

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION, AWARENESS AND MOTIVATION

1.1 Introductory Orientation

Fast living deprives us of opportunities to engage in **self-expression** and **self-reflection** in a **meaningful** and **aesthetic** manner. The value of **self-expression** is highly esteemed, but there seems to be a need for more practical approaches to assist people who feel inhibited or alienated from the **arts**.

In speaking about dance movement therapy, Kristina Stanton-Jones (1992:95) states the following:

“Culture and the arts, understood broadly, are concerned with the struggle to create meaning out of the general chaos of modern existence. The **arts** offer the opportunity to use symbolism to express difficult issues in the life of one person and the life of society...Creativity taps the ability of the client or patient to draw upon creative resources in thought, action and expression.”

My aim is to attempt to provide a possible example of a more practical process – from a **combined arts therapy** point of view – to assist particular types of clients with expressing themselves and gaining insight into themselves and their situations as a whole, in an “artistic”, logical way, aided strategically by relevant electronic equipment and software.

1.2 Awareness and Motivation for Choice of Topic

I consider myself as someone with an affinity for **people** and new challenges, with an aptitude for **appreciating** and **producing** various **art** forms. My interest and skills fall within the scope of arts therapy and, for some modalities, I received training on a tertiary level.

Throughout my college and university years, I kept my artistic interest alive by painting when possible and, for this purpose, I acquired a camera to photograph subject matter for artworks. Eventually, my interest in people also led me into portrait photography.

At university, I majored in languages in order to fulfill my one dream, which was to become a High School teacher in English. In my English classes, I allowed great **freedom** of expression and presentation and some pupils enjoyed adding image to text, taking great pride in their work. This I found delightful because, in hindsight, I can see that my subconscious aim was to enable myself, and my pupils, to make the abstract slightly more tangible or visible, within the boundaries of language teaching.

During my language teaching years, 1990 to 1994, I needed to have a personal matter resolved and a friend offered to undertake a pastoral counselling journey with me that lasted several weeks. During the course of the process, he gave me an assignment to complete, which I found very enjoyable, because it provided scope to make pressing **inner** issues **visual**. It was a type of **brainstorming** and **problem-solving exercise** in one, a very simple procedure that required the writing down of specific issues, which had to be grouped under specific headings. This brought clarity and inner peace for me, because after I had diagrammatically documented my thoughts on paper, I felt that I had a handle on the issues that had, in the past, seemingly been threatening me, because of a lack of “inner order”. To this day, I find myself returning to this procedure, which I have slightly changed to resemble a mind map appearance.

I taught English for a number of years and achieved some of the professional successes I thought necessary but I felt I had exhausted the creative possibilities that language teaching held for me. A nudge towards **artistic expression** and a growing need to be **intellectually** stimulated led to my resignation.

The years following my resignation were filled with academic pursuits and art production and I became interested in **the motivational and inspirational arenas**. As I observed the methodologies of inspirational material and personalities, I became aware of the fact that

there was, generally speaking, in my opinion, also room for a more practical artistic approach, namely one in which the audience is not listening but doing.

I started applying my mind to these functional artistic exercises. The question I had ringing in my head was, “How can I use (artistic and) expressive activities meaningfully, in a credible way, to (hopefully) assist people accessing their intrinsic motivation?”

During 1996, I enrolled for a three-month, full-time video production course that was taught from a multiskilled perspective, which meant that the student had to write the video script, shoot the video footage, appear on screen and edit the final product. I enjoyed the course thoroughly, because of its **combination of expressive modalities**. The way in which the written text became alive when used with images and music fascinated me, even though, at that point, I could not see how it was possible to use video and its related modalities to motivate people.

I embarked on a one-year career as a full-time artist, which was suspended when I was offered a post in 1998 as a Junior School teacher in Art. Due to the fact that I had no previous art teaching experience, I made interesting professional discoveries, which could possibly be true for all beginner primary school art teachers.

To describe every one of these discoveries in detail would be a daunting task, because some are related to specific art exercises and the personalities of specific children. I do, nevertheless, wish to highlight some recurring “successes” I had with some children and how these discoveries inevitably rekindled my interest in motivational activities.

It is a well-acknowledged fact that most adults believe children are more expressive and imaginative than most adults and my reason for stating this is because the reader might find my discoveries rather mundane. These “mundane” discoveries were, however, the very **factors** that enabled me to attempt to look beyond the art activity in the art room and picture it as a useful tool – perhaps slightly altered to be more symbolic – to assist adults in tackling their inner issues in a colourful and aesthetic way.

