Symbols can assist us in weaving humour & play into our lives
- Symbols are personal to us, and they also are informed by the collective. Symbol use can help to identify core issues, wounding and the collective unconscious.
- Symbols can reflect motion or stagnancy current in our lives.

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# Using Symbols in Sand Play

***Symbolic language, whether in dreams, fantasies or sandplay work, allow messages which might be too powerful or too painful to face, to be acknowledged and integrated over time.***

Sandplay allows us to drop into the mythic realm of our psyche.

Before selecting symbols the client is asked to spend time playing with the sand, feeling its texture and feeling, and shaping the landscape of their tray.

Clients may form mountains and streams, lakes and deserts. They may form patterns and barriers, spirals and depressions.

Each of their choices inform the dialogue occuring in the subconscious.

Forming the sand supports a shift in awareness from cognitive and verbal - to kinesthetic involvement. This allows relaxation of defence mechanisms and frees set ways of thinking.

The kinesthetic focus on the sensation of the sand and the movement of the hands also opens new ways of communicating and knowing the self. This supports the emergence of emotional issues, blocked feelings, and whatever else may be waiting in the unconscious for resolution.

The sand tray presents a safe place to explore issues that the unconscious is ready to release.

Within the boundaries of the sandtray the client makes a visual representation of the inner world.

The sandtray becomes a sacred space, with a special representation of inner reality, at a safe distance from the everyday world and everyday concerns.

***The 'builder' or client always remains the focus of the process, and the 'witness' or practitioner is there to encourage, support, and guide the builder as they depict elements of their inner world in the sand.***

**The psyche has an in-built, self-activated, corrective healing drive & organising principle (inner healer), and sandplay is designed to access this.**

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# Supporting your Client

| POTENTIAL PHASE | CLIENT | FACILITATION |
|---|---|---|
| **PHASE 1**<br>Chaos | Potentially figurines dumped in the sandtray, no apparent order, upheavals & mingling of figurines | This is a time clients can feel unsure or overwhelmed. |
| **PHASE 2**<br>Struggle | Conflict played out between figurines & obstacles in landscape with emotional overtones. Exploration of meaning | It is often helpful to choose only 5 symbols to work with initially. |
| **PHASE 3**<br>Resolution | Order & balance being restored. Realisations, insight with new directions & trajectory. | Hold presence and gently guide the flow when/if client feels stuck with good quality questions. |

Often while working with clients and sandplay, there will be particular areas of the tray that feel more significant than others.

Or there may be particular symbols that will draw the attention of the client more, or feel of greater importance to the person.

Trust that and allow a client-centred approach of where to explore first.

**Enquire with your client what they can see, feel & sense?**
**Actively Listen & Reflect and provide an environment for exploration.**

If clients become overwhelmed by the sensation of the sand or the symbols that present:
Guide them to find an area of the sandtray or a symbol that offers them support or refuge.



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# Key Points

## In Facilitating Sessions:

***Sandplay activates the self-healing tendencies and so it is the client's experience of the process which holds the potential for healing, rather than any therapeutic interpretation of the sand picture.***

***Any insights or gains made come from within the client and can be clearly recognised by the client as their own internal power.***

After sandplay is completed, the client and therapist analyse and discuss the client's figurine choices, their arrangement pattern in the sand, and their symbolic or metaphoric associations.

Upon discussion, the client often chooses to make changes to the world they have created in sand.

Sandplay therapy may consist of a single session or last as long as several years.
In the context of a client's Feminine Embodimet Sessions symbol work can be woven in to address a clients intension and where the need presents.

Symbols can be incorporated into ceremony and art work.

Using symbols as a means of sharing in circle work, weaving symbols into rituals and rites of passage, and forming symbols in clay therapy are powerful means of expressing & exploring the subconscious realms.

Symbols can be selected and placed on artwork for additional therapeutic enquiry.

The explanation and exploration of personal alta use in a client's home environment can be supportive and helpful in a client's growth and self care plan.

