

An Examination of the Experience and Use of Self
In Facilitating a Mindful-Based Expressive Arts Therapy Group
For People Living with Cancer

by
Miriam Anne Duff

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to deepen awareness of my experiencing, personally and professionally, in facilitating a mindful-based expressive arts group for people living with cancer. A heuristic, multi-modal approach was used. Consultations with mindful-based expressive arts mentor and Drumming Elder facilitated data checking and provided outside perspectives. Over the ten week period that I facilitated the group I wrote field notes, expressed myself through contemplative responsive drumming (North American Indigenous hand drum) and created visual art with a focus on the questions of the study. Findings included identifying core themes that emerged across personal and facilitative contexts. Consistent with the literature, these themes included the role of self-care, presence and bearing witness, and being part of the greater whole, sitting with uncertainty and learning to trust the process. I observed these themes occurring through a rippling out process from the intrapersonal to the facilitative, to the group collective experience. I learned to appreciate the drum and the art as teachers and co-researchers, adding dimension to the data, and providing triangulation for the findings. In addition, I came to recognize the facilitative role of rhythm instruments in opening up a liminal space for group members and myself through mindful self-expression. The creative synthesis that arose was a metaphor, the dynamic image of myself playing my drum, which embodied my experience as the therapist engaging with the group. This study allowed me to deepen my personal and professional awareness and understanding as an emerging expressive arts therapist.

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My Personal Invocation



Creator, Spirit moving across the land
Mother Earth holding and birthing life
Rivers that flow over her face, gathering in
all the droplets that ebb and flow from land and sky,
be with me, help me to understand the ways of holding another,
nurturing growth, awareness and the creative impulse
that dances through life, death and all creation.

Help me creative imagination, intuition, muses of the artists, dancers, musicians, shamans, saints and teachers...

to understand and find the right words to bear and open meanings for this work,
as I turn my conscious mind, speaking tongue, sensing body, and creative impulse
towards this sacred, ancient way of being,

Ancestors, grandparents, mother, father, siblings, husband, children, patients, animals, community
help me know in relationship the ways of being with and being absent,
the manner of encouraging creative presence and honouring that with words and spaces.

Mindful too, of my time on this earth,
and how that tentativeness comes into play
and into the rhythm and reason of my words.

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Introduction

The position of expressive arts therapist is a sacred privilege, a responsibility and an opportunity to grow and develop in relationship like no other. The process of facilitating and engaging in expressive arts therapy requires safety, containment and presence as essential ingredients. These are supported and sustained by the therapist's own personal self-awareness and attunement, which, when well developed, act as a wellspring for the therapeutic process, sustaining and feeding both therapist and client. The therapist's training involves developing her use of self as a finely tuned instrument to serve in the therapeutic process with the client. Under ideal circumstances, the client benefits not only from the active interactions, but also has the opportunity to learn from the modelling that a self-aware therapist provides.

A mindful-based expressive arts therapy orientation particularly calls for the therapist's attunement and self-awareness, amongst other skills (McNiff, 2015). Confident embodiment of an attitude of inquiry and nonjudgmental awareness in the present moment forms a foundational part of the work in mindful-based practice (Callahan, 2016; Rappaport, 2014; Isis, 2014). Knowledge of what is already here, as well as what may arise, in oneself as well as in the other, calls for a therapist who has developed these skills and is grounded well enough to engage her use of self in the service of the other within a mindful-oriented process (Peterson, 2014).

I provide expressive arts programming for people living with cancer, and find it very beneficial to integrate a mindful-based perspective into my approach. Therefore, the opportunity to deepen my understanding in this particular area is a natural fit for the focus of my final project.

Description of Self

The therapist is a person first, thus, in bringing myself to the work, I bring my accumulated knowledge, experience and personal being, in addition to my training and skills. Each of these can be an asset as well as a blind spot or obstacle, depending upon the context. Besides my therapeutic training and orientation, my previous education and lived experience, including work history and personal life, are essential aspects in my personal makeup. My cultural heritage, family of origin, socio-economic status, relative privilege or lack thereof, personal faith, value system, personal assumptions and practices are all important, sometimes overlooked aspects that I also bring into the work. Thus it behoves me to know myself, and be attuned to these biases and parts of who I am. Exploring and naming these aspects is one way of knowing. Practicing in a self-reflective way will also help me to monitor, and at times discover, how these parts of myself influence my perceptions, assumptions, and responses in the therapeutic work itself.

Clinical Issues

Engaging in a process that is focused on my own experiencing of self and my awareness of use of self in the context of mindful-based expressive arts therapy has implications for clinical practice that can be both positive and negative. Attending to my experience ought to result in greater attunement and presence in my role as a therapist and group facilitator. However, taken too far, this inward gaze could lead to self-absorption and second-guessing that sidelines the group in the process.

The manner in which I structure my focus is important. Making the link between experience of self, use of self and facilitation of a therapeutic process will be beneficial in balancing my perspective. Stepping back from my interior view for perspective checks will also

be important. To ensure I address this I have sought out regular consultation with a mentor experienced in facilitating mindful-based expressive arts programming for groups and therapy for individuals. Sharing the data I am collecting with her provides a means to consider the information arising from the perspective of another, and to explore aspects and patterns through a facilitated process of reflective discussion.

Proposed Theoretical Approach and Research Questions

I have used a heuristic approach to systematically examine my experiencing by way of field notes and arts-based enquiry. I will focus upon my experience and use of self while facilitating the Expressive Arts Group for People Living with Cancer, a ten-week program provided within a tertiary outpatient oncology service setting in a large city in Midwestern Canada. Arts-based enquiry and field note preparation was undertaken separately following each meeting in my personal studio. To facilitate data-checking and address subjective limitations I have sought consultation with Marg Janick-Grayston, as my mindfulness-based expressive arts mentor throughout the research process, and with respect to responsive drumming based upon North American Indigenous style, I have consulted with my Drumming Elder Val Vint, from whom I began my learning about the drum.

I have posed the following central question and two sub questions for this project,

1. What are the themes and patterns of relationship that arise in my experience and use of self in facilitating a mindful-based expressive arts group for people living with cancer, as revealed through my field notes and my arts-based enquiry?
 - a. What does the responsive drumming reveal about my facilitation experiences over the course of this 10-week group?
 - b. How does the use of these modalities together help to inform my enquiry?

Review of the Literature

The facilitation of mindful-based expressive arts therapy groups is a role that requires the therapist to be knowledgeable of expressive arts and mindful-based processes, skilled in group facilitation, and able to maintain an awareness of self that is both personal and attuned to the group's process and development (Callahan, 2016; Fox, 2014; Isis, 2014; Knill, 2005; Peterson, 2014). Consideration of this perspective will be given with a review of the literature that includes contributions from seminal leaders in the Expressive Arts Therapy field, and recent publications. It is necessary to begin with a brief discussion of the core principles of expressive arts therapy, as they provide the context and frame of reference for the therapist/group facilitator's work. The focus will then move to the more specific context of mindful-based groups and, even more specifically, those that are geared to people living with cancer.

Principles of Expressive Arts Therapy

The theoretical principles of Expressive Arts Therapy delineate the nature of the therapist's work. A pioneer and leading educator in the field, Stephen Levine (2011) has aptly described Expressive Arts Therapy as "a 'theory indigenous to the arts,' a way of understanding that would be appropriate to aesthetic experience itself, not based upon another foundation" (p. 21). Mitchell Kossak (2015) has provided specific detail, "The overriding consideration in expressive arts therapy is the same as in any psychotherapy approach, which includes sensitivity to each client's needs, rooted in the capacity of the human imagination to reveal creative solutions to complex problems" (p. 4). He described the difference between expressive arts therapy and single modal art therapies as follows, "the imagination is considered the main focus in the sense that it can be employed in a multisensory and multidimensional way toward the goal of health and well-being " (Ibid). Kossak (2015) also referred to this as creative intelligence,

which he viewed to be an innate aspect of being human, comparable to an instinct. He considered a key function in expressive arts therapy as being to re-engage and instill awareness of this instinctive creative intelligence, which many have become alienated from, due to insensitive school programming (p. 28). In support of this, Margaret Jones Callahan (2016), a mindfulness-based arts therapist and educator, responsible for creating a curriculum (the SPARKS Guide) for high schools in Vancouver, British Columbia has noted, "Research shows that without active encouragement and the opportunity to practice in a supportive environment, the adolescent's ability to draw or to sing comes to a developmental standstill" (p. 9).

Below, I have drawn heavily from Levine's elegant explication of expressive arts therapy theory, augmented by other leaders in the field, to highlight its core principles and link them to the role of the therapist/group facilitator. I have also touched upon its philosophical underpinnings, to reveal its existential, relational and phenomenological roots.

Intermodality. Levine (2011) acknowledged Paolo Knill, the founder of the intermodal approach, as responsible for returning arts therapies to a more wholistic and integrative approach within the human experience of artistic expression, "intermodality makes sense once we realize that artistic disciplines are rooted in the different modalities of sensory experience...all of these ...are united in the common-sense experience of having a body" (p. 22). This form has also been acknowledged in terms of its deep roots in human history and sacred shamanic practices. "Art-making has traditionally been intermodal within the context of dramatic or ritual performance" (Ibid, also noted by Atkins and Eberhart, 2014; Kossak, 2015; McNiff, 2004). Another early proponent, Natalie Rogers (1993), considered expressive arts to be multimodal by its very nature. Modelling her approach after that of her father, Carl Rogers' Person-Centered approach (p. 3), Natalie acknowledged the dynamic work made possible through the multimodal process of

expression, aptly naming her approach the Creative Connection (p. 4). For example, in describing group work she stated, "Becoming aware of the connection between one creative form and another is key to elevating a group's process through the expressive arts" (Rogers, 2011, p. 7). Likewise, Kossak (2015) noted that employing a multimodal approach led to more shifts in internal embodied awareness, "a larger way of seeing or knowing" (p. 23).

Poiesis. Levine (2011) associated expressive arts with the concept of poiesis, "taken from classical Greek...the act of making in general, and artistic making in particular" (p. 23). He denoted the relationship of "making" to human adaptation, a way of being, in a vast range of environments, and thus our success as a species.

What is implied in the concept of *poiesis* is that art-making is not divorced from other forms of production...rather it is an extension and development of the basic capacity of human beings to shape their worlds...In building its world, the human shapes the environment, and as it does so it shapes itself. *World-building is self-building*. (Levine, 2011, pp. 23-24).

This concept thus implies the tremendous potential for transformation, as Levine further noted, "...the very fact that we have made this world as it is should awaken us to the possibility of changing it. *Poiesis is always possible* (Levine, 1999, p. 31)" (Ibid).

Likewise, Rollo May (1975) observed that the dialectical relationship between the world and human beings, was inherent to the creative act:

A dialectical process goes on between world and self and self and world; one implies the other, and neither can be understood if we omit the other. This is why one can never localize creativity as a subjective phenomenon...within the person. The pole of the world

is an inseparable part of the creativity of an individual. What occurs is always a *process*, a *doing* - specifically a process interrelating the person and his or her world (p. 50).

Artmaking as performative - witnessing imagination made manifest. Within this context, Levine (2011) observed that art-making "*shows* something and it shows itself as having been made...it needs to be seen...in this sense...art is always *performative*...it requires an audience in order to be what it is" (p. 24). Thus, the creative imagination is manifested, via the artwork, into being-in-the-world and thereby witnessed in a personally meaningful way. Levine described art's invitation to imagine within the context of the real world, "art indicates its quality of irreality, its ability to create an alternative world of the imagination...At the same time, this alternative world of imagination always takes place within the literal reality in which we exist." (Ibid).

Kossak (2015) noted a similar experience in the arts community, and also observed witnessing was a mutual communion, "this kind of ecstatic experience...reported by musicians, actors, painters, dancers, and poets is similar to ...an expressive arts therapy session...a deeply shared experience of intersubjective connectivity occurs through the sharing and witnessing of the art process" (p. 16).

Aesthetic response, experiencing surprise and discovery. Due to its performative nature, expressive artwork has the capacity to affect or "move" us. This is known as our "aesthetic response" to the work (Levine, 2011, p. 25). Atkins and Eberhardt (2014, p. 41) differentiated this from its more general use, "In the field of expressive arts the idea of aesthetics is related not to formal rules of what is considered beautiful...but to an awareness of and sensitivity to what emerges that inspires, awakens and energizes us." In the context of therapy, Levine noted, "When the work results in an aesthetic response on the part of the client, we can

say that it has been effective, it has touched what we can call their 'effective reality'... This aesthetic response can also be seen as the proper psychological point of reference for aesthetic experience" (Ibid). Knill (2005, p. 137) has noted this experience to be what Gendlin (1993) described in his focusing method as a "felt sense" (p. 1). This is the transformative process at the heart of expressive arts therapy, as explained by Levine (2011):

Art is not self-expression; it does not merely give an outward form for what is already there in our inner worlds...Of course we could say that the impulse to make art often begins with an inner psychic state. However, as soon as the artist begins to shape his or her material, that impulse becomes transformed. The work starts to shape itself, and the role of the artist is to allow it to find its proper form, rather than to force it into a pre-conceived mold. (p. 25).

Flowing from this process is the therapeutic output that both making the art, and aesthetically responding to the art created can realize, "precisely because it goes beyond myself, it can affect me in a powerful way: it can touch me deeply and change my way of being in the world" (Levine, 2011, p. 26). This new awareness may be experienced as surprise and discovery, and can lead to new understandings, shifts in perception, and a changed way of being.

Likewise, Allen (1995) described "the appearance of certain images which are 'numinous' or spirit-filled...These images are signposts into the depths of your self...Archetypal images emerge that help to place your personal experience within a larger context of the imagination of humankind" (p. 87). She noted that sharing these images, as well as witnessing others' images was important. "Such images require witness...These images belong to all of us, or rather, we belong to them, and we are nourished by viewing images made by others that resonate within our depths" (Ibid).

Existence as Being-in-the-world. Levine identified with contemporary philosopher, Martin Heidegger's view of existence. Heidegger (1962) referred to this human existence as a particular kind of individual Being, "Dasein is in itself historical"(p. 67), and "has *in each case mineness*...one must always use a personal pronoun when one addresses it: 'I am', 'you are' "... (p. 68). Furthermore he stated, "In determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of a possibility which it *is* itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands. This is the formal meaning of Dasein's existential constitution" (p. 69). The reality of existence as a conscious being is also contextual, Heidegger referred to this as Dasein's "facticity", a concept which "implies that an entity 'within-the-world' has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world" (p. 82). Heidegger observed that this way of being involved a particular essential attitude, "Because Being-in-the-world belongs essentially to Dasein, its Being towards the world...is essentially concern" (p.84) - simply put, to care. Following this line of reasoning, Levine (2011) paid attention to the way in which we encounter our experiences, "we experience the world and others through our senses, and we *make* sense of what we experience..."(p. 27).

