

Art Therapy Exercises

Inspirational and Practical Ideas
to Stimulate the Imagination

Liesl Silverstone

Foreword by Brian Thorne



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Foreword

The sense I'm left with is of harvest time – the season of abundance, a time for garnering, the fruition of much patient caring, of sometimes unrelenting toil and, above all, of loving and committed hopefulness. Liesl Silverstone's new book – a kind of presenter's supplement to her highly acclaimed *Art Therapy the Person-Centred Way* – is the outcome of a personal and professional life dedicated to the celebration of the imagination and to an unshakable belief in the resilience of the human spirit.

For Liesl, art therapy and the person-centred approach are much more than a powerful response to individual suffering and wounded lives. They are a means of ensuring that in an age beset by competitive materialism and cognitive arrogance, the capacity of human beings to dream dreams, to create new worlds and to enter into deep empathic communion with each other is nourished and fostered. The training experiences she created and facilitated, which continue as certificate and diploma courses in person-centred art therapy skills throughout the country, have become a continuing beacon of hope in a world where all too often what seems to count is the number of targets achieved or what can be measured in quantitative terms.

Liesl believes in the often hidden potential of the human person to move towards a fullness of living where imagination, intuition and the creative impulse share parity of esteem with cognitive ability and analytical thought. She trusts the inarticulate yearnings of those who cannot find words to convey their deepest desires and aspirations. She encourages those who have never painted or sketched or modelled to discover their creative ability and thereby to enter a world infinitely larger than the imprisoning context of their previous existence. Many of us perhaps pay lip-service to concepts of holistic integrity, but Liesl challenges therapists and clients alike to take the risk of moving beyond the boundaries of familiar terrain to discover the liberation and the excitement of exercising capacities which had previously remained dormant or unacknowledged. There was a period when I had the privilege of acting as consultant to her training courses. To visit her cohorts of students as they neared the end of their training was to be assured of a transformative experience and to have my own limited perceptions of reality extended and rendered more challenging and entrancing.

In the pages of this book readers will find a veritable cornucopia of exercises which have the potential to open up new vistas and to inspire imaginative journeys of great richness. They are an invitation to trust the process of letting go of limitations and to respond to the challenge of extending awareness even if this seems frightening or even a little crazy. Most of the exercises are devised by Liesl herself and have stood the test of application in her own training groups or therapeutic encounters. Simply to read them is itself a voyage of discovery, but for many trainers and therapists they will constitute a repertoire

on which they can draw as from an inexhaustible well. I have no doubt, too, that they will serve as an inspirational stimulus for the creation of further exercises which will offer yet more possibilities for those who retain their faith in human beings to transcend the often unwelcome desert of our current culture. Lies's life and work are an enduring symbol of the hope which lies beyond despair. For me she calls up the image of the rare flower in full bloom which appears through an unexpected crack in the concrete. I salute her and, with countless others, rejoice in having known her.

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