Please bear in mind that these discoveries I made refer to the art classes I taught, my teaching environment and my particular approach.

I discovered that most of the junior primary children I taught enjoyed being given a pile of odds and ends or a collection of strange elements and then being left alone to build whatever they felt could be manufactured, using the collection of items. They seemed to derive endless pleasure from their own constructive abilities and the respect they had for their own structures amazed me every time. I saw some of these children carrying their structures around with them the whole day long and “meaningfully” interacting with them.

In my art teaching approach, I try to structure the art activities in such a way that most learners have a chance at being successful. At times, I would give step-by-step instructions involving activities that were quick but impressive and these activities usually excited the children, because almost all of them had a fairly impressive artwork in front of them at the end of the activity. They usually wanted to know immediately whether they could make another one, or whether they could take it home.

As I was enjoying these accidental discoveries, I could see in my mind’s eye the usefulness of some art exercises for motivational work in the teenager and adult populations. I realised that the art exercise would have to be slightly altered to accommodate a symbolic or metaphorical *inner scenario* and, from this idea, an interest in *artistic expression* as a *counselling tool* was triggered. At that stage, I thought that I could find some answers by looking more closely at art therapy and its applications.

I read a book about the use of painting and claywork with patients in hospital but I realised that I did not want to use art as a mere activity to keep people “busy” who were seemingly not understanding what they were doing. I wanted to work with people, who have problems regarding self-understanding and are in need of an activity-focused counselling process to alleviate inner disorder.

During 1999, I enquired at various institutions, both nationally and internationally, in order to see what was happening in the **art therapy** arena and to compare the various art therapy programmes. I found that most courses were not really offering what I was looking for. In general, art therapy courses seemed to focus on the methodologies of structured and unstructured exercises that did not necessarily stimulate self-insight.

As I understood it, the understanding of the self was not the ultimate aim of art therapy, and verbal discourse was at times limited to the minimum. That's why it can be referred to at times as a *silent therapy*. Overseas studies were too expensive, however, and, in South Africa, there was only a one-year introductory art therapy course at the Witwatersrand Technikon, which was still in the planning stage.

My interest in art therapy as a solution to my intentions waned, because I was looking for a methodology that was alive with artistic and verbal expression that would focus on engaging the client meaningfully in a process that would aim at self-understanding and inner order.

I persisted with my search for a meaningful course, which had academic credibility and a focus on assisting people. The B. Ed degree, Educational Guidance and Counselling seemed appropriate.

I finished the B. Ed (2001) and had to postpone my M. Ed studies to 2003, due to restructuring on the part of the university. At the beginning of 2002, I was slightly disorientated because my study focus had to lie dormant for a year. So I decided to try my hand at designing an example of a possible visual or graphic procedure a counsellor might be able to use with some people who would prefer a more visual approach to counselling. The aim of the procedure would be to provide the client with an opportunity to create a type of visual construct that might stimulate a measure of **self-insight** and **inner order** and concretise something that the client is feeling.

I did not consult any literature but decided that it was time to brainstorm this idea by myself to see if part of what I had in my heart and head at that stage was practically possible and to visually **clarify** my own ideas to myself. My focus was on something that was manageable, colourful, stimulating, practical and approachable – worthy of **presentation** and **contemplation** – in order to attempt to create an opportunity or possibility to assemble and resemble a slide of the **holistic** client **scenario** by means of a creative **workshop** environment.

As this procedure took shape, I was conscious of the fact that the elements employed were in no way unique but hoped that there could be some merit in the order or combination of exercises and tangible outcomes. Another important feature of the example I designed was that its focus was entirely on the positive aspects of the client's life and abilities.

Please note that I realise that the environment where the procedure takes place may be an important element but, for the sake of brevity, it will suffice to say that the environment should be friendly and needs to accommodate artistic expression. The time-frames required for each step still need to be scrutinised and a myriad of factors can determine the duration.

A combination of brainstorming processes, art techniques, magazine collages, descriptions and labelling of key words was employed to create an example of what a possible procedure might look like that aims at giving visual substance to issues that are not “categorised” in a person's mind.

The visual process described below can be viewed in **Appendix C** as it is incorporated into the practical research components of **Chapters 5 and 6**.