Heidegger (1962) also described the temporal nature of human existence in the a-priori world, "Dasein's Being - this 'that it is' - is veiled in its "whence" and "whither", yet disclosed in itself ...we call it the "thrownness" of this entity into its "there"; ...as Being-in-the-world, it is the "there" (p. 174). Following this line of reasoning, Levine (2011) observed, "I always have the capacity to *respond* to what has been given to me...Within the framework of expressive arts, we could say that poiesis implies the capacity to respond to the world in which we find ourselves" (p. 27). Levine (1992) viewed conscious human existence to be informed by our imagination, "To be alive means to be in the world as embodied beings, capable of imagining ourselves more

deeply, i.e., seeing our authentic possibilities in the course of our lives" (p. 41), and this speaks to the experience of hope. He further distinguished this form of creative engagement from fantasy, which he recognized as a more avoidant, irrational response "fantasy ...ignores actuality in constructing images of pleasure or pain...We are in the world in a vital way only through creative affirmation, the imaginative projection of our own possibilities" (Ibid).

Suffering and the helpless situation. We experience suffering when we find ourselves confronted by circumstances that we cannot imagine overcoming, as Levine (1992) observed, "Sickness and suffering then, come from a wound to our imaginative capacity" (Ibid). We may be unable to change our circumstances and/or we may encounter trauma over which we have no control. These can arise from a variety of circumstances, such as being confronted with failure, loss, illness, disability, abuse, neglect or an unexpected change in our environment. When life's adversities overwhelm us, due to outside circumstances and/or our perceptions of what has happened, we may view our situation as insurmountable, and become stuck, and fall into self-blame. "We fantasize because we cannot imagine"(Ibid). Paolo Knill (2005) aptly referred to this as "the helpless situation", wherein either the person feels overwhelmed by "too much" or too little, nothing is there, nothing helps. Both "bring an experience of being stuck, an agitated immobility which we also characterize as a 'lack of play range' (*Spielraum*)" (p. 78).

Role of the Therapist/Group Facilitator as Change Agent

Suffering is a universal aspect of human experience and the impetus for the development of a vast array of therapeutic approaches and healing arts. While suffering can immobilize, it also holds potential through the process of healing, for growth and transformation that can spur development forward. Levine (2011) observed that as change agents, "We are responsible for shaping our interventions so as to help the people we are working with regain the capacity for

creative action that they have lost" (p. 29). The very name, change agent, denotes the therapist's use of self in the context of the therapeutic relationship, informed by his or her own personal experiencing (aesthetic response/felt sense) to facilitate healing. Virginia Satir's (2000), description of her own use of self in the therapeutic relationship sums up the personal nature of the work:

The whole therapeutic process must be aimed at opening up the healing potential within the patient or client...through the meeting of the deepest self of the therapist with the deepest self of the person, patient, or client. When this occurs, it creates a context of vulnerability----of openness to change. (p. 25)

Levine (1992) further described, "healing has to be understood as the restoration of a person's imaginative capacity. Only the restoration of the imagination will heal our souls."(p. 41). This relates to what Knill (2005) described as "a 'rite of restoration.' "(p. 78), a ritual that can offer healing and restore wellbeing to the person and their community (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014, p. 39). Key to the expressive arts therapy approach will be the elements that follow.

Creating safety, providing a holding environment. The restorative healing nature of the therapist's work is made possible, "through the creation of an imaginal space between the therapist and patient...In this space...therapeutic play can take place" (Levine, 2011, p. 41). This is where the expressive arts enter in, providing a playful means to embody self-expression in a tangible way, "I imaginatively express my being-in-the-world...The therapist's affirmation of the patient's creative life restores the connection to what has been lost...Poiesis makes healing possible" (Levine, 2005, p. 42).

The facilitative and accepting "holding environment" Levine described has its roots in pediatrician and psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott's (1971), theory of play. Winnicott observed the

loving and reliable relationship with the mother to lay the foundation of the child's capacity for creative play, as it supported the child in navigating the transition between self, joined with mother and self as separate from mother:

...the mother...is in a to and fro' between being that which the baby has the capacity to find and (alternatively) being herself waiting to be found...Confidence in the mother makes an intermediate playground here...I call this a playground because play starts here. The playground is a potential space between the mother and the baby or joining mother and baby. Play is immensely exciting...the thing about playing is always the precariousness of the interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects. This is the precariousness of magic itself, magic that arises in intimacy, in a relationship that is found to be reliable. To be reliable the relationship is necessarily motivated by the mother's love...When a patient cannot play the therapist must attend to this major symptom before interpreting fragments of behaviour. (p. 47)

Winnicott (1971) recognized that play provided the underlying basis for wellbeing, "It is good to remember always that playing is itself a therapy...Play is...always a creative experience... in the space-time continuum, a basic form of living..." (p. 50). And he announced the central role of the transitional space within the therapeutic relationship as, "the only place where play can start, a place that is at the continuity-contiguity moment, where transitional phenomena originate" (p. 103).

Drawing upon this emphatic message, Levine (2005) noted that, by providing a safe, accepting therapeutic setting, in which experimentation with different ways of being was invited, while as the therapist, practicing a "letting be" attitude, a transitional experience could be fostered for the client or patient. This in turn was characterized by a particular kind of

experience, generally found in playing, "a kind of dreaming or reverie, a relaxed state of being in which distinctions are held at bay and one feels nourished by not having any demands put upon oneself to exist in a certain way" (p. 49).

Kossak (2015), offered this perspective, based upon his work engaging others in improvisational play, and connecting with them as a facilitator on a level playing field:

In expressive arts therapy I enter into an uncertain situation that is addressed through experimentation and free exploration...it is possible to feel a relational connectivity to myself, my clients, the groups and communities I work with ...but only if uncertainty and chaotic states are tolerated and held in a safe and caring way...the first thing I try to communicate is that we are here to accept everyone in all ways. (p. 73-74)

Thus, the people have an opportunity to play in a multisensory, multidimensional way, thereby reconnecting to their imagination, which is a central resource in their movement towards health and wellbeing (Kossak, 2015, p. 4).

Aesthetic responsibility. Knill (2005) used this term to summarize the therapist's responsibilities as a participant in the expressive arts process. He listed these to include, committed attention, and a surrender that exceeds the limits of time and space. He also noted "a permeation of boundaries between artist and emergent" (p. 140) - which might be considered as allowing for the third in the room, the voice of the art. He referred to "a non-possessive attraction and yearning toward the emergent, letting go of work when it is recognized" (Ibid). Similarly, Rollo May (1975) described the receptivity of the artist as an essential aspect of the creative process, "Receptivity is the artist's holding him or herself alive and open to hear what being may speak...in order to let one's self be the vehicle of whatever vision may emerge...waiting for the birthing process to begin..." (p. 80-81).

Knill (2005) acknowledged that an important aspect of aesthetic responsibility also included, "understanding that the validity of the process is independent of the 'loveliness' or 'beastliness' of the emergent" (p. 140). Further to this aspect, Shaun McNiff (2004) has observed that, "The disturbing image is typically the one that delivers the most important messages. It wants to be seen and heard... Typically it furthers my compassion for the places in others and myself where, the soul is wounded, suffering or confused" (p. 103).

Similar points have been made by others, including Pat Allen (1995), who stated, "imagination is the deepest voice of the soul and can be heard clearly only through cultivation and careful attention. A relationship with our imagination is a relationship with our deepest self...Art is a way of knowing what it is we actually believe" (p. 3)." Like Knill, Allen instructed, "The first step, then, with no outcome in mind, is to begin to practice awareness. Play with the different ways in which you can be aware. *The images are already here*" (p. 5).

This connects to both the contextual and numinous, sacred nature of the work, as Shaun McNiff (2004) has stated, "the agents of transformation are more likely to be in the atmosphere or ambience than within the person. This is why healing through art is so closely identified with spiritual traditions that focus on one's relationship to something other than the limited self (p. 19). A reverential approach is called for, "Art as a spiritual discipline entails paying attention to images and opening ourselves to their unique expressions rather than trying to fix the problems we think they represent" (p. 103).

Atkins and Eberhart described (2014) therapist attitudes necessary to the work to include, playfulness, non-judgment, and trusting the process; "Our way to work with the arts is open and playful...We listen to the possibilities of the media, the materials, ...and we listen to the body. These elements become our teachers...Working with the process and products of art making in

expressive arts requires the same attitude of non-judgment that is requisite to any helping relationship" (p. 45).

Presence and the person of the therapist. Eberhart and Atkins (2014) assert that effective process-oriented work really centres on the person of the therapist, due to the quality of trust and presence that is required, "we could say that expressive arts practice is more about who you are, how you are and how you think than what you do" (p. 28). This resonates with Virginia Satir's (2000) observation in use of self:

When I am fully present with the patient or family, I can move therapeutically with much greater ease. I can simultaneously reach the depths to which I need to go, and at the same time honor the fragility, the power, and the sacredness of life in the other. When I am in touch with myself, my feelings, my thoughts, with what I see and hear, I am growing toward becoming a more integrated self. I am more congruent, I am more "whole," and I am able to make greater contact with the other person. (p. 24)

This, and likewise Eberhart and Atkins's view of the nature of presence, aligns with philosopher Martin Buber's (1958) foundational concept of the "I-Thou" relationship. Buber stated that, "the primary word *I-Thou* establishes the world of relation" (p. 6). This relationship as he described it, seems to be imbued with both immediacy and deep, integrative reverence for the shared nature of presence, "The Thou meets me. But I step into direct relation with it.... I become through my relation to the Thou: As I become I, I say *Thou*. All real living is meeting" (p. 11).

Informed by this perspective, Eberhart and Atkins (2014) described presence in relation to several therapeutic contexts, including presence for oneself, presence with the art, and presence experientially, through encounters with others and the world. They noted that presence in the context of expressive arts-based work was a consciousness-altering experience, "we enter

an alternative space, both physically and psychologically, a different state of consciousness than that of ordinary life" (p. 45).

Similar approaches have been offered by others, for example, Carl Rogers (1961) practiced presence with the client via his therapeutic conditions, including unconditional positive regard, accurate empathy and congruence which, optimally, he found helped him to attain flow in the presence of the other. Likewise, his daughter Natalie Rogers, adopted the Person-Centered Approach, and integrated these conditions into her work in expressive arts therapy, which she termed, *The Creative Connection* (2011, pp. 7-8). On an intrapersonal level, likewise, Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005), introduced mindfulness to people dealing with chronic pain and other maladies, teaching them to maintain an attitude of nonjudgmental presence towards what is here now.

Attunement. Mitchell Kossack (2015) integrated the aforementioned principles in his concept of attunement, here illustrated as he described arriving at a breakthrough with a client, "there was an embodied empathic response--from me, in him, and in the space in between. Through the inner drama of his story he spontaneously tuned into a deeper reality--one that affected him in a profound way..." (p. 8). He described this attunement as requiring both the therapist and the client's mindful awareness and presence:

I can become more empathic when I attune myself to my own internal rhythm, my breath, my body and my emotional state... find something that can help to ground me in the moment in order to help me to be more present.... It is also my job to help my client to similarly find his or her own distinctive symbolic attunement that will help to anchor them to something meaningful, and if I am working with a group to help the group find their unique attunement. (p. 9)

Presence as a process of encounter. Atkins and Eberhart (2014, p. 129) use this phrase to describe the dialectical, dynamic relationship between the client and the expressive arts therapist, "Attention moves back and forth between inner and outer awareness, between a focus on the verbal and nonverbal presentation of the client and the inner awareness of the change agent...It is a meeting, with an ongoing interplay of listening and responding" (p. 75).

Acknowledging that presence is a complex phenomenon, they highlighted three related important concepts, which are described below.

Multileveled awareness. This is practicing a focused awareness of the client, oneself, and the space in between on cognitive, emotional, felt sense and bodily expressed content, within the unfolding process and flow of time. In the context of expressive arts work this includes the art and the art-making process. "The art-making experience is an aspect of the ongoing process of the relationship, which now includes the artwork as a third partner" (p. 71). While this way of being with a person can foster intersubjectivity, McNiff (2015) has also noted the value of witnessing as a nurturing presence, "witnessing enhances artistic expression; the presence of another person giving careful and positive attention increases creative energy and its overall circulation and flow" (p. 77).

Multifold openness. This is a form of receptivity to experience in the present moment in the form of sensations, thoughts and feelings without judgement or censor, which is essentially a mindful attitude (Rappaport, 2014). "The effective change agent is open to receive information coming from the client ...and open to receive the information coming from her own bodily sensations and flow of thoughts, emotions and intuitions...we also want to remain open to what arrives in the art making" (Atkins & Eberhart, 2014, pp. 72-73). Relevant to this open approach, is McNiff's (2004) observation that "Depth is on the surface we do not fully see. The art affirms

that every object or gesture has a spiritual as well as a physical nature and that these depend upon each other" (p. 103).

Appreciative curiosity. Conveying genuine interest and excitement towards the client within an atmosphere of safety and trust, thereby inviting the client to be more adventurous in the process of exploring their experiences, experimenting with their approach and making meaning (Atkins & Eberhart, 2014, p. 75). Kossak (2015) links this kind of play to learning, stating "If the therapist and client can play together, then learning (adaptation and assimilation) can begin to take place...in...expressive arts therapy it can mean playing with material such as sound and rhythm, or with temporal and spatial dimensions" (p. 35). He described sharing a laugh with the client when doing something together for the first time as indicative that the connection has been made, "We can smile together and somehow it reminds us that we are both human and it's okay to be together" (p. 35-36).

Acknowledging the place and voice of art. Each of the aforementioned attitudes necessarily must extend to include the art-making process and the art itself as the third participant in the relationship, "art making is a courageous exploration and an inquiry...In responding to art, we are careful to begin on the surface...let the work speak to us in its own language" (Atkins & Eberhart, 2014, p. 77). For example, McNiff (2015) observed that art arising from the dark, often rejected side, or what Carl Jung (1964, p. 73) referred to as the Shadow, can be uncomfortable, and take courage and confidence to respond to, "Artists have described how their inspiration is sometimes felt as a divine force and how this sense helps bring it into the world when they are facing obstacles. Creative expression becomes an act of service to something that needs us to accomplish its purpose" (p. 62-63).

Opening to the senses. Through the intermodal process, both the client and the change agent can be present in the moment-to-moment experiencing that is inherent in the sensory-based nature of the expressive mediums, and observe the body's response to the experience. "We explore what it is to move from an inner impulse, then to shape our movement in relationship with that of others and the space...The arts call us to sense our own aliveness" (Atkins & Eberhart, p. 77-78). Likewise, McNiff (2015) has observed the immediacy of creativity, "the source of creation is located in the most immediate actions and perceptions of the present moment...we learn how to create with what we already have...Depth is on the surface of what we do and perceive" (p. 71).