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# Holding a Healing Space

Sandplay activates the self-healing tendencies and so it is the client's experience of the process which holds the potential for healing, rather than any therapeutic interpretation of the sand picture or figurines.

Any insights or gains made come from within the client and can be clearly recognised by the client as their own internal power.

Sandplay has all the ingredients of healing:

- Safe Containment (sandtray)
- Free form sensory connection (sand)
- Non-judgemental presence (therapist)
- Choice & Self direction (figurine selection & action)
- Creativity & Play (imaginal realms)

# Using Symbols in Groupwork

There are many ways to use Symbol work in groups.

Firstly, having an alta set up somewhere in your healing space can not only be aesthetically pleasing, but the symbols themselves can assist participants in the space to drop into a therapeutic, grounding or evocative state of being, depending on symbol selection.

Sacred items, items of a feminine nature and items that expand the sensory world of participants can be helpful in the space, and can prepare the psyche for deeper work.

Items placed in the middle of the circle can give people a central focus point, and can be stimulating to the subconscious, mystical realms.

Attendees can begin the sharing circle by choosing an item or symbol to centre their share around, or they can bring items to contribute to the space.
Pair work, can then be utilised for shares incorporating symbols, art, and movement.



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# Therapeutic Steps:

***Supporting clients in Feminine Embodiment Sessions:***

## 1 Meet & Greet

Create an environment where your client feels safe, supportive and comfortable; personally & professionally.

## 2 Intention

Discuss with your client their intensions for the session; how they are, what they may wish to work on and with in your session.

## 3 Educate

Gently introduce the modality you will be working with - explaining the context, meaning & benefits of symbols use.

## 4 Connect In

Before beginning the session take a few moments to relax, ground and centre your client into their bodies and intension, before beginning the session.

## 5 Presence

During your session ensure you bring your full presence and attentiveness to the therapeutic space. Practice deep listening, reflective communication and mindfulness in regard to facilitation of 'wisdom' or 'insights' from within the client, rather than imposing one's own ideas, advice and beliefs.

## 6 Engagement & Follow Up

Suggest ways your client can continue with the integration of their session. eg Journal writing, dream exploration , meditation and reflection etc.

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# FEMININE EMBODIMENT

Client Record Sheet

**CLIENT NAME:** **DATE:**

**INTENTION:**

**SESSION PLAN:**

**ACTIVITIES & OBSESRVATIONS:**

**NOTES:**

**FOLLOW ON:**

# Feminine Embodiment Arts Session Record Sheet:

***Client Name:***

Date & Session: _____
Intention: _____
Modalities: _____
Follow-on: _____

Date & Session: _____
Intention: _____
Modalities: _____
Follow-on: _____

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Date & Session: _____
Intention: _____
Modalities: _____
Follow-on: _____

# Therapeutic Principles

## Holding Space is an Honour

***Apart from the breath, the primary tool of a Feminine Embodiment Mentor is an attitude of love and truth.***

Feminine Embodiment Mentoring honours the unique, subjective experience of each individual.

Changes and insights are generated largely through the discovery, recognition and validation of what 'is', rather than through some 'fix it' mentality.

In this way the Feminine Embodiment Mentor and the client come into a relationship that is mutually honouring, respectful and empowering.

Benefits of Feminine Embodiment practices and what they offer:

- An expanded experience of love and self acceptance.
- Enriched experience of being alive & present
- More peace and less stress
- Improved clarity, insight & Empowerment to create the kind of life desired
- Enhanced physical & emotional well-being
- Connection with one's true, infinite nature of Being
- Increased ability to express and integrate life's experiences

Feminine Embodiment principles assist in deepening one's understanding of self, releasing held experiences, opening to greater vitality & direction, and assisting in facilitating more inner love, peace, happiness, freedom, aliveness & well-being.

As a culture we are often 'emotionally stifled' from childhood. Generally we are taught growing up to suppress most of our feelings and innate impulse and intuition.
In Feminine Embodiment Mentoring participants can learn how to express feelings and emotions to enhance personal power, effectiveness and peaceful interactions.

