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PROMOTING THE ETHICAL PRACTICE OF SAND THERAPY

Focus on Miniatures

Water

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Water can be a driving force of all nature (De Vinci). It is the only natural substance found in solids, gas, and liquid. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the earth's surface is covered in water, yet not all water is drinkable. According to UNICEF, over 800 children under the age of five die from diseases that can be linked to unsafe drinking water every day (UNICEF, 2023).

As humans, we need water. Water helps humans regulate our internal temperature. We sweat when we are hot. Water helps us flush our bodies of toxins when we urinate. It lubricates our joints and protects our babies as they grow in us. Water also protects our spinal cords and brain cells (Water Science School, 2019). In fact, approximately 60% of our human bodies are comprised of water (Medical News Today, 2023). Water can help us to survive or lead us to our demise. People drown in water, they can be electrocuted in water, they can become dehydrated due to a lack of water.

Water may symbolize purity, faith, or salvation in the Christian Bible. John the Baptist baptized Christ with water on the banks of the Jordan River. In Hebrew, water is known as Mayim. Jonathan Neril (2023) shares that in the Torah, the "see-saw experience of having water and then losing it is the means to develop the spiritual muscles of appreciating God." In the Qur'an, water is

described as the building block of all things, and it is also noted that "man cannot live without water for only three to four days" (Thajudeen, 2023).

Water is also seen as a symbol of unconscious energy, containing formless powers of the soul and motivations both hidden and unrecognized. It holds the "contents of the soul," which may come to the surface (Chevalier et al., p. 1089).

In the sandtray room, many therapists have both wet and dry trays. They may have a pitcher of water within arms reach so the builder can create rivers, lakes, seas, or oceans. Water can be symbolized with wave miniatures, or some therapists will have small containers that can hold water so the



water isn't engulfed by the sand in the sandtray. Old plastic kidney-shaped basins found in hospiwater, are perfect for this purpose. Sadly, many medical settings have replaced the plastic containers that created lovely lakes with cardboard ones that would easily break down if holding water for any length of time. Water can also be represented in fountains, pitchers, or even swimming pool miniatures. In this writer's training with Dr. Gisela De Domenico, before putting miniatures in the sand, trainees could pour large amounts of water in the sand and play with just the sand for at least one play session. This type of sand play was both intense and emotional. At times, memories of earlier childhood experiences were experienced due to this brief sensorial activity.

Four therapists from the UK, Ireland, and the USA shared their thoughts about water. They identified as sandtray therapists who were Therapeutic Play Practitioners and Professional Counsellors and aligned with Adlerian, Humanistic, Integrative, Jungian, and Psychodynamic theoretical orientations. The most common age group that they worked with was aged 10-13 years of age. However, some worked with children under 6 and others with individuals over 65.

The therapists shared that water was utilized for individuals who were processing trauma, abuse, anxiety, stress, and neglect. Water helps communicate blessings, nurturing, and centering, yet it could also communicate aggression, friendship, or the feeling of being flooded, cleansed flowing, traveling, movement, and tears. Not unlike the natural world, where water can be soothing and calming, water can also be destructive as with floods that our world is experiencing regularly due to climate change.

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