Opening to the imagination. Engaging in an intermodal process offers the opportunity to embody the imagination in a variety of ways. "Especially when an individual or group is stuck in rigid and ineffective ways of perceiving and acting, activating imaginative capacities can be profoundly transformative" (Atkins & Eberhart, p. 78). Working together using an art-based approach also creates its own community of presence in imagining together (Ibid, p. 79).

Rollo May (1975) theorized that, "Creativity occurs in an act of encounter and is to be understood with this encounter as its center" (p. 77). He observed the creative act as similar to a healthy child's play, characterized by a certain degree of absorption, "there must be a specific quality of *engagement*" (p. 40). This included the act of expression, "creativity can be seen only in the act" (p. 43). He described this as integrative, involving the whole person, "it involves the total person, with the subconscious and unconscious acting in unity with conscious...it is ...suprarational. It brings intellectual, volitional, and emotional functions into play all together" (p. 48-49). And from this process, "Something is born, comes into being, something that did not exist before - which is as good a definition of creativity as we can get" (p. 78).

Art-making as process oriented - tolerating chaos. Levine (2005) observed that, contrary to the traditional form of poesis, expressive art flows from play rather than reason, it is "an exploration in which letting go of control leads to surprising results" (p. 11). This then, is about trusting the process, an aspect that is widely acknowledged in the field (Allen, 1995; Eberhart & Atkins, 2014; Kossak, 2015; McNiff, 2015; Rogers, 1993):

...If we can stay with this chaotic experience, it often happens that something emerges, the gift of a work that carries meaning and value. Then reason can be employed in its critical capacity, evaluating the emerging work and making decisions for its revision. (Levine, 2005, p. 11)

Thus reason is not lost, the order in which it comes into play has simply been changed to a later step. "The play of imagination must be placed at the centre of the human capacity for shaping if we are to understand this power in its own right" (Ibid).

Kossak (2015) has noted the therapist's central role in addressing safety while promoting relational trust and attunement in this context:

In expressive arts therapy I enter into an uncertain situation that is addressed through experimentation and free exploration... it is possible to feel a relational connectivity to myself, my clients, the groups and communities I work with...but only if uncertainty and chaotic states are tolerated and held in a safe and caring way...One way safety is built is through improvisational artistic explorations where a kind of leveling of the playing field takes place, and where each person's artistic expressions can be accepted...it involves a level of in-the-moment intimacy. (p. 73)

McNiff (2004) noted that sitting with uncertainty allowed for the unfolding of potential, he too recognized the importance of respecting the process, acknowledging the soul work involved.

"Art's medicines are based on surprises... I never know in advance what a person needs to receive. I try to get people involved in...a deep personal dialogue with images and feelings that instinctively present the needs of the soul" (p. 19).

Similarly, Eberhart (2014) has described the change agent's work to be client centred and process-oriented, "when the action of the professional person is informed mostly by the actions of the client, the professional's own inner reactions and the evolving atmosphere, and not so much by a manual...or a prescribed methodology" (p. 96). Thus, trusting the process is necessary on the part of both the client and the change agent in a relational dance.

Decentering. This technique is an example of trusting the process to help a client who is in the helpless situation. Decentering is defined as "any activity in which one intentionally leaves what is the center and is occupied with something outside, something that normally isn't in the center of the attention" (Eberhart, 2014, p. 137). This provides a means by which to "go into an art-making experience in order to widen perception and gain new perspectives and activate resources" (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014, p. 36). The benefit of this approach lies in going outside of everyday logic associated with language, as Eberhart (2014) observed, "Working with the arts can be understood as dealing with another sort of expression, a totally other 'language'" (p. 137). Further benefits of this approach include interrupting the well-worn, often circular thought patterns of the problem or dilemma; opening new perspectives by working from a completely different direction. Decentering can result in surprises, as new ways of being with content and new approaches may lead to discoveries and insights not previously considered. This broadening approach enriches the content under consideration, and may elevate the person's view of the situation to a new level of organization. This can be very nourishing for the person, and he or she can feel empowered by the new information that he or she brings to the work (p. 148-149).

Cultivating creativity in ourselves and in community. Drawing from his extensive and varied experiences in the field of expressive arts therapy, McNiff (2004) has noted the following truths:

The core process of healing through art involves the cultivation and release of the creative spirit. If we can liberate the creative process in our lives, it will always find the way to whatever needs attention and transformation. The challenge, then, is first to free our creativity and then to sustain it as a discipline...If I had to identify one fundamental or defining element that informs every aspect of my work, I would probably point to the activation and circulation of creative energy in groups and communities. (p. 5)

Facilitating a Mindful-based Expressive Arts Therapy Group

"Mindfulness is a practice of bringing awareness to the present moment with an attitude of acceptance and nonjudgment" (Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014, p. 24). Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990) lists seven interdependent attitudinal factors that comprise mindfulness practice: nonjudging, patience, a beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go (p. 32). Considering the discussions that have gone before this section, it is possible to recognize the common ground mindfulness shares with expressive arts therapy. Both involve moment-to-moment process orientation, grounding in the senses, and presence with an attitude of appreciative curiosity. Rappaport and Kalmanowitz (2014) cite the following analogy to bring this into sharper focus:

Mindfulness practice can also be compared to two wings of a bird...One wing symbolizes our experience; the other represents our ability to witness and observe our experience... As birds need both wings in order to fly, so too do we. Mindfulness practices and the

expressive arts teach us how to become aware of the inner witness while noticing and sensing our experience at the same time. (p. 25)

They further described two perspectives from which to consider the application of mindfulness in relation to expressive arts, "(1) the processes inherent within the arts that cultivate mindful awareness and engagement in the present moment, and (2) the application of mindfulness practices to the arts therapies" (p. 32).

Deep Roots in Humanity. Similar to the expressive arts, mindfulness also arises from deep roots, appearing in Buddhist practices dating back over 2500 years, and appearing in the contemplative practices of other faith traditions around the world (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Indeed, as Rappaport and Kalmanowitz (2014) have noted, "The roots of mindfulness and the arts therapies can also be traced back through the ages to the use of the arts in ritual to enhance spiritual and religious practices and promote healing and transformation" (p. 33).

Qualities and qualifications of the facilitator. Facilitating a group of this nature will necessarily call upon the use of self to both embody mindful practice for others to observe and learn from, as well as in creating and holding a space in which group members can engage in expressive arts processes grounded in a mindful-based orientation (Isis, 2014). Therefore, it is important that the group facilitator has both completed proper training in mindfulness, and committed her or himself to a personal practice, if seeking to integrate this approach in the group's work (Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014; Isis, 2014). Isis (2014) noted that the personal qualities of the facilitator should also include authentic presence, kindness and an open and receptive attitude. Isis delineated this to mean an attitude that allows what *is* arising for members to be received with an attitude of hospitality and curiosity in the group, rather than a "fixing" or "smoothing over" response to issues (p. 160), this has also been noted elsewhere (McNiff, 2004).

Conscious intention as part of practice. Pat Allen (2005) described the importance of setting one's personal intention in coming to the work, particularly in being mindful to let go of our preoccupation with the "stuff" already in our lives:

Sometimes the best intention is simply to make space to notice what *is* before trying for something new. In that space, our attention catches on something and the imagination is sparked. The spark is our intention, ignited by the attention we give it through making art.
(p. 13)

She further noted that in the facilitator role, "I make an intention to do no harm, to receive no harm, and to be a worthy conduit for what needs to come into the group...I also make a personal intention based on my life at the moment" (p. 17-18). And she observed the bridging role that intention fulfills in attaining a meaningful harvest from the therapeutic process, "Artmaking is the vehicle by which we enter the place of all possibility. Intention determines what we manifest when we return from that place" (p. 25).

Creating the holding, witnessing environment within the group setting. Approaching his role as therapist and group facilitator, McNiff (2015) highlighted the importance of focusing on the holding environment and bearing witness to the creative process as an essential aspect:

I am concerned with how the overall environment supports and enhances expression through safety, inspiration, and focused attention. The creative process is the healing agent, and my role involves its cultivation and helping others participate as fully as possible...Witnessing is an integral part of the process where mindful attentiveness to the present moment and the outcomes of actions complement art-making. (p. 40)

Going together - Creative community and co-regulation of the group. McNiff (2004) illustrated embodiment and immersion in a mindful process in his description of creating a

'sanctuary of soul medicine', "My lifelong practice ...was constructed in those first days of 'beginner's mind' that accessed the ancient continuities of a *participation mystique*--we relax our self-consciousness and become part of a larger group expression" (p. 17). Based on his experiences McNiff (2004) described, "the 'slipstream' of group participation takes individuals to places where they cannot go alone. Groups of people can generate, reinforce, and revive creative energy and imagination" (p. 5). Others have noted this community aspect as well (Allen, 2005; Isis, 2014 Peterson, 2014; Luzzato, Payne, Gabriel, Laomaggiore, Minerbi, Ventrella, Oldrini & Mullin, 2014; Malchiodi, 2012; Rogers, 2011).

Margaret Jones Callahan (2016) has offered details of the underlying neurobiology, which she terms as limbic resonance:

The limbic brain structure has an open-loop design...one person transmits regulatory information that can alter cardiovascular function, hormone levels, and more, inside the body of another. This reciprocal process occurs simultaneously: the first person regulates the physiology of the second, even as she herself is regulated. This process of mutual exchange and internal adaptation whereby two mammals become attuned to each other's inner states is known as limbic resonance.

...In the classroom or studio, when we practice Mindfulness we are consciously creating conditions for limbic resonance that allow empathy to grow...This creates a positive climate for teamwork, group dialogues and collaborative projects. (p. 30)

Jones Callahan acknowledged this new neurobiological understanding as extending from Winnicott's (1971) work regarding attunement (previously noted).

Respecting and attending to the power of the group. "The group from the first enactments of shamans to contemporary therapy groups, is a crucial factor in either restricting or

liberating the creative energies of healing" (McNiff, 2004, p. 6). The power of the group itself, in both formal and informal contexts is the setting in which we live and grow, and from which we face life's challenges. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) have noted, "People need people - for initial and continued survival, for socialization, for the pursuit of satisfaction" (p. 24) and in their study of group therapy, have described groups to offer a venue for interpersonal learning and a range of therapeutic factors that contribute to personal change and growth (p. 1-2).

Facilitating a Mindful-based Expressive Arts Group for People with Cancer

Mindful-based expressive arts therapy group work is emerging in the literature as an efficacious, strengths-based approach to addressing the psychosocial needs and challenges faced by people living with cancer. Benefits documented have included improvement in emotional wellbeing, meaning making, fatigue-related mood, and quality of life (Klagsbrun, Rappaport, Speiser, Post, Byers, Stepakoff & Karman, 2005; Lesiuk, 2015; Meghanie, Peterson, Kaiser, Rhodes, Rao, Chittams & Chatterjee, 2018). Facilitating a group for people with cancer necessarily involves encounters with themes arising from the experiences that are specific to its membership, and their subsequent engagement in the group.

Encounters with Suffering. People living with cancer have described experiencing a sense of personal fragmentation and social isolation related to being diagnosed with cancer, living with illness, undergoing treatment, and the subsequent trajectory of recovery or lack thereof, also often characterized by uncertainty, anxiety, feelings of loss, grief, depression, fear of recurrence, and encounters with one's mortality (Cornell, 2006; McNutt, 2013; Rappaport, 2013). There is a genuine need for witnessing and community, as noted by Yalom and Leszcz (2005) with respect to people living with advanced cancer, "What the patient needs is to make

contact, to be able to touch others, to voice concerns openly, to be reminded that he or she is not only apart from but also a part of" (p. 25).

Fostering healing and transformation. There is privilege and opportunities for the change agent and group members here as well, in witnessing the courage and determination of those who choose to come to the group. Liebman (2004) observed that such a group "can open doors to personal communication about 'unspeakable' things, and help to resolve feelings connected with these - and the uncertain future which most cancer patients face" (p. 123). Furthermore, in bringing to the group members a way of being-in-the-world that is absorbed in the present moment, and in awakening and engaging their imagination through the expressive arts, it is possible to create the conditions necessary for group members to play and imagine, to restore hope, self-efficacy and personal agency, and to discover experiences of freedom and healing (Peterson et al, 2014; Luzzato et al, 2014; Cathy Malchiodi, 2013).

McNiff (2004) has noted, "People today who suffer from illnesses want to be involved in their recovery, to contribute to the healing process, not just passively receive treatments administered by others...they understand that recovery will be enhanced by their active and creative involvement"(p. 4). He further observed that, "there is a difference between curing and healing...there can be healing when curing is impossible...art heals...Wherever the soul is in need, art presents itself as a resourceful healer" (pp. 4-5). Renowned dance therapist, Anna Halprin (2002), in sharing her own experience with cancer reported, "I have seen that dance has the power to heal. Healing is intrinsic to one's outlook on life" (p. 14).

The facilitator's experience and use of self. What then can be said about the facilitator's experience and use of self in the context of this work? Clearly the literature reviewed demonstrates the central role played by the facilitator as change agent in general. Despite an

extensive search of the literature, I have not been able to locate a study that examines the facilitator's experience from within the group context, and following the process and trajectory of the group experience, in a mindful-based expressive arts therapy group intervention for people living with cancer, or for any other group of this nature.

This thesis will set out to address this gap, seeking to bring new insights and to connect what is known to the lived experience of the facilitator in this context. Enquiry will be conducted using a heuristic-based method, engaging in both a thematic analysis of field notes, and a multimodal arts-based approach to explore and reflect upon the expressive arts therapist's experience and use of self in facilitating such a group.

Conclusion

Expressive arts therapy is a relatively recent arrival to the modern world of therapy, but its roots run deep in the human timeline, "...healing through art is one of the oldest cultural practices in every region of the world" (McNiff, 2004, p. 4). The preceding review of the literature reveals the very human pathway to addressing suffering while instilling hope. Using oneself as a change agent and facilitator within a mindful-based expressive arts group approach, it is possible to offer people living with cancer an opportunity to rise up, uncover and embrace their creative selves, and move towards ever expanding horizons. Through a moment-to-moment process of discovery, engagement, and embodiment with the creative process, the facilitator and group members have the opportunity to connect together and grow in relationship with their human birthright and greatest resource in times of adversity, their imagination.