The procedure I designed was simply an attempt on my part to see how feasible some of my ideas were and what a possible example of such a “creative” combination might look like. Six months later I had to formulate a possible dissertation title and, at that stage, my

focus was still concentrated on art therapy, because that was simply the only field in which I could visualise my area of focus.

As I was considering my options and my completed example of what I thought a possible procedure or approach could look like, I realised that a study that would fall within the boundaries of an art therapy approach *only*, would be limiting my intended holistic visual perspective.

The idea of utilising the wonderful possibilities of video as a medium to render a recorded, holistic and personal “visual document” of the client’s life, opened up a brand new focus. The possibility of incorporating video and other electronic media into the creative counselling environment excited me, for example, if I followed the provisional procedure I had designed, the use of a video camera at strategic places in the six steps would enable me to hand the client a “visual” document of the process he had gone through and it would still be viewable for years to come. I thought that such an “electronic witness” could still motivate the client long after the counselling experience had ended.

As a practising artist and educational counsellor, interested in **effective stimulating aesthetics** – beautiful inspirational constructs that resemble artworks – it dawned on me to enlarge my focus to a **multimedia** approach to counselling. This meant that I could still use the elements of art therapy I regarded as valuable but I was now at liberty to include other expressive modalities, such as video, drama, photography and their relevant techniques, to arrive at some organised **understanding** of the client’s personal environment and identity. The client would have the opportunity to **generate** visual and expressive **imagery (constructs)** as a means of expressing and uncovering hidden potential. These constructions, images and **descriptions** would eventually be pieced together with the help of technology, such as video editing software, in order to arrive at a **tangible outcome** fit for a literal **screening** and private contemplation, to which the client could return at a later stage to monitor self-development. The client would be able to hold in his hands the constructs he had manufactured during the counselling process,

plus a video or a CD/DVD that was a visual summary of where he was and what he had experienced.

The interest my professor took in my personal, practical and visual approach was encouraging and he saw merit in my inclusion of electronic devices. In December 2002, my concept of including multiple expressive modalities was approved and my focus established.

At the beginning of 2003, as I was starting with the first chapter and defining the parameters of my study focus, before I had even embarked on an exhaustive literature search, I decided to have a conceptual presentation video filmed, illustrating my intentions and the examples of what possible self-generated/ client-generated constructs might look like.

The reason for the video in which I actually used myself as a subject, was twofold. Firstly, I wanted to make certain issues clear to my professor, as well as myself, and secondly, I thought that it could be valid visual reference material when convincing possible clients to participate in the practical research component.

Three months elapsed after the video was produced, during which I showed the video to a selected audience in order to place myself – in my head at least – within the right frame of reference. I had not actually started searching for literature that could shed light onto my interest. In this time, I had the privilege of meeting a South African student who had a six-month scholarship and who had personally met George Buck at the University of Alberta, in Canada, who does Arts-based research in Education. I established e-mail contact with George Buck (e-mail 2003: July) and sent him a copy of my conceptual video. His recommendations are mentioned in **Chapter 5**.

In July 2003, I felt I was ready to delve into the library and locate the information that was spread across the visual and expressive therapy spectra. During this time, I was so impressed by the work of Judy Weiser in the field of photo therapy, that I decided to

correspond with her via e-mail in order to establish what other variations and combinations of photo therapy existed (e-mail 2003: August). After having watched a copy of my conceptual video, her response seemed very indifferent but she alerted me to the fact that I was so biased in my interest towards the visual and expressive outcomes that she failed to understand my rationale and how counselling could benefit from the constructs.

She mentioned that my process would definitely be motivational and self-affirming but why couldn't it be just as effective without a counsellor? She managed to help me pinpoint my actual focus and I felt it necessary to change my title to: ANALYSING GUIDED AND RECORDED SELF-GENERATED VISUAL AND EXPRESSIVE PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS AS ADJUNCTS TO THE COUNSELLING PROCESS.

1.3 Analysis of the Problem

My literature collection included material about some 26 visual and expressive therapies, which was necessitated by the wider scope of my interest, as related in 1.2. (See **Chapter 2, Table 1.**) I discovered meaningful material on how a specific expressive modality, or a combination of modalities, could be used to stimulate the client in an attempt to make the inner concerns visible. Most combined approaches did not, however, seem to value the “recordability” of the process, except for sandplay therapy, which relies heavily on the slides taken of the tray scenes that apparently only really have true value five years *after* completion of the therapy, when the client is confronted with the slide.