Typically the emotions of sadness, anger, and fear that are suppressed, once felt and recognised can be freed to move through the body, enabling integration and release.

Suppression of feelings, does not equal freedom. On the contrary, it seems that the deeper we suppress feelings, the harder they pursue us.

Feminine Embodiment Mentoring can assist us in releasing some of these unexpressed emotions, so that we may return to our natural state of peace & joy.

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# Embodiment as Healing

## Engaging the Authentic Self

***Embodiment practice gives us an opportunity to develop emotional freedom, safety and emotional intelligence for life.***

In a safe and supportive environment we can gently release & integrate our feelings.

This often leads to feelings of lightness, relief and deep release; leading to feelings of inner peace, harmony, love, joy for life, and a freedom to be who we truly are.

At the time of releasing suppressed emotions we gain an opportunity to become aware of the release of limiting decisions about ourselves, others, and life.
These pivotal decisions are the basis of our *beliefs* and usually reside in our subconscious. Though we may be unaware of them, they inform and affect virtually everything we do.

By becoming aware of the '*context*' where a core wounding may have initiated, where we anchored in a limiting decision about ourselves, then providing a space to release the emotional charge encircling it, we have the power to make new, life enhancing, decisions.
Engaging with ongoing embodiment practices often leads to a deep connection with the very core of our being. This leads to understandings of ourselves, our purpose in life and our place in the universe at a very deep level.

Somatic practices ground us in our bodies as they are, not as they could or should be or as we wish them to be. It is from this platform of feeling into right 'now' that we build a bridge between our mind, our body, and our heart.

Engaging in somatic work is about becoming an 'integrated' human organism and in this way somatic practices are inherently healing and stress relieving.

We develop a relationship with the swell of our impulses, needs and desires, according to how these are met.

When we ignore our vital impulses, we also lose communication with the wisdom of our bodies, leading to disconnection with our healthy desire and will.

Since our bones, muscles, organs & tissues carry the imprinted memories of experience, when we engage in practices that stimulate these different systems, these stories can move to the surface to be re-experienced, looked at anew and even healed.

# Energetics of a Practitioner

## Holding space for Others

***To 'hold space', one must become aware of habitual responses within ones mind - and instead 'empty out' to listen from your heart space.***

**Qualities of an effective Practitioner:**

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Respond-ability
- Presence
- Respect

**Feminine Embodiment Pillars:**

- Intention
- Enquiry
- Exploration
- Expression
- Integration

## Creating a “Solid” Container

As a Practitioner your responsibility is to hold a safe, feminine container that is inviting, nurturing and supportive of growth and authenticity.

To successfully offer this you will need:

**Integrity** - This is created when we show up when we say we will show up, say what we mean and mean what we say. This is critical to establish trust within the relationship, for trust and so clients are safe to bring their own integrity. Connections go deeper when there is trust and integrity.

**Accountability** - In sessions, we are doing work to come into alignment with ourselves and be congruent so our appearance to the outside world is congruent with who we are inside. This is about being real, authentic and true.

**Responsibility** - This is the ability to 'respond' instead of simply 'react'.
Triggers and sisterhood woundings can come up in group settings. We may be afraid of speaking up if someone triggers us because we don’t want to create “hurt” or face our reaction. We may desire to hide, run away or avoid an issue. The truth is, if it is in the space it may need a voice before it can be cleared.
In sessions, women learn to respond to these experiences by communicating without blaming or shaming instead of reacting. This creates trust and healing.

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# Creating a “solid” container

TIME: Being on time is a very important agreement. It comes from mutual respect for one another’s time. If sessions start late, they may end late. Keeping with the time shows each woman that her time is valuable.

NOT GIVING FEEDBACK: When establishing safe space there is no direct feedback or evaluation; only presence beaming (an attitude reflecting love and support) and quality questions to assist a clients line of enquiry.
This helps create a safe space for women to open up and share without worrying about what judgement or 'incorrect' responses.