Methodology

The Heuristic research approach was developed by Moustakas (1990), as a means of enquiry that is grounded in lived experience and a reflective process of discernment and meaning making by the researcher. It is a personally enriching way to develop knowledge as, "while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge" (p. 9). Elaborating further on the experiential sweep that this subjective form of enquiry may include, Moustakas stated that "I am personally involved...may be entranced by visions, images and dreams that connect me to my quest...come into touch with new regions of myself, and discover revealing connections with others...I am able to see and understand in a different way" (p. 11). Indeed, heuristic research is rooted in the subjective experience, "self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning and inspiration" (Ibid). Comparing this research method with others, Moustakas (1990) described, "The heuristic researcher is seeking to understand the wholeness and the unique patterns of experiences in a scientifically organized and disciplined way" (p. 16). The framework he delineated for this method involves a six-phase process (p. 38). These phases are described below, followed by Method section, which provides a detailed description of the heuristic processes used in this study.

Initial Engagement

The first phase involves an exploratory means by which to draw out an intense interest from the researcher, identify research questions and discern the means of gathering data. This can involve self-dialogue to explore and discover a topic and question, "the investigator reaches inward for tacit awareness and knowledge, permits intuition to run freely, and elucidates the context from which the question takes form and significance" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27).

Immersion

Once the research question has been delineated, the researcher becomes absorbed in "living the question" wherever it is present and relevant to experience. This might include any aspect of experience with oneself, others, or through readings and discussions that are connected to the question and offer a way of understanding. "The immersion process enables the researcher to come to be on intimate terms with the question" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28).

Incubation

During this phase, the researcher steps back from direct engagement with data and the question, on a conscious level. This allows time and space for processing on a tacit level, "The period of incubation allows the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). Similar to the process involved in making bread using yeast; once mixed and kneaded, the dough must rest in a sheltered, warm place, to allow time for the yeast to ferment, causing the bread to rise and expand in size.

Illumination

After having some time away, the researcher returns to the question, and, upon revisiting the data gathered, the new perspective can lead to new discoveries and insights, uncovering meanings through the processes of intuitive enquiry and tacit awareness. "When the researcher is in a receptive state of mind without conscious striving or concentration, the insight or modification occurs. A degree of reflectiveness is essential, but the mystery of situations requires tacit workings to uncover meanings and essences" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). This can facilitate the process of synthesis, bringing together previously disparate parts, locating missing links, possibly invoking a gestalt-type shift in perspective.

Explication

Once the researcher has experienced illumination, the focus of the work moves to explicating what has been discovered about the phenomenon under study. Refining and integrating the new learning more fully, greater detail can receive attention, in an overall description of the phenomenon being studied. This involves a process of introspection "a concentrated attention is given to creating an inward space and discovering nuances, textures, and constituents of the phenomenon which may then be more fully elucidated through indwelling" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). Through this means, the researcher is able to flesh out the aspects of the phenomenon in working towards an understanding of the essential, unified wholeness of the experience.

Creative Synthesis

This is the final phase in which the researcher, having developed a full understanding of the various parts of the phenomenon, brings all aspects together into a synthesis, a unified whole. Tacit knowledge and intuition are called upon once again, as the researcher, having mastered the knowledge amassed about the phenomenon in question, engages in a meditative, gestational process, eventually transcending the content, to arrive at a distillation of the phenomenon's essential meaning. This may be expressed through a creative form, such as a poem, image or story, serving to convey, "a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is realized" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32).

Validity

Due to the subjective and qualitative nature of heuristic enquiry, the validity of the study's findings is largely dependent upon the researcher's judgment and interpretation. To further bolster validity the researcher repeatedly returns to the data to check for accurate alignment of

the depictions regarding the experience. Further steps can be very beneficial in addressing the researcher's potential blind spots, for example, consulting with a mentor to discuss observations, and consulting with co-researchers, if available, for their further judgment and confirmation or further refinement of the conclusions reached (Moustakas, 1990).

Method

Study Location. This study was based on personal experience and use of self in the context of facilitating a ten-week mindful-based expressive arts therapy group for people living with cancer, based in an outpatient, tertiary care oncology facility located in a Canadian prairie city. This study was introspective in nature, meaning, the data collected was based upon my own personal experiencing. Arts-based enquiry and field note preparation was undertaken in my personal studio.

Necessary permissions were obtained from the clinical setting and my clinical supervisor, and at the first meeting, for the sake of transparency and out of respect for their association through membership in the group, I provided an explanation to participants regarding the heuristic self-study I was undertaking. They also signed and received a copy of a written document describing their awareness of my study and their indirect association, which had no potential risks and offered potential benefits regarding my presence as a facilitator. A copy of this document is included in Appendix A.

The group was part of a pre-established program that I have developed and facilitated for several years. The purpose of the group was to cultivate community, foster group-based therapeutic factors (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005), and facilitate members' integration of their cancer experience within the context of healing and restoring their own self-identity, through engagement in a series of mindfulness-based expressive arts processes. A closed-group format

was used, which could include up to eight people at a time. The group met for one two-hour session a week for a period of ten weeks. Entry to the group required screening to meet criterion, including treatment for a cancer diagnosis within the past two years, as well as, first time experience of this group, knowledge of group work and no history of psychotic episodes, there was no monetary cost to attend.

Initial engagement. Through engaging in a process of reflection, meditation, discernment followed by a discussion with my mentor (by phone, as she lived out of province) and other practicing expressive arts therapists, I was able to determine the focus of my research study. This approach allowed me to connect with my inner tacit awareness and knowledge using a mindful-based approach, to form my central research question. The focus of the research question emerged in meditation in a very viscerally experienced way, which was an exceptional experience for me, as an experienced daily meditator. This made the question all the more compelling. Secondary research questions emerged as I became curious about how the modalities with which I had chosen to gather my data might inform each other, and deepen my understanding of the knowledge I was seeking as an expressive arts therapist.

Immersion. I immersed myself in the research and 'lived the question' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28) over the ten-week period that I facilitated the aforementioned group, and continued to do so as I worked with the data I had gathered, which included, field notes recording my experiences and two forms of arts based enquiry, responsive drumming and visual art-making (Moustakas, 1990; Kapitan, 2014; McNiff, 1998; Van Manen, 2014).

Gathering my experiences using these three expressive modalities, helped facilitate my self-enquiry in a manner consistent with Moustakas' (1990) observation, "The deepest currents of

meaning and knowledge take place within the individual through one's senses, perceptions, beliefs, and judgements" (p. 15).

Field notes. I wrote field notes regarding each group session, typically within the first two days that followed. Notes followed the same outline as the group meeting agenda, for example, Check-In, Rhythmic Attunement, Grounding Meditation, Studio, and Check-Out. I reflected upon my experience of the group processes that had taken place, regarding interactions in the group as a whole, regarding myself, and regarding the individual members in attendance.

Arts-based enquiry. After writing the field notes for a session I subsequently engaged in two forms of arts-based enquiry (Leavy, 2015, pp. 17-20, 235-249), first responsive drumming and then visual art making.

Responsive drumming. I prepared for the drumming by meditating for a set period of eight minutes, recalling the group session in my mind with an open attentive and receptive attitude, while holding my drum and mallet. I then engaged in an intuitively guided drumming response, (which I recorded), while maintaining a stance of open receptivity. I engaged in tempo, volume and drumbeat patterns that arose spontaneously, until the response came to its own end.

Visual Art-making. Following the drumming response, I made art, focusing on my enquiry about my experience and use of self as the group facilitator, using the same kind of activity and medium as the group had been using that week. This was compatible as group members were working on personal awareness, identity and integration centred themes, which was not dis-similar to my area of focus just in a different role. My process began with a grounding meditation, followed by the art making process. I typically allowed more time for my art process than the group members had, as doing the work in my own space I had the time, and the art was in the role of co-researcher. Art making included two weeks of collage work in an art

journal, and in the third week, creating an image using water-soluble pastels to process my experience of an aberrant session due to the group's need to address difficult themes. I prepared myself for each of these three art response sessions, using a Focusing meditation (Wallace, 2015).

The fourth session was comprised of placing my body outline on large format paper with the help of my spouse, and making art flowing from a mindful body scan. To facilitate the meditation and art making, I recorded a mindful-based body scan meditation, which I then played back to myself, following which I created the image in my body outline. Following that step I recorded and then played back a meditation to identify my safe place. I then used the imagery from this to make art creating a field of support around my body outline art. I allowed myself to revisit this art until it was complete, which unfolded over the course of three days.

The fifth session focused on the spectrum of emotions I experienced as group facilitator. I generated and wrote out my list of emotions, meditated for eight minutes, practicing a mindful stance (attending to the present moment with openness and receptivity, suspending judgment), and followed this with a sequential, timed expressive image-making session (using the same time as the group had), to create a booklet containing my spectrum of emotions as group facilitator.

Sessions six through ten involved the use of mindful-based meditations, engaging in guided imagery and visual art making activities from Cornell's (2006) book, *Mandala*. A sacred intention for making art was invoked each time I came to the art making process, using the meditation "Blessing the Materials" (Cornell, 2006, p. 63). The first activity, undertaken during group session six, was the creation of a white on black image, "Remembering who you are" (Cornell, 2006, pp. 22-25). I recorded and then played back the meditation and guided imagery scripts to myself, following which I allowed myself all the time I needed to complete the art

response. I subsequently interviewed the art and noted the responses that were generated by the sentence starters "I am...", "I need...", and "What I offer is...".

The next art-making activity was the creation of a healing mandala, this occupied group sessions seven through ten. The mandala was based upon my intention to know about my experience and role as group facilitator. This was divided into segments over three weeks to parallel the group's process, and involved recording and playing back scripts to facilitate the art-making process. The first step was setting the intention for the mandala and using the meditation "Accessing a Healing Symbol" (Cornell, 2006, p. 66). The second step involved the meditation "Bringing the Symbol to Life" (p. 69), in which the mandala was energized by scales of light. The third step involved the meditation, "Accessing Healing Colors" (pp. 94-95), in which the colour system for the mandala was delineated. Each session involved the meditation "Blessing the Materials" (p. 63) to begin, in order to mindfully prepare for the art making process as a sacred act. The mandala making process including some note taking following the meditations that focused on the elements and colours, and the mandala was finished when it was clear that nothing further needed to be added.

Incubation. Following this intensive period of data collection and immersion, I spent time away from the data to allow for incubation (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28), for several weeks.

Illumination. I then returned to the notes, read them and did the initial coding of themes, listened to the drumming responses and illustrated the beat patterns, identifying repeating patterns and noting new emerging patterns. I viewed the art and began to make some notes related to what I was seeing and what I had noticed in the process of creating them. I also shared and discussed this initial analysis with two other co-researchers, my mindful-based expressive arts therapy mentor and my Drumming Elder, and made notes from these discussions.

Moving in and out of the data. I moved into and out of the data over time to facilitate the heuristic process. In addition to analyzing the field notes and drumming responses, I engaged the artwork as a participant in my process (McNiff, 1998), through interviewing and listening to the art's voice, and reflecting upon notes made during my experience of making the art. Illumination has unfolded in relation to this process along each step of the way. I particularly wish to acknowledge the role that my dreams played during the time I was moving in and out of the data. True to Moustakas' description (1990, p. 11), as I worked within the heuristic approach, my own dreams played a valuable role in tapping into other aspects of knowing outside of my conscious awareness and responding to matters that I had a conscious question about, and cuing me to attend to aspects of the data that I had not yet noted.

Explication. The understandings arising in relation to the data and the research questions have been explored through memo writing and further discernment processes, as described by Moustakas, (1990) "the heuristic researcher utilizes focusing, indwelling, self-searching and self-disclosure" to reach a deeper understanding of the whole experience and explicate it as such (p.31). I further enriched this process by checking and discussing findings with my mentor (via phone calls), as well as, my Drumming Elder (via emails), both were situated at a distance from me, but were able to share their perspective to an extent, on the basis of our discussions and the data provided.

Triangulation measures. Gathering data using three modalities readily provided a means to consider the findings from multiple perspectives, via data checking. I also engaged in consultation with a mentor who practiced from a mindfulness-oriented expressive arts perspective, regarding the formulation of my research study, as well as during and after the data gathering, regarding my observations and discoveries, in order to ensure I accounted for the

limitations inherent in my own subjective perspective, in other words, "to check behind me". I also consulted with my Drumming Elder regarding the responsive drumming recordings. I sought her independent perspective regarding the drumming recordings, informed by the field notes to provide her with context, prior to discussing my observations about them with her. This allowed me to check for independent patterns of convergence and divergence. I then sought her further comments regarding the beat patterns. She also referred me to some reading (Ash, 2001) about the style of sacred drumming I had learned and was using, which is a form of North American Indigenous Drumming.

Creative synthesis. The culmination of my study process is the synthesis I have arrived at through the previous steps, informed by my personal intuition and frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). This is shared in the Discussion section, alongside the key data elements and images from which I have distilled my understanding of my personal experience and use of self as a mindful-based expressive arts group facilitator for people living with cancer. The following section will review the findings specific to what was learned from examining the various modalities, individually and then with consideration for their interaction, as articulated in the questions of the study.

Findings

The findings are presented following the framework provided by the research question and sub-questions posed. In the first section I describe the themes and patterns of relationship arising in the field notes I prepared based upon my experience and use of Self while facilitating the 10-week mindful-based expressive arts group for people living with cancer. In the second section I describe the findings related to the responsive drumming I engaged in, as a means of expressing my experience and use of Self in facilitating the group. The third section deals with the findings related to the visual arts I engaged in, parallel to the group's process. I have chosen to defer addressing the intermodal relationships to the Discussion section, as I will draw upon the Findings described amongst the three expressive modalities provided below to consider the ways in their combination helped to inform my enquiry.

Themes and Patterns of Relationship Arising in the Field Notes

While facilitating the group program, I wrote field notes following each of the ten weekly meetings, amassing 63 pages in total. After allowing a break of a few weeks from the data (incubation phase), I returned to the notes and analyzed them for thematic patterns. Initially I grouped the themes into the two contextual branches, in keeping with my research question. One branch, my "experience of Self", consisted of reflections upon my personal experience of Being (my Self) in the context of facilitating the group. The other branch, my "use of Self", related to the act of facilitating. However, upon review, I discovered that the thematic categories were almost the same. Therefore, I have streamlined the discussion according to the thematic categories, and subsequently attend to nuances specific to experience of Self, followed by use of Self as facilitator, respectively. I then describe the themes that arose exclusively in each context.

Care, preparation, teaching and facilitative support. This broad category refers to themes and patterns specific to facilitator preparation and delivery.

Experience of Self: Doing the work before, during and after the work. Personal self-care and preparation prior to, during, and after the group time arose consistently. This included engaging in my own personal mindfulness practice through grounding meditation, ideally, prior to the group session. My mentor referred to this as, "Doing the work before the work" (Palmer, 2004, p. 103). I was able to do this most of the time, except during Weeks 8 and 9, when I became distracted by other responsibilities at work and missed this step. Monitoring my own personal needs, just as I encouraged and observed other group members to do so, was also important in sustaining myself as the group facilitator, in addition to having access to a mentor outside of group time with whom I could seek regular supervision.

