

*Theoretical Analysis of the Use of Symbols in Expressive Arts Therapy and Their Effectiveness as an Integrative Part of the Therapeutic Process*

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This study investigated the use of symbols in three primary Expressive Arts therapeutic techniques, Art Therapy, Sandplay Therapy and Storytelling Therapy. Studies suggest that symbols are an important part of the therapeutic process as they support the therapist in the interpretation of non-verbal information and unconscious material. This study describes the use of symbols throughout history, how they were applied in the life situations, how they support the therapeutic process and the value of their use. The use of symbols is recognized in many therapeutic modalities, including psychological testing as well as in a variety of common psychological techniques. However, most therapeutic techniques consider symbols as an attribute or result of the process and not as an integrative and complementary component of therapy. This study analyzed three main Expressive Arts therapies, Art, Sandplay and Storytelling which provided the greatest amount of information about the use of symbols in therapy. This study proposes integrating the use of symbols more fully into the therapeutic context and recommends further research about their effectiveness in uncovering unconscious or repressed information as well as the use of symbols as an integral part of the therapeutic process.