**Clarity**: Presencing these agreements at the beginning of sessions is a great way to clear the space and create safety for all involved.

**Commitment vs. Rigidity**: It's important to be committed to an outcome without forcing it. A client will generate their own insights and reflections.

**Receptivity**: You may have an agenda for each meeting, and yet be open and receptive to what might be needed that is 'off the agenda' but in alignment with the intentions.

**Respect**: Be mindful of how you “bend” any structures, and model by example not control, maintaining integrity of agreements. For example, if you are running over time, never keep going without stopping at the end time, asking the group permission for more time and giving people the option to leave if they have another obligation. Ask women to be on time, but also make sure you are also honouring anything you ask.

**Holding space** means when someone is going through something, simply means you support their foundation with your presence and love for them to have their own time and space to work out whatever they’re going through.
You provide stable, solid ground for them to be completely where they’re at; without judgment, criticism or blame. A neutral territory for the other to just be. You have faith in their intelligence to figure it out on their own and resist any temptation to problem solve, rescue or offer advice. Instead you encourage participants back to their own insights, responses and resources. In time individuals learn to listen for this inner feedback system, rather than seek validation.

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# Cultivating Presence:

The more attuned one is, the more present one can be to our body sensations at the same time as read the surrounding energies.
In stillness and openness one can pick up on the energy in the room, and be sensitive to other's energies.

The sacred feminine deeply appreciates being witnessed and holding this space of open presence is healing on many fronts.

A Practitioner masters the art of congruence in body and being, of being mindful of how we are showing up in our presence and body language. Communication occurs with our body  and is 80% of subconscious communication.
Being mindful of posture, communicate with your body that you are attentive with good posture, an open stance and open heart.

Create space and stillness for the allowance of insight.
Do not to fidget or play with anything as you hold a space of presence.
Anchor in your breathing, slowing down and focus on taking deep breaths to come into full presence to enable the client/s in the space to do the same.

When someone is speaking, maintain gentle, open, eye contact.
This will show them that what she has to say matters, and that she matters.

**The main components or holding space are:**

- Letting go of judgment
- Opening your heart
- Allowing another to have whatever experience she's having; therefore giving her "space" without the impulse to rescue or change her.
- Allowing another to talk about her pain without 'fixing '
- Giving your complete undivided attention to the situation/other person and being fully present.
- Dropping down from your mind space into your heart space
- Emptying yourself and becoming a vessel for something larger than you
- Allowing a situation to unfold; allowing the therapeutic space to weave its magic without feeling overly responsible
- Trusting that everyone can heal themselves with time and space
- Less is more. There is a force greater than our own.

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# Deep Listening:

Trust your intuition. Trust your gut. Listen to your higher self's voice as it guides you. Check in with your body.

Allow yourself to be in the present moment and respond to what comes up. If you are present in your own body, you can tune into what your own desires and needs are in the moment and see if others are also having that same feeling arising in them. You'll start to hear and sense more deeply, seeing how things are resonating when you trust your feelings and intuition of what is arising in the space.

Breathe & Relax and stay connected to your body and you will hear with a deeper listening, enabling you to be present to your needs and the needs of others.

# Maintaing your own energy:

How you clear and channel your energy can make or break a session.
Continue to care for your energy and the energetics of the space you provide.

Ensure you are clean, clear and light before your session begins and that your energy attracts, and not repels, your soul clients.
Your energy is most magnetic when you are authentic, clear and well nourished.

Your job, above anything else, is to keep clearing out all of your concerns, limiting beliefs and projections so you come into alignment with the intentions of those you are holding space for. This is the part where you are doing your own work. It's what calls in the right people and creates the glue for your sessions to be divinely guided.

A true leader has done her work and will continue to do her work. She is constantly looking within herself to find where she is connected, accountable and in integrity, and supporting others in this journey.

A good Practitioner does not take on the energy of others, but actively empties out anything she might be holding. Her intension is to maintain her own sovereign energy and refresh her own frequency in order to be a vessel of support for others.
Whatever changes we make in our own lives, this will filter down to our clients.

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