Use of Self: Preparing the way. Attention to care, preparation, teaching and support were much more involved within the role of facilitator in every group session. Gathering in and welcoming group members was a weekly occurrence, whereas Housekeeping related duties were more prominent in the starting and finishing weeks of the group, when pragmatic matters required attention, such as orientation to the physical facilities, and later arranging for completion of anonymous evaluation forms. Guiding, particularly in the somatic grounding, introduction to rhythm instruments and meditation was a regular feature.

"Preparing the way" was the manner in which I perceived activities related to laying the foundation for the work. This included practical aspects, such as, physically setting up for the group meeting; and personal aspects, providing guidance, ensuring members received a facilitative level of support in moving through both the group-based and individual expressive arts-based processes.

Do you have what you need? Raising consciousness through collaboration. I engaged in facilitative care as a regular practice, specifically checking in with each member of the group during studio time to ask if they had what they needed, rather than assuming that silence meant all was well. I then listened and responded to the needs arising and expressed in response to my enquiry, engaging in a collaborative process with the member to provide support and attention.

Presence and bearing witness. This theme manifested in several specific ways, according to the point of reference from which it was considered, personal or facilitative. I will discuss each in turn below.

Being present and bearing witness from the place of Self-experiencing. Within this more personal context, intrapersonal awareness tended to inform the interpersonal. For example, being present to my own felt sense and somatic awareness informed the manner in which I could bear witness within the context of the group. This was well illustrated by the situation that arose during Week 3, when a group member expressed her disappointment regarding the program's focus on art processes rather than discussion. My own personal attunement was a key factor in my response, as my interior response (vulnerability and surprise), connected with previously arising feelings of concern and unease regarding this person's level of engagement during Weeks 1 and 2. I had consulted with my mentor following these groups, and had been able to develop interior resources through exploring and responding to my own felt sense. Thus I was prepared and able to attend to the situation in Week 3 with mindful nonjudgment and open awareness, while grounding myself somatically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively.

Bearing witness from an intrapersonal context came up at many other times during the group, for example, attending to group members' disclosed cancer experiences and unfolding art processes. Practicing from my own intuitive centre, I was able to offer my aesthetic response

authentically at an interpersonal level in the group, contributing with others in the processes of mutual reflection and sharing. This was particularly the case in Week 4, when members were engaged in large format inside-outside art work and reflective writing. The group engaged in somatic grounding, a body scan, and large-scale visual art using their body to delineate the inside space from the outside field. This was followed by guided imagery to identify the body's safe and loving field of support, then more visual art-making based upon what had been observed in the guided imagery, followed by listening to the voice of the art, as "I am" and journaling the response received. Viewing the art together, we were aware of it as a palpable entity in the room and a sacred time of sharing. This experience deepened the level of trust and safety in the group.

Being present and bearing witness from the place of Self as facilitator. The personal privilege I had been given in bearing witness to group members informed the manner in which I sought to fulfill my use of Self as facilitator. From the outset I offered myself as a mirror that could reflect back to members what they shared, with encouragement, acceptance, nonjudgment and curiosity. This included, bearing witness and accepting the departing member's expression of dissatisfaction with the group in Week 3, as she came to realize the group could not address her needs in the manner she had hoped. An opportunity to experience a corrective emotional experience was facilitated when the member's comment that she felt shut down and not heard after treatment was validated and reiterated by other group members. Consulting with the group, the focus of the meeting was shifted to bearing witness to these feelings, away from the plan for the day. All had agreed to this plan, except one dissenting member, who later observed how she usually avoided strong feelings and could benefit from mindful "staying with" practice more often. Members subsequently commented on how much this time was appreciated, and contributed to building safety and fostering healing.

Honouring the words each member used in naming emotions, was another example of being present and bearing witness. The collaboratively organized Emotional Spectrum activity (Week 5) offered a tangible way of bearing witness to each person's experiencing. Likewise, highlighting the group's natural strengths helped to build the identity of the group and strengthen the container. For example, when they moved into reverie (working alongside one another in quiet, absorbed, creative art-making process), and thereby created temenos (safe creative space) during our first studio session (Week 1), without any specific direction from me, I acknowledged this and explained processes, linking their positive experiences to what they had accomplished.

Push-pull. This theme arose early in my work with the group at a personal level, and later, at the group facilitation level. It was one of the first themes identified in discussion with my mentor. I am dedicating some space to consider it on its own, as it was significant to my own personal process and to the process involved in facilitating the group. This occurred with respect to different dimensions.

Interpersonal experience of Self. I experienced an interior push-pull, discerning when to act and when to allow space in observing members' different responses to the invitation to engage in the group. For example, observing a member who followed along with the group process and invitations to participate, but did not appear to be engaging in the art process, except very minimally, while not verbalizing any concerns (Weeks 1 and 2). I experienced a push-pull between holding space for the member to decide for herself what she wanted, and approaching her directly to see what was going on. Consulting my mentor I was able to tap into a somatic experience of push-pull in a way that helped to ground me so that I could respond in a facilitative manner in Week 3, when the group member finally did verbalize her discontent during Check-In,

essentially stating her need to check herself out of the group, a push-pull that she herself had been experiencing.

Balancing personal and group needs. Discerning when and what to attend to with respect to me personally, versus what the group needed, was an area I noted several times. Examples included attending to my own art process in terms of gathering collage images that presented themselves during the studio period, alongside the need to give the group members facilitative attention. At times in the group discussions, such as during Week 2, I also found myself ready to respond to a remark, then stopped to check for group members who had something to offer, and held space as they shared their perspective. Likewise, when I was not feeling well I had to evaluate whether I posed a risk to the members, and upon determining that I did not, I also chose not to share my experience with them, focusing rather on theirs, and finding this helped me (Week 7). I also faced a big push-pull in deciding to share my parallel art process. I had spent much more time on some of my art than the group members had been allotted in their sessions, so I was concerned that they might compare their art to mine. Then I realized that I had an agreement to honour with the group, to bring my art in, and I could simply acknowledge the time spent and encourage group members to do likewise if they wished.

Facilitation and push-pull pressures with personalities in the group. Facilitating the group, I found myself having to monitor and respond to the tensions arising from the different personalities in the context of the group's needs. Having collaborated on group expectations at the outset provided a structure that I could refer to when members moved off course. Individual examples included the push-pull I felt with a group member who openly and frequently expressed contrary views, and yet was quite dependent, requiring a lot of attention over the course of the group. She began our relationship by giving me some negative feedback about a

necessary information sharing process. I had felt some annoyance and ruffled feathers by her remarks, then had to remind myself that receiving and accepting her way of being was part of the therapeutic purpose of the group; this was the ground of trust and safety. From that point on I was able for the most part, to turn each of the concerns that she raised along the way in the service of herself and the group as a whole.

Another example of a layered push-pull situation arose when one member resisted the change in plan during Week 3, while the rest of the group had committed to focusing on the intense themes raised by a second member. The first member expressed the wish to be busy, so as to distract herself from being confronted by the big feelings raised by the second member. I had to acknowledge her wish, while staying course with the process elected by the rest of the group. Later, during Check-Out the first member stated that perhaps she had something to learn from staying in the present moment and sitting with the uncomfortable feelings arising, rather than avoiding them. This growth continued for her when, during the following meeting, she shared having arrived at a new understanding of mindfulness and explained her new perspective in a very poetic and meaningful way at Check-In. Meanwhile, the second member chose to leave the group, while acknowledging and thanking the group for the opportunity to have her voice heard.

Managing the push-pull of programming time and space. Time management was an ever-present aspect of facilitation. Group members commented several times on wishing to have more time, in part due to enjoying and becoming absorbed in the process, and in part due to their desire to do more. I found myself particularly challenged by the change in direction for Week 3, as each part of the program plan contributed to the whole. To accommodate the new time pressures while ensuring availability of additional support, I added an allowance for mandala

completion time in the Art Grad program that members could attend following the Expressive Arts Group. Working closely with the group within the allotted program time we were able to accomplish what was planned. The group was rewarded with a rich harvest in art-making and personal learning, with the members themselves, reporting on their personal growth in flexibility and learning to "go with the flow".

Space was another push-pull challenge, as the group was bumped out of the usual room on the day that we moved into the mandala work (Week 7), and had to adjust to the different surroundings and move forward. Remarkably, once the group was settled into the "new" studio setting, all of the members were able to move forward with their mandala work.

Art as co-facilitator and teacher. There were two important and inseparable ways that the art was present in my experience and use of self as the group facilitator. It was my teacher personally, and my co-facilitator with the group. The art helped me to maintain a mindful and curious attitude towards the group members, in order to learn from them, through their art-making process and subsequent discourse, about what mattered. Likewise, through making art, the members were able to make their own discoveries and experience shifts in how they viewed themselves and their experiences, just as I had also experienced for myself.

Art making as a reflection of being and self-knowledge. Group members revealed much about how they lived in and perceived their world via their approach to making and viewing their own art during Art Check-In and in Studio. The mindful-based nature of the art processes provided them with the opportunity to make discoveries about how they perceived their world and then enabled them to experiment with different ways of being, as they learned new art processes.

Art as mirror, container and modulator. The art materials and processes mirrored, held, and also provided opportunities to modulate the emotional tone in the group. For example, when creating the Spectrum of Emotions in Week 5, members commented on how the art process facilitated the release of emotional content onto the paper, and provided a container they could use to hold it. The art as paralleling and modulating the group members' emotional range was demonstrated during Weeks 8 -10. During Check-In of Week 8, several of the members disclosed experiencing dark, low mood. Likewise, in the art at that time, members were working with a large piece of black paper and laying down images using white pencil. Notably, during the weeks that followed the mood at Check-In lightened, and so did the art quite literally, as each member progressed in bringing more light values, and then colours, into their healing mandala.

Art empowers perception. Actively engaging the group in the art empowered members to be their own change agents as they learned how to use the materials to create transformative effects. For example, in Week 5, the first skill they learned with the pencil crayons and black paper was to create a scale of light. This exercise invited members to literally bring light into the darkness via actively applying white pencil strokes repeatedly onto black paper. Furthermore, to achieve the scale of light values, members had to learn how to perceive, as well as create, as many shades of gray as they could, through physically and perceptually engaging themselves to manifest the scale. I discovered that this challenge tended to align with members' ways of perceiving experiences. This activity was later expanded upon by a guided imagery exercise that allowed them to experience themselves as part of the universe (Week 6 - "Remembering Who You Are", Cornell, 2006, pp. 22-23).

Teaching group members how to use a black pencil (Week 9) in this context was also interesting, as they were amazed, just as I had been, by their own power to make things fade,

darken and even disappear. However, it is worth noting that this was not immediately obvious to everyone; some members still required a perspective check (to view their art from a distance of several feet) to realize the effect they had created. Their pleasure in recognizing what they were realizing through this technique was palpable and vocally expressed!

Art responds to intention, embodies knowing, and can heal. The personal healing mandala work undertaken by group members in the latter half of the group, called upon members to form a personal intention. This then informed their art process, if they could accept and allow the art process to engage them, by "going with the flow". I observed that for some members this was where the challenge lay, and I discovered for myself the need to simply encourage them to "trust the process". The art process involved in creating the mandala, guided by the intention of the maker, had its own timeframe and direction. Learning to trust and participate in the process led to healing for group members, that also informed other parts of their lives, which they acknowledged, by their own report.

Facilitative role of rhythm instruments, my drum and use of other sounds. Sound played a role in my personal experience and in my use of Self, facilitating the group. Upon consulting the group in Week 11, it was agreed that instrumental and chanting music would be facilitative in the background during Art Check-In and Studio periods to support people's comfort level and ease of flow. There were times I intentionally did not use music, in order to allow members to be absorbed in inner experiences, including during Weeks 4 and 5, when the focus was on body awareness and the spectrum of emotions. At other times, I used sound particularly, for example as a way to spark an experience of wonder through learning about how to play Tibetan singing bowls. I offered the unexpected discoveries as a metaphor for learning about mandalas in Week 8 - and this had the intended effect in the group, as members were

amazed and intrigued into engagement. Use of meditation bells and chanting "Aum" was a facilitative part of the meditation process in later weeks, bringing myself and group members into the present moment, and introducing a sacred voiced intention to the art-making process.

I also had a significant personal experience with intuitively chosen music after the final week of the group. While beginning to clean up the room after everyone, including a visiting newspaper photographer had left, I felt compelled to play the Teyata chant, sung by Deva Premal. I felt uplifted as I completed my work and, upon looking up the lyrics and meaning on Premal's website, I discovered how fitting it was to the context, "One of the most important mantras for healing, it asks for healing from the illusion of duality. This mantra is also used for the dying process. (*India*)" (<https://devapremalmiten.com/pdfs/embrace.pdf> downloaded Jan. 14, 2019).

The introduction of rhythm instruments during Week 3 as a regular part of group Check-In added sound as a personal expressive modality to the group's experience, including my own. This step came following strong encouragement to do so by my clinical supervisor, and I had experienced some trepidation. Reflecting upon this, I realized that I had bumped up against my own resistance and preconceptions; holding an aesthetically low valuation of these instruments and myself, lacking in formal musical training, carried over from other music contexts. Despite recent expressive arts training experiences I was nervous about how I would be received, introducing and facilitating such an opportunity, this was something new for me in the context of the group. I sought consultation with my mentor, who helped me to practice grounding myself when sitting with uncertainty. I proceeded, gathering together my personal collection, including a tambourine, a wooden rattle, an assortment of bells and shakers, two Tibetan singing bowls, a set of meditation bells, and bringing along my own hand drum for the introductory week. I invited the group members to each select an instrument and share what drew them to it as part of

their Check-In remarks. Once everyone had a turn, a short group attunement followed, which I led that first time, and subsequently, members took turns leading. Group uptake happened easily, especially as the variety of instruments piqued curiosity for some and for others, connected them to memories.

Reviewing the field notes with a focus on the rhythm instruments, I was struck by member's comments throughout the weeks that the rhythm instruments were used, which reflected just how facilitative the instruments were in evoking feeling, as felt experiences in their bodies, as well as a way to share significant metaphors and personal memories. I had a similar experience, and found myself using the instruments to articulate or amplify pertinent feelings and meanings. For example, during the final group Check-In, I chose to share the sound of the meditation bells as my own metaphor for the group's fidelity to itself and its process. My drum was much loved and enjoyed by the group members when I would bring it, and they made a point of asking for it when it was not present. The synchronicity of timing between the introduction of this auditory/kinesthetic expressive component, alongside the introduction of the art journal Check-In page, and the turning of a quiet, unhappy member's efforts towards actively verbalizing her discontent and making a decision to withdraw is also notable.

Being part of the whole: Sitting with uncertainty and learning to trust the process.