Apart from the *lack* of a “recordability” focus, the literature also indicated that virtually all expressive combinations *lacked* an interest in trying to create a holistic picture of the client's life. In order to illustrate my point here, I refer back to the possible procedure in 1.2, where an attempt is made to cover a few areas of the client's life, such as his present cognitive concerns, his dreams for the future, his identity and his plan of action, to see some necessary changes take place.

My intended study focus differs from other approaches, in which visual and expressive therapies are combined. This difference does not only lie in the structured, rehearsed and *positive* confrontational emphasis, but also in the attempt to implement video affirmatively. This does not mean to say that other durable and positive confrontational elements cannot be found in art, therapeutic writing, photo therapy and recorded drama therapy and that the needs of the population I am targeting, namely fairly healthy people in need of self-understanding, cannot be met by another approach.

Before the use of video is illuminated in the broader context, it might be valuable to provide a synoptic overview of the other expressive combinations that seem to be very prevalent in the literature (discussed in **Chapters 2** and **4**):

- art and movement;
- art and video;
- art, movement, sound, writing and drama;
- art, music and writing;
- drama (playback theatre), music, play, sandplay, art and storytelling;
- drama and video;
- drama, humour and art;
- phototherapy (photographs including photocopies) and art processes;
- poetry (writing) and music;
- sandplay, photography, video and art (including building a scene with miniatures);
- storytelling and video; and
- writing and voice work (singing).

In referring to the abovementioned combinations, it is important to note that the literature seems to lack a step-by-step procedures plan for counsellors to meaningfully integrate expressive modalities. The literature does, however, provide ample techniques and examples, for which certain expressive therapeutic approaches may be used. I am of the opinion, however, that perhaps the majority of these techniques could leave many

counsellors indifferent, because of the high level of confidence and competency some approaches demand. Interesting applications of video were discovered, as illustrated in **Chapters 2** and **4**.

Some writers claim that the counsellor is only limited by his own creativity and they, therefore, seem to imply that only counsellors who themselves *feel* creative, or are perhaps skilled in an expressive approach or approaches may attempt to employ a more “colourful” approach to counselling.

I saw a need in the literature for at least an attempt to provide a structured approach example for a specific population, to help the counsellor see how he or she could practically and credibly stimulate a client without feeling overwhelmed by the practical implications and demands of the visual and expressive arts therapies, and have **professional-looking constructs** as fringe benefits of the approach, as well as a stimulated and satisfied client. The reason for saying this is that the arts therapies are known for their ability to utilise spontaneity, which may cause some counsellors to withdraw from the arts applications, due to their “unplanned” nature.

As explained in **Chapter 5**, a similar concept, embarked upon or completed in research, incorporating multiple visual and expressive therapies and media, to establish a possible degree of self-understanding in the client by producing a tangible recorded portfolio with aesthetic outcomes in an enjoyable facilitative environment, was not found at the time of my literature search.

1.4 Problem Statements

- Is it possible to create an innovative motivational process to benefit those counselling clients who would prefer to engage in a creative, expressive and tangible process?
- Is it possible to implement a counselling process that can assist the client to create a “visual narrative”, in order to transcend mere language or printed symbols?

- Is it possible to synthesise some core elements of different therapeutic approaches and counselling techniques, in order to create a sensory client-friendly model that could serve as a motivational portfolio?
- Does a visual and auditory exhibition of inner concerns trigger meaningful self-insight in some clients?
- Can self-generated visual and expressive personal constructs aid the counselling process?
- Can visual and expressive counselling adjuncts play a more prominent role in counselling?
- Is it practically possible for the counselling process to assist a client in manufacturing stimuli that will be decorative but, at the same time, laden with a personal message to motivate change?

1.5 The Aims of the Investigation

1.5.1 Immediate aims

- ✓ Designing a practical procedure, with the aim of creating a holistic portfolio, by employing multiple media to create a visible and audible construct that can literally be viewed on a television screen, in order to stimulate self-insight in the client.
- ✓ Establishing the effectiveness of a procedure designed to create a holistic picture of the client's situation, as depicted by self-generated visual and expressive media.
- ✓ Determining whether the client experienced any meaningful inner response during such a practical and professional looking process.
- ✓ Gaining insight into the value that a multiple arts therapy and media approach holds for the counselling process.
- ✓ Determining the elements regarded as most enlightening, enjoyable and worthy within the parameters of the case study, as well as the exercises that need to be altered, in order to optimise client co-operation.
- ✓ Establishing the meaning of the final private screening for the client's situation.