My initial trepidation with introducing the instruments in the group served as a prime example of sitting with uncertainty and learning to be a part of the whole, a process that is greater than myself. I had many experiences during the group that reiterated for me that I am one part of a bigger, more intricate whole that I do not control, but do contribute to, in a facilitative way. To provide greater detail, below I describe the subthemes in relation to my experience of Self and my use of Self, as facilitator in the group.

Sitting with uncertainty. Tolerating uncertainty was a frequent feature of my experience in facilitating the group, from the point of confirming participants for registration, with uncertain health circumstances, to engaging with the group itself and accommodating interruptions in attendance. Throughout the ten weeks I had to mindfully discern how to respond to members in a manner that was facilitative, balancing their needs with the programming, in the service of the group. Being the facilitator, it was also necessary to model this for group members, as tolerating uncertainty was an important part of their own learning. Through undertaking mindful meditation and art making experiences, group members frequently commented upon their own process of personal enquiry and reflected upon how this led repeatedly to discoveries of what they did and didn't know.

Trust the process and go with the flow. This theme followed from my experiences of sitting with uncertainty and involved following my intuition in relation to how I responded in myself and engaged with the group. For example, I received a last-minute urgent request to accommodate a person with a fragile health status. Due to a full registration list I warned that it would be unlikely there would be space. However, as I called to confirm members, many of the people originally registered had to withdraw for various reasons, leaving plenty of room to accommodate the prospective member. In this case I trusted the process, spoke to the person and included him. He demonstrated good tolerance for attending the group, and expressed appreciation from being included as a member. The development of an alternate agenda in Week 3 likewise required that I trust the process and go with the group's flow, and this led to members expressing appreciation for the opportunity to address their concerns, and reporting an increased feeling of safety in the group.

Similarly, as the group facilitator I was responsible for fostering and supporting group members in learning to trust the process as they moved through the various meditation and art-based activities each week. Trusting the process and going with the flow arose in my interactions with the group members most particularly when inviting members to step into the mandala work. I had always found this step in the program to be a delicate "crossing over" into a new level of art making, as it involves creating a sacred intention and space. First, I had to introduce the concepts related to the process the group would be undertaking (Cornell, 2006) then, tentatively I would seek the group's willingness to proceed. From that point onwards, members were called upon to "trust the process". They learned new skills in using the art materials, set their own intentions to create a healing mandala specifically for themselves, and learned to use an intuitive meditation process to engage their imagination. Over this time, I observed members deepening their comfort level with, and in fact, adopting the comment, "trust the process" as a kind of mantra for what they were doing with this way of being in the art process, and they also reported applying it to other aspects of life outside of the group.

Themes and Patterns in the Field Notes that were Specific to Experience of Self

Two themes emerged from the data that I considered to be more specifically situated in the context of my personal experience. These are explicated below.

Self in relation to facilitator role and the group. Reviewing the field notes, I noticed my own self-awareness within the group context to emerge in relation to my personal reflections upon how my therapeutic role fit in. This was present along the following subthemes.

Holding space for the group and its members. There were times when I became aware that an insight or a shift was arising that required space to be held for it, in order for the group or a member to effectively absorb and process it. For example, in Week 4, a member expressed

concern for me in relation to the negative comments about the program that had been made by a member the previous week. She then noted how easily she could do this for someone else, but not for herself. I simply held the space, listening attentively with a supportive gaze, and the member subsequently dropped into deeper contemplation of her own situation. Then I was able to gently highlight this very helpful insight, as the member and the group engaged in further reflection. Similarly, members would share an experience that other group members could respond to, and so withholding my own contribution and inviting others to comment furthered the group's own mutual support process in a very authentic and meaningful way.

However, by contrast, there were times when I was compelled to step in. For example, during the Week 8 Check-In I had a strong felt sense of the group's tone being very dark and heavy, and realized this could be taken on by the members. Therefore, I reiterated my role in holding and carrying the group, including the heavy feelings being disclosed, and reminded the members to be mindful to carry only what was theirs, and not gather up those belonging to someone else.

Exercising personal humility in facilitation approach. Humility was a necessary element in my approach to facilitation and personally, that came up in a number of ways. Exercising humility was important to me personally, and helped to cultivate a collaborative, respectful style in the group. For example, respecting members' right to choose their own way, when I offered assistance or provided instruction. Respecting people's space and things, by asking permission, for example, before touching a distressed person when seeking to offer them support and, when moving people's things related to rearranging the room. Likewise, when asking a question or making a comment regarding a member's perspective, dilemma, or shared art, I would often ask permission and, upon sharing, check to see if my comment aligned with the

member's perspective. I also consulted the group regarding program delivery, for example, when moving to the mandala work, I sought the group's assent and checked for understanding and feedback regularly about what I was presenting. I reminded group members as well, that engaging in the activities was by invitation and they ultimately were in charge of their choices.

During points in the program when the focus was upon the expertise of the group members I served as more of a midwife to bring the group's efforts to fruition. For example, I served as the recorder during the Spectrum of Emotions discussion, and as the timer, during the art activity in Week 5. When group members had moved into the mandala work, direction was truly drawn from their own intuitive imagination. Therefore, I offered consultation and frequently served as a friendly "human easel" by holding their art at a distance of several feet and in various positions to provide members with perspective checks as they worked on their mandalas.

Experiencing a "miss" and responding to it. During the ten weeks of the group I experienced times when things didn't go well or I would miss something and had to recover and carry on. This called upon my own practices of humility and self-compassion. For example, responding to members' feedback when they were unhappy or struggling with something.

Brain fog was a factor for several people in the group. This condition stemmed from the negative impact that cancer treatment could have on their ability to perform cognitive tasks and to remember content. Some members found it very challenging to receive a lot of information and would let me know when this was becoming overwhelming. I responded by thanking the members for their feedback and then worked to anticipate and counterbalance for upcoming potential trouble spots in the program. For example, creating summarized notes to minimize the content needed to convey a concept such as creating mandalas and discerning their colour

systems (Weeks 7 and 9). This was also helpful when members missed a week and needed help to catch up, as happened in Week 10 with one member.

A miss that I felt some responsibility for was the mismatch that the group member who expressed dissatisfaction had experienced and the way she had disclosed this in the group. First, I had recruited her to the group at the end of an individual psychosocial oncology counselling session, which put her in an awkward position due to the dual roles I occupied in relation to serving her. Second, when I observed her disengaged body language during the first two weeks, I had not checked it out with her privately, as I was doing my best to be mindful of her right to make her own choices, and was also in early self-observation mode with respect to the project. Reflecting upon this with my mentor, I was able to consider corrective actions for use in future, and also, to note the benefits that were realized in terms of the therapeutic, cathartic work that was accomplished as a result of the miss, given the shared experiences being tapped by the group and the member. For example, both the member and the group expressed appreciation for the opportunity to air grievances and have them heard. I subsequently followed up with the member in private, to offer information on other groups that might be a better fit, and to provide resources related to personal issues.

There were other minor misses that I picked up on by myself and made corrections to in the flow of the group. Practicing mindful self-awareness while monitoring my delivery of services in the group facilitated my sensitivity and allowed me to remain supple in responding to misses when they arose.

"Flipping rocks" with group members. This is a phrase that I used to refer to heavy, difficult perspectives that were transformed by being viewed from a different direction. Like sun-baked rocks along the shore, their appearance on the surface concealed the life dwelling beneath

them. Curiosity and discovery were necessary ingredients in this process. Within the group opportunities arose of their own accord and when I recognized and seized them, I was able to help turn circumstances in the service of group members' learning, self-awareness and empowerment. Examples included responding to a noisy phone in Week 1, by using the circumstance to remind people to mute their phones, and thanking the embarrassed phone owner for providing the example that had been needed. In Week 2, following a guided imagery exercise to connect to a safe place, more than one member observed with some surprise that they did not have a safe place and did not know what that might look like. This crisis became an opportunity to affirm these members in discovering that safety was missing in their lives, and now that they knew this, they were in a position to learn what safety might look like and to begin to cultivate it. During Week 3 the dissatisfied member named feeling shut down and alienated as concerns, and the group received, validated and, upon consultation, refocused the meeting upon discussing these commonly held experiences. This led to a significant increase in members' perception of the group as a safe and open place and to the original member's own acknowledgement that she felt seen and heard, which was likely an emotionally corrective experience for her, and for others by association, given the context.

During Week Five I flipped my own rock when, as the recorder for the Spectrum of Emotions activity I resolved the dilemma of having too many words for the activity, by choosing to honour all of the words the group members named. In consultation with the group, I grouped the words into categorized lists, which I then read, and the members chose which words mattered to them as they responded in the art activity. This honoured the naming and witnessing of all the feelings members experienced across the spectrum of emotions in relation to living with cancer.

Theme Specific to Use of Self: Noticing Shifts

Noticing shifts was a theme that arose specific to my use of self as group facilitator, and was an important aspect of being the change agent in relationship with the group. I viewed a shift to be a qualitative change detected in the individual or group's process or perspective. This could come about as the result of an external factor, such as the curriculum shifting from single session expressive art projects to a longer-term project, as was the case with the mandala work (Weeks 7-10). The shift could also be due to the actions of a member, as was the case in Week 3, when the concerns pronounced by one member led to a shift in focus by the group to respond and take time to discuss experiences in common to all.

Developmental shifts in the group. The field notes reflected my observations of the group's developmental shifts as I facilitated it. First, gathering its members in to form as a group that, bearing supportive witness to its members' suffering, became a safe place to share and to create. Then the group briefly stormed, as one member expressed dissatisfaction with the group's mode of operation, and other members responded by acknowledging their shared experiences, while reaffirming the group's focus on expressive arts modalities.

The group then moved into norming and performing, with the unsatisfied member's withdrawal and the other members investing in the studio work with great focus. The community of the group deepened as members spent more time together at the end of each meeting, and during Check-Ins, each commented on how they looked forward to the support they experienced, frequently identifying this as all that they needed. Then the group moved into the mandala work, creating a sacred space for the art to unfold in Studio, and sharing the challenge of learning to "trust the process" as well as, the discoveries that emerged from doing so. Finally, as the group prepared for adjourning, its members made plans to mark the day with food and community

time. Upon my invitation, they also organized themselves to continue meeting on their own terms, after the group was finished.

Shifts in group members' personal awareness. I also observed and supported individual members in their own personal shifts. Beginning with disclosing their cancer-related experiences in the group, members found common ground and established a safe space in which to acknowledge and approach emotional struggles. Validated, encouraged and witnessed by myself and one another; group members sat with their vulnerability, then progressively shared and reflected upon more personal aspects of their lives.

Moving together into the mindful-based expressive arts processes, group members also encountered uncertainty, doubt and vulnerability and, using low skill high yield processes in a safe supportive context, they began to make discoveries and learn about themselves. When the curriculum shifted to the mandala work, I supported them in acquiring skills with the materials while also moving inward, to be receptive to their own intuitive wisdom. When this was manifested through the members' expressive art, I encouraged them to listen to the voice of the art. Members began to trust themselves and gained confidence in trusting the process. Engaging in perspective checks with the art, members made discoveries and experienced personal shifts.

During the final week of the group each member was able to reflect upon their own unfolding process through the art making and to articulate some shifts in their own perspectives. Each of them commented upon attaining a greater sense of wellbeing and self-awareness through the group and the expressive arts processes they had undertaken. Sharing their experiences and discoveries during the final Check-Out, members' descriptions included finding healing, experiencing integration, learning self-compassion, developing improvements in focus, and feeling excitement about their future.

Themes and Patterns of Relationship Arising in the Responsive Drumming

Playing my single headed hand drum as a means to respond to my experiences with the group I was surprised to find that this embodied, visceral form of self-expression came so easily and naturally. From the first responsive drumming session, the opening beat was often present in my mind as if given, even before I began.

Preparing to respond on the drum. Preceding each responsive drumming session, I chose to prepare myself by meditating for 8 minutes. I would settle on my meditation cushion in my study and call up the experience of the group meeting that I had facilitated that week. I would then begin my meditation period, simply holding space to sit and be present to what arose about that experience, while holding my drum in my hands and lap for the duration of the meditation. Subsequently, I would begin the voice memo recording function on my phone and proceed to play.

A notable experience. I had one exceptional experience during this preparation meditation over the course of the 10-week group. Following Week 3 I noted:

Meditated for 8 minutes in silence holding my drum at first stiffly, then became more relaxed and loose, then felt energy moving in my hands and arms where they came in contact with the drum - similar to the energy I felt with the triangle energy - but this was more of a container shape. (personal field notes, Oct. 18, 2018)

The triangle energy I referred to was part of a meditation experience I had prior to the project, of channelling energy when sitting with the question of the focus for this thesis. The container shape energy described in the field notes above is of significance, as it relates to what went on in the Week 3 group session that formed the basis for this response. During this week I had introduced the Art Check-In Page, and the Rhythm Instrument Check-In and Attunement, for

which I had also brought my hand drum. This was also the week that a member had announced her dissatisfaction with the group, stating she felt shut down by the art process when all she wanted to do was talk with others. She had also described feeling very alienated in general, by her post treatment experiences. The group had responded with empathy and resonated with the themes raised by the unhappy member.

I had recognized that the energy in the room related to this matter was substantive and considered it imperative that time and space be made available for the group to respond. The planned program was dropped with the assent of most of the group, and members were able to engage in sharing and witnessing their experiences of alienation and isolation related to their respective cancer experiences. During the brief movement and rhythmic attunement session that had followed that discussion, I had played my hand drum in the group for the very first time, as the members had risen, moved and played their chosen instruments to create a collective sound, our first rhythmic group attunement. The session had closed with Check-Out, during which the group members had acknowledged their desire to continue on in expressive art, and acknowledged the unhappy member's right to choose her own way, which was to leave.

Debriefing with the members the following week, it was apparent that this experience had strengthened and deepened the container of the group for those who chose to stay. Therefore, being the group facilitator, I found the meditation experience of perceiving energy, in the form of a container moving from the drum into my own body, to be very authentic, affirming and grounding.

Drumming My Response. Following preparatory meditation for each drumming session I would hold the memory of the group experience for that particular week's meeting in my mind and allow my body to respond through playing my drum. Trusting this somatic expression, I

allowed the beats to flow and change until the response was complete. The length of the drumming responses time varied, from 1:30 minutes to over 6:30 minutes.

Transcribing the Beat Patterns. When I analyzed the recorded drumming responses, to help elucidate the rhythm patterns, I listened to and illustrated each session, transcribing each beat according to the pattern I was able to discern. Below, Figure 1 shows an illustrated list of the beat patterns, each is shown in the colour I was drawn to and using lines and curves that best represented the sound as I perceived it at the time of transcribing.

An example of transcription in Figure 2, showing my drumming responses for the week 1 and week 2 group meetings.

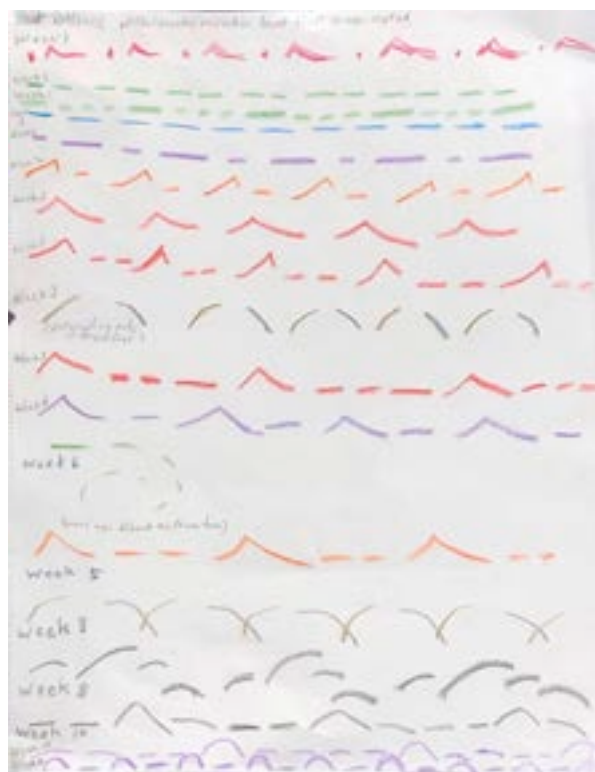


Figure 1. Illustrated List of Drumming beat patterns



Figure 2. Transcription of Week 1 & Week 2

Comparing drumming responses over the group meetings. I created Table 1 below, to provide a systematic comparison of the drumming responses over the group's ten meetings. In

addition to relevant comparative details of the responsive drumming sessions, I have included the type of art process that was undertaken each week, as well as the interpretive title I gave to each drumming response upon listening to it during the analysis phase.

Reviewing the responsive drumming sessions, I was able to discern 18 different rhythm patterns over the 10 sessions I recorded. Each rhythm pattern had its own "voice", and the sessions often had the feel of a conversation. Some rhythm patterns appeared in one session alone and others appeared in several. Figure 1 shows that new rhythm patterns arose in session 1 (5 different rhythms), session 2 (1 rhythm), session 3 (4 rhythms), session 5 (1 rhythm), session 6 (2 rhythms), session 8 (2 rhythms) and session 10 (3 rhythms). Notably session 7 was the only one to have periods of silence during the drumming response. During a session, rhythms could change several times; as seen in Table 1, the most changes occurred in sessions three, five, six and ten, which was by far the highest. Notably, only the single blue beat was present in every session, varying in magnitude and length. This was followed in frequency by the green beat, which had 3 variations in form, from short paired beats, to long beats separated by 3 short beats, to a curling beat (short taps close together, forming a circle or curl on the drum); session six was the only session in which the green beat was not present. These two beat colours were frequently present at the beginning (blue beat), and the end (green beat) of a session, as noted in Table 1 below and continuing on the two pages that follow.

Table 1. Responsive Drumming Sessions

Week # <i>Interpretive Title</i> • Art process	Drum session time	# of rhythm patterns	# of rhythm changes	First rhythm pattern	Last rhythm pattern
Week 1 <i>Beginning to find a pulse</i> • Collaging Art Journal	2:00	5	4	Red dot dash	Purple long & short

Week 2	1:32	3	5	Blue single beat	Green short paired beats
<i>Being with the group, Together</i>					
Collaging Art Journal					
Week 3	3:09	8	12	Blue single beat	Red dot dash
<i>Intense conversation: Many voices</i>					
Art Check-In, Discussion, Rhythm & Movement					
Week 4	5:37	3	11	Orange inverted check & dash	Green short paired beats fading
<i>Connecting with deep resonance: Making progress together</i>					
Body Outline Art: Inside & Outside Supportive Space					
Week 5	4:48	4	14	Red dot dash	Green short paired beats -fading
<i>Steady with variations and spaces</i>					
Spectrum of Emotions collaborative discussion and cathartic expressive flip book					
Week 6	5:42	5	13	Blue single beat	Green curling beats
<i>Working steadily</i>					
- Read & discussed Rumi's <i>The Guesthouse</i> related to Spectrum of Emotions artwork - Creating scale of light, making art to guided meditation, "Remembering who you are" (Cornell, 2006, p. 22-23)					
Week 7	4:16	5 (incl. silence)	8	Red dot dash	Green short paired beats
<i>Working with focus</i>					
Starting to create a personal healing mandala, sacred art making introduced (Cornell, 2006)					
Week 8	3:23	6	9	Blue single beat	Green short paired beats - fading
<i>Many voices, Energy moving</i>					
Bringing healing mandala to life					
Week 9	3:26	5	11	Green short paired beat	Green curling beats
<i>Different tempos sharing the space</i>					

- Introducing colours to healing mandala (Cornell, 2006, p. 94). - Received brief visit from study recruiters at Check-Out.					
Week 10	5:29	10	22	Black arc variations	Green curling beats
<i>Members speak clearly in their own voices</i>					
Working on personal healing mandala, participating in art review as part of group closure, completing evaluation, closing, newspaper photographer visits.					

Listening to each of the responsive drumming sessions, I arrived at an impression of the group's process, from which I formed an interpretive title as shared in Table 1. I was fortunate to be able to consult with Val Vint, who graciously consented to be my Drumming Elder for reviewing the notes and recordings, as she had taught me when I first received my drum.

Discerning meaning: Consulting with my Drumming Elder. I shared the responsive drumming session recordings and the field notes with Drumming Elder Val Vint, while withholding my own conclusions, in order to preserve impartiality in comparing her impressions with mine. She was able to provide feedback on the first 4 sessions, as cited below with her consent (Drumming Elder Val Vint, private communication, February 15 & 18, 2019). The title I had previously given to each session follows her comments for comparison purposes:

Session 1

Begins with hopefulness then seems hesitant

At 1:00 becomes focused

slows at 1:21 - like determining directionality

Title: *Beginning to find a pulse*

Session 2

Focused on task & thinking

feels like you are trying to slow yourself down to be able to notice everything - big job

Title: *Being with the group, together*

Session 3

Stuttering but on point

Trying for an understood/recognized rhythm

Unwillingness to stop

wanting to push/drive on

striving on

Title: *Intense conversation: Many voices*

Session 4

starting out with assuredness

path is set somewhat now

direction is in view but changeable

moving with caution - listening - watching - feeling - absorbing all that can be

Title: *Connecting with deep resonance: Making progress together*

The Drumming Elder's enriched detail is evidence of the depth of wisdom and sensitivity she held in relation to her long experience and practice of the drum. I found our congruence

validating for my own beginning perceptions (the titles), and in affirming the voice of the drum as an expressive channel for conveying meaning. The Drumming Elder also resonated with the needs and issues named by group members; with respect to a member withdrawing she offered the following, "I find working with Spirit, the ones meant to be there are there even if they do not complete the time, they complete their time" (Ibid). She also asked about the employment of specific measures that I had not mentioned, noting their value to address trauma and culture, including the use of a talking stick or stone, and beginning the group with a land acknowledgement. I have since implemented both of these and received an enthusiastic response from recent participants.

Themes and Patterns of Relationship Arising in the Visual Art Responses

The visual art I created for this study followed a parallel process and range of modalities to that of the group. Like the group members, I too, was engaging in a process of enquiry about my experience and identity. My focus differed, in that it centred on the facilitator role I occupied, rather than the experience of living with cancer. I was moved and informed by the art I made, and this deepened further once I interviewed it as a co-researcher. The art truly had its own voice, and conveyed a very powerful and unfolding embodiment of the different aspects of my experience, personally, as facilitator, and in the relationships with the group, the art and the unspoken emotions, as I will address in the following section. I have chosen to follow the sequence in which the art was made as it reflects the developmental process of building relationships as the group progressed. Images of the art pertinent to the discussion are included here, to view the complete range of images and the voice of the art particular to each, the reader is directed to Appendix B.

Collage Art. Beginning with low skill, high yield image making was very facilitative for expressing the perceptions and felt sense I experienced with respect to the group and my role. Like the group members, I used an art journal to hold the collage, and was surprised to create quite an abundance of images parallel to the first two weeks of the group. Particular themes arose in the collage pages, in response to the focus of my project. These were brought into further focus in dialogue with the art, as explicated below.

Self-awareness. My own presence is featured in the first image, a photograph, surrounded by a black pencil and oil pastel edge. This reflected my intention, preparation and position on the path, as I approached the group members, which I realized were represented by trees in my line of vision, right down to the number in the group (not a conscious choice, one I discovered after the fact). The interview of the art further revealed my attitude, "I know this path, dappled with sun and shadow I follow it with interest in what I will discover along the way this time" (See Figure 3, below).



Figure 3. Group facilitator starting out - Collage, Week 1

Reviewing the various collage images with my mentor, I observed my own personal content had arisen, albeit quite subtly. For example, amongst the images, I had included some Inuit images with the years they had been made and, upon later reflection, realized that these denoted personally significant dates. For example, "2009" marked the year I had begun to facilitate the Expressive Arts Group program; while other years marked my return to the city of my childhood, and my return to school to begin my training journey in counselling therapy. One of the collages also featured kayaks out of the water, with people listening to a woman who seemed to be leading them, as well as a body of water located close to the city I had moved to as a newly married person (See Figure 4 below). Both kayaking and the geographic locating of a personally formative space are vital experiences for me, thus the art reflected the reality that I brought my personal self to the work on many levels, even those out of my conscious awareness.



Figure 4. Bringing personal self into the art - Collage, Week 2

Invitation to the process. The collage work conveyed an invitation to a process that offered nourishment and new perspectives, grounded in the senses. The imagery conveyed the opportunity to bear witness to art in life and life in art, in the context of multiplicity; acknowledging suffering, grief and loss and receiving comfort and nurturance through coming together in community. The voice of the art shared a message that applied to myself in addition to the group members, "you are part of something much greater, beholding it is your job".

See Figure 5 below.



Figure 5. Part of something bigger, beholding it is your job - Collage, Week 1

Acknowledging numinous and primal energies. The imagery and voice of the art made it clear to me that by engaging in an expressive arts process with the group, deeper knowledge was being tapped, and that the imagination was a primal energy source connected to wildness, as shown in Figure 2. "I am going deeper, the old wise inner numinous knowing and animal

energies Being, inside of you, looking out, recognizing the pulse of life ...connect to old wisdom to know what this is" (See Figure 6 below).



Figure 6. Encountering numinous and primal energies - Collage and Oil Pastels, Week 1

Building relationships. The collage imagery that followed Week Two focused upon the safe space offered in relationship within the group and with the presence of the facilitator. This was notable, as the group meditation had been about a safe space, and some group members had discovered that they did not have a safe space.

Building relationship called for movement together and trust in engagement. Vulnerability and vigilance was apparent from the perspective of the group participants, "I am watching you. I need to know that I can trust you" (see Figure 4 above). I perceived that some but not all members, could respond; as the felt sense emerges in the art and its response, "I invite those who wish to move to join me, while bearing witness to those who cannot or will not, grounded by their own weight, black tar or stony disappointment" (see Figure 7 below).



Figure 7. Inviting those who wish to move while bearing witness to those who cannot - Collage, Week 2

Water: Accepting the emotional realm. Throughout the collage process, water appeared in its various forms, from volcanic steam, to morning dew, freshwater lakes in Spring thaw, to icebergs, and the frigid seas at the extreme poles of the earth, in this instance, Antarctica's frozen landmass and surrounding ocean. I recognized this element as being about emotional life, and noted balance and movement on the water, via a variety of means, also featured in much of the collage imagery. For example, particularly at the beginning, a female surfer balanced on a big wave, riding her surfboard, in stark contrast to the desert-like conditions in an image next to her (See Figure 8 below).



Figure 8. Water in its various forms, and its absence, woman balancing on wave
- Collage and Oil Pastels, Week 1

Encounters with trauma: Meeting Sedna. By way of contrast, in the harsh environment of Antarctica, it was the sea animals that were at ease in the setting, as they had flippers designed to help them navigate the ice and frigid watery terrain. However, the people were not grounded; instead they were bundled up, wearing life jackets and sitting in supervised boats, some taking pictures of what they were viewing, as shown in Figure 9 below. One human-like figure was present amongst the imagery (bottom right corner), and at ease in the sea with its creatures, Sedna, Inuit goddess of the sea. According to the Inuit legend, a beautiful Inuit girl who had been pressured into marriage by her father and unknowingly married a raven rather than a human. After having been carried off to a remote nest, far from her family, she was very distressed and lonely. Her father who missed her greatly, went to rescue her and when returning her home in his kayak, was overtaken by a windstorm created by the angry raven upon discovering his wife was missing. Realizing the kayak would capsize and they would be killed, Sedna's father threw her overboard and, when she surfaced and clung to the kayak, he struck at her frozen fingers with his



Figure 9. Encounters with Trauma: Meeting Sedna - Collage, Week 2

paddle, and they fell off and became the mammals of the sea. Sedna slipped beneath the surface and became the goddess of the sea. Thus, when hunting was not possible due to storms and high seas, the Inuit knew that Sedna was expressing her anger and frustration, and they would need to have the shaman travel to the sea bottom, to visit and sooth Sedna, and comb the lice from her hair. If the shaman was successful, Sedna would be calm down and the mammals of the sea would again be able to surface and be harvested to feed the community (Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2006, p. 4; Dougherty & West, 2007, p. 45-46).

This connected with the work the group was delving into, learning to feel their feelings, after their often arduous encounters with cancer and treatment - not an easy task, thus the voice of the art rang true, "I am a place to discover...remote...much of me is frozen...yet...life is present and change happens...vulnerability is very real and trust is important. I need to be seen, respected, treated with caution...so come with a guide...preparation, support and community".

What the group offers. The final collage image in the series from the second week of the group conveys themes of containment, rest, safety, nurturance and resilience. These include a safe harbour and flourishing city within view of extinct volcanoes. Brightly dressed fashion models sport big semitransparent tote bags in brilliantly transformed spaces. A reclining Buddha reveals the soles of his feet, full of connection points, colourful foods are attractively displayed in skewered groups on a buffet, and a starfish stands in sparkling clear, shallow water. Starfish are remarkably resilient, known to be able to grow a new limb when they lose one. This is a reflection in imagery of what the group and I, as its facilitator, did endeavour to offer, as described in the voice of the art, "I need to be seen and experienced in order to be appreciated. What I offer is support and containment as well as nourishment, playfulness and restorative pleasures" (Appendix B, Figure B9 Week 2, and accompanying statement).