1.5.2 Secondary aims

- Constructing a marketable, enjoyable and sensory approach to counselling and the motivational arena.
- Triggering self-development and self-discovery in clients, such as discovering talents for activities they did not consider before.
- Enabling clients to leave the process feeling personally enriched, because they were involved in a creative process for which they have proof.

1.6. Concept Elucidation

ANALYSING GUIDED AND RECORDED SELF-GENERATED VISUAL AND EXPRESSIVE PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS AS ADJUNCTS TO THE COUNSELLING PROCESS

1.6.1 Guided

The word “guided” is used in the context of facilitating, assisting and accompanying someone who needs practical advice and encouragement. The counsellor will be guiding the client through the activities and providing the necessary assistance needed in the various stages of the process. The counsellor will intervene at strategic points to ensure that the process keeps its momentum and that the client retains the correct focus.

1.6.2 Recorded

This refers to the capturing of information in an artwork format, or in electronic storage devices. The process will employ video cameras, digital cameras, photocopy and laminating machines and pen and paper to document relevant issues.

1.6.3 Self-generated

The term relates especially to the artworks and expressive constructs that will be created autonomously by the client. The client becomes the major source of information and may

only work with authentic issues stemming from the self, or selected by the self as being relevant and configured by the self in a meaningful expression (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996:1314).

1.6.4 Visual

“Visual” refers to all the constructions, collages, images and other visible, durable, art-like representations created by the client in any format, including the final integrating result, namely the video, CD or DVD that will be showcased.

1.6.5 Expressive

“Expressive” refers to expressions on paper, e.g. prose and poetry; body movements; interviews; and drama-like appearances. This excludes all the fine art applications incorporated under “visual”.

1.6.6 Personal

All aspects of the client’s life and expressions thereof, visually or through verbal expression, triggered by the implications of participating in this personalised approach, aimed at providing inner insight, are regarded as personal.

1.6.7 Constructs

“Constructs” refer to any visual or expressive artefact that has been made, painted, constructed or documented by the client, which has visible or tangible evidence, e.g. a drawing or a poem (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996:309).

1.6.8 (Counselling) Adjuncts

Adjuncts refer to the constructs that provide material for conversation with which to engage the client in meaningful verbalizations (Tulloch, 1993:21).

1.6.9 Synthesis

This research project intends to investigate the responses elicited by a **process** that is practical and intellectually stimulating and which maps the client's inner concerns, expressive preferences and abilities through the application of arts media.

1.7. Research Design

This is a qualitative study with a phenomenological focus, in which information about the **process** will be gathered from one participant who is willing and interested in being part of a study that relies on practical applications and video appearances. The goal is to ascertain whether it is possible to gain self-insight and inner clarification by means of a combination of arts therapies. The process will span a three and a half-day island-counselling environment.

1.8 Programme of Research

In **Chapter 1**, the layout of the study focus and the aims of the study are set out.

In **Chapter 2**, a brief discussion on the use of art **in** therapy and art **as** therapy introduces the literature review, in which the essence of each of the various visual and expressive arts therapies that may possibly be included in the combined approach (explained in **Chapter 5**) is outlined.

In **Chapter 3**, the most common therapeutic themes that occur in the literature across the indicated arts therapy spectrum, which are discussed in **Chapter 2**, are highlighted.

In **Chapter 4**, the most relevant techniques, procedures and methods are discussed and illuminated by means of applicable exercises. The latter part of the chapter sets out the most common existing combinations and provides a foundation and rationale for the way in which the intended research activities will be combined in **Chapter 5**. A demonstration is given of the existing natural tendency to partially combine different arts therapies. The chapter concludes with a list of materials needed for the explained exercises.

In **Chapter 5**, a possible step-by-step layout is given of the detailed pilot study that was done on myself, accompanied by a brief exposition of the successes and weaknesses others and myself saw in the process. A new simplified, step-by-step multiple media process is proposed for the respondent who will be taken through the process in **Chapter 6**.

In **Chapter 6**, results and findings of the empirical study are presented in writing.

In **Chapter 7**, the findings that were highlighted in the literature and the empirical research are expounded. Certain recommendations and deductions, based on the literature review and on information gleaned from the empirical study, will be made.