Responding to Difficulty. There are times when the facilitator's role is simply to be present, bear witness and receive difficult feelings expressed by a group member, as this is what is needed for that member to feel received, even as he or she is rejecting the very experience



being offered. When this happened to me as the facilitator, I needed to be grounded enough to accept, allow and trust this process to unfold, as it had its own rhythm. The image that arose in my art making process, as shown in Figure 10,

Figure 10. Receiving bitter black grief - Water Soluble Pastel, Week 3

provided me with a way to express this experience, in the context of the group. The art's voice sums it up, "I am receiving this bitter black hard grief, holding the vessel of the group to accept and allow it to be included and absorbed and supported, seen and heard in the hands of love. I need to allow this to be just as it is." Making this art was a departure from the group's art process, as the only visual art made in the group that day was the Check-In art. It would be reasonable to call this image my Check-In art from the group experience, it certainly allowed me to connect and reflect upon what was happening at the time.

Body outline and supportive field imagery: Self-identity, resources and supports.

The large format art, (here created from two spare pieces of poster paper, with the bottom right corner missing) I made for this stage in the group was very interesting in how it unfolded. Elements arrived in stages over a three-day period, culminating in the final image as shown in Figure 11. Following the body scan meditation on the first day I created the interior of my body space. Then, following the safe and resourced space meditation, I created a safe, supportive space around the body that included a blue sky and yellow sun, accompanied by an eagle, vegetation, and winding river, as well as my drum and stick. The second day I added my eyebrows, and an energy portal to the top of my head, showing the outside connection to the energy that streamed through my body. To the soles of my feet I added roots that ran into the ground beneath me. I also added people to the outside field that surrounded me, including, my family, some of my teachers, a Drumming Elder playing her drum, creative spirits singing and dancing, and more vegetation. On the third day I added my skirt for modesty after becoming aware of feeling exposed and self-conscious. After having drawn it to below my knees, I was reminded of the indigenous expectations of traditional dress that I follow for the women's

drumming circle that I attend, where I wear a skirt, and this felt more natural and supportive in



Figure 11. I am connected to the rhythm of Life
Oil pastels on poster paper, Week 4

my drawing, as well.

Reflecting upon the process in this art, I felt much more self-aware of my personal identity, and how the resources with which I surround myself are also present in the work I do, as facilitator. Reflecting upon the art in the larger context of this project I was also struck by the rhythm lines, the ones I intentionally placed in the image and those that were all pervasive, surrounding and running through my image. They were there as the result of the textured surface upon which I made the art, that I had not considered at the time. Nevertheless, in the context of the image, they were meaningful in how they connected my Being to the rest of life, by simply running through the entire surface; as the voice of the art stated: "I am connected to the rhythm of Life."

Spectrum of Emotions: Aware of Self, being the facilitator. To explore the range of emotions I experienced as a facilitator and personal during my experience with the group, I



Figure 12. Oil pastel, Week 5

guided myself through the same exercise as the group.

Brainstorming all the feelings I had, I grouped them from darkest to lightest, and allowed myself to draw out each set of feelings for a set period of time (1:20 mins.) in rapid succession, to create the flip-book. The full 13 pages are included in Appendix B, Figures B12 to B24.

Reviewing the images, I noted that many included a simplified characterization of myself. Amongst these, the image containing the most personal detail was the one I felt the greatest affinity towards, as shown in Figure 12,

Acceptance Courage Building the Container.

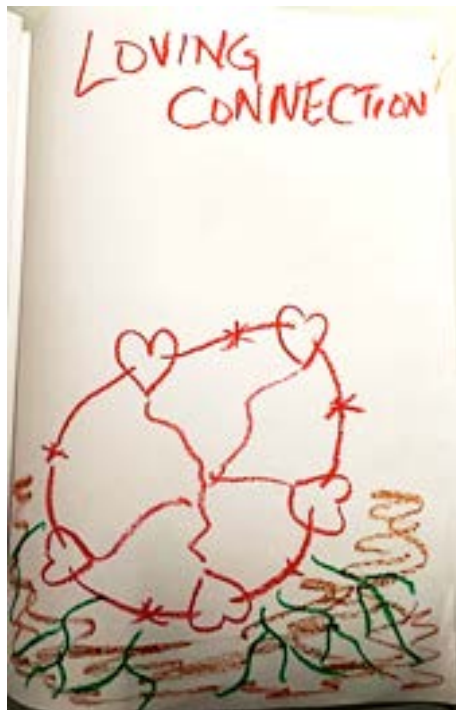


Figure 13. Oil pastel, Week 5

Also of note, were the emotions for which I had drawn images that did not include personal representation, for example, Fear and Worry; Groundedness, Presence Focus Holding the Group Container; Faith + Trust; and Loving Connection (see Figure 13). These are more immediate to my personal experience as group facilitator, and the art reflects that by revealing a direct image, not one that is personified by a representation of myself. This difference further illuminated my experiencing. The colours also played a role, for example, in comparing the two

images shown, the green in the first image related to acceptance, courage and building the container, is also featured in the second image, as the roots, in Loving Connection. Thus, in its manifold ways, the art continued to teach me. In the voice of the art, "I need to be aware of these many aspects as essential to being wholly authentic and present".

A part of the Universe: Connecting with the life force. Creating the image in response to the meditation, "Remembering Who You Are" (Cornell, 2006, p. 22-23) was a deceptively simple art process, yet became a deeply numinous experience. I felt compelled to immediately interview it once it was created. Holding the flat sheet of paper in an upright position at the table, I stood it on each of its edges to discern the orientation of the image. Remarkably, one side stayed standing upright, after I let go of it, without any support other than the surface of the table, so I decided the art was telling me this was the right way up. It remained standing for as long as I sat still and looked at it, then when I got up for a pen and my journal, upon my return it fell off the table and would not stand by itself again.

The image began from the Bindu point I had placed at the centre and radiated out in the form of a chrysanthemum or elaborate lily, streams of energy radiating from it in oscillating strands. It had a wild, three-dimensional sense of spaciousness about it, and I sensed an organic energetic presence, which led me to interview it immediately, so that I could know what the art had to tell me. I have included the full conversation in Appendix B, accompanying image B13. I include a smaller version of it here in Figure 14 below, accompanied by highlights from the voice of the art.



Figure 14. Chrysanthemum of Life - White Pencil on Black Paper, Week 6

I am the Chrysanthemum of life, all energy radiates from me to fill the universe...I move and change in my form, I am constant however in my presence, necessary to living beings, held in the space of nonbeing.

I need space to unfold in my own way and time,
understanding and acceptance of my manifold ways.

What I offer you is a way of understanding wildness...a way of being that is not confined by templates yet is still connected to a source and contained by the nature of its energy which vibrates and undulates. It has its own properties, which can be felt in the body, sensed in the heart, perceived in the mind and embodied through the spirit.

Mandala: Holding a Sacred Space to Bloom in the Wildness of the World. Creating the mandala, guided by the steps outlined in Cornell (2006) began with writing an intention. My intention expressed my wish to know who I am as group facilitator, what the core ingredients are in my role, holding space in the Expressive Arts Group that I facilitate for people living with cancer. I also sought guidance as a person growing in myself, and as an artist, as well as in my calling as an expressive arts and counselling therapist. Upon meditating to receive the symbols for my mandala, images arrived in quick succession, hands cupping a water lily, supported by my drum, resting on marsh water, in the forest, feathers and an eagle in flight. I located photographs I had taken in wild locations over the past two years that resonated with the eagle and lily images. I was surprised by the stack of images, and wondered how I would be able to draw the hands, but then found it came quite easily once I simply held and gazed at my hands in the position needed. The first step in the mandala making was to draw these out in white pencil on the black paper, contained by the mandala circle. Then with further meditation I was given the colour system I was to use, specifying that the eagle and drum were to be coloured just as they were created, the balance of elements had more specific colour designations.

I was surprised by how quickly the mandala was completed, after three sittings I became aware that there was nothing else to be added. One aspect that took some time and effort to render effectively in colours and proportion was the pulse of life, which appeared as the ripples in the water, seeming to emanate from the drum. The full interview and image are provided for further reference in Appendix B, Figure B14, with accompanying statements. Below I have included the mandala image in Figure 15, accompanied by highlights from the voice of the art.



Figure 15. Personal Mandala: Holding a Sacred Space
Pencil Crayon on Black Paper, Weeks 7-10

I am here, gently cradling the water lily, its root an umbilical cord rising from the mud passing through the drum, the life force vibrates, the drum beats, reverberating through the water, connecting to my pulse-points... Purple hands facilitate transformative change in the context of safety and support. This is the wilderness of the world and I am here to facilitate in collaboration with all that vibrates.

I need time and focused, receptive presence, trust.

What I offer is a sacred space to bloom with love and support, in the wildness of the world.

Loving, caring connection and tenderness.

Discussion

Through this study I sought to deepen my understanding and self-awareness as a beginning expressive arts therapist in my personal and professional practice. To do this, I set out to learn about my experience and use of self in facilitating a mindful-based expressive arts group for people living with cancer. I wanted to know what themes and patterns of relationship would arise for me, and chose to explore and capture this using a multi-modal approach, including field notes, responsive drumming and visual art making. I am grateful to my practicum placement and the group participants, for their support and acceptance of my proposed self-reflective study in the context of the group. I am also grateful to my mindful expressive arts mentor and my Drumming Elder for holding space to listen and bear witness to my explorations and providing me with guidance and feedback from their own perspective.

The preceding chapter reflects the richness of the data I found using the heuristic method to approach my question. In the discussion that follows I will summarize my learning regarding the key themes, patterns of relationship and images that arose in the modalities I chose, as well as the intermodal connections, with regard to my research question and sub-questions. Consistent with the heuristic process, I will also present the creative synthesis that emerged to embody my learning. This is followed by a discussion regarding the implications for practice, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research directions.

Key Themes, Patterns of Relationship and Images

Analysis of the field notes revealed that the themes emerging were not separate according to context, as initially set forward in my research question, regarding experience of Self and use of Self as facilitator. Instead, I found that in general, the themes were present across the contexts of my personal and facilitator experiences. Furthermore, I observed that developmental

movement along the themes flowed from the intrapersonal to the facilitative, and on to the group collective.

Facilitation, Teaching begins with Self-care, Preparation and Ripples Out. For example, in the thematic category of Care, Preparation, Teaching and Facilitative Support, my personal self-preparation was where preparation began.

“Doing the work before the work.” This phrase, offered by my mentor who cited Parker Palmer (2004, p. 103) for this descriptor, described the self-preparation that I was doing. Setting aside time to engage in mindful meditation and to prepare the materials and the room prior to the group start were important preliminary steps to support myself personally, and in facilitating the group. This self-awareness and care continued to be important during the group time; by ensuring I paid attention to my physical needs, I also kept more attuned to the group as a participant. Finally, having access to a mentor with whom I could seek regular supervision, provided opportunities for me to address needs in caring for myself both personally and in the facilitator role.

Use of Self: Preparing the way. Having prepared my Self, as the facilitator I then prepared the way in the group. I provided structure and guidance, gathering the group in, guiding members in mindful attunement and somatic grounding, then inviting them to enter into studio, checking that they had what they needed and providing ongoing support and encouragement for creative flow. This very intentional and at times intensive focus in my use of Self contributed to a feeling of safety and trust that group members commented upon, as they came to know what to expect. This in turn facilitated members in trying new things, in the company of their peers. Likewise, the group members would grow in their own self-awareness, facilitated by personalized attention, as I regularly approached each individual at the start of studio, as well as

later, as I discerned a need (usually through body language or eye contact), to ask, “Do you have what you need?” This practice helped raise awareness regarding their needs, as I discovered members often did not otherwise identify or articulate them. I believe this kind of enquiry helped group members to internalize the practice for themselves, becoming more mindfully attuned to their own needs, they were developing an important life skill with respect to self-care, preparation and support.

Ripple Effect of Mindful Self-care. Over time group members became more trusting of this practice and reported on expanding this self-care into their personal lives away from the group. Noticing this expanding, repeating pattern with this first relational pattern, led to a perspective of this shift as movement, beginning from my personal experience, as change agent, and expanding outward into the group, in concentric rippling circles. Notably, this ripple effect has been described in the field of social psychology, Christakis and Fowler (2009) found in their studies on the spread of happiness in social networks. Using mathematical studies of large social networks, after controlling for outside influences, and noting geographic proximity as a contributing factor, they found a directional influence, that “clustering is also due to the causal effect of one person’s happiness on another’s” (p. 51), and this effect continued to have significance at three degrees of separation, such that they stated, “we have our first evidence of the Three Degrees of Influence Rule...Being in a particular spot in a social network, exposed to people with particular feelings, has important implications for your life” (Ibid).

Presence and Bearing Witness: Cultivates mindfulness and builds the container.

Practicing mindful awareness by being present and bearing witness to what arose with curiosity and nonjudgment also rippled out in my facilitation of the group, and subsequently, to the cultivation of this presence in the group members themselves. Practicing mindful presence was

something I modelled and spoke about, with a focus towards oneself, one another, and the expressive art, while cultivating safety through receptivity, curiosity and nonjudgment. This applied to Art Check-In, Group Attunement, Grounding, Studio and during Art Check-Out, which provided an opportunity to reflect upon the harvest, what was being discovered and learned. This practice was important in building the group container, as illustrated below in Figures 16 and 17 from my Spectrum of Emotions flip-book, created following Week 5.

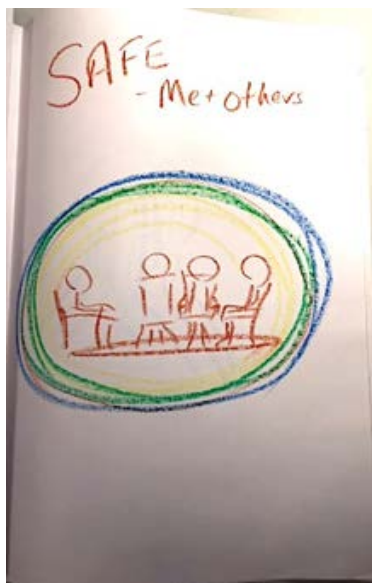


Figure 16: Flip-book Image
- Oil pastels



Figure 17: Flip-book Image
- Oil pastels

Being present and bearing witness from the place of Self-experiencing. Bearing witness to my own felt sense was especially important in times of uncertainty. For example, seeking consultation with my mentor when I noticed the disengaged response of one group member helped me to prepare and respond to that member's expression of disappointment from a receptive, supportive and authentic perspective, as facilitator. This also helped me to be present and listen to subsequent group members' remarks with an awareness of the deep privilege they had bestowed upon me in sharing such personally felt meanings and experiences. All of the

members, including the unhappy one, subsequently commented on how much this time was appreciated, and contributed to building safety and fostering healing.

Modelling of this kind supported group members in developing their own mindful presence, bearing witness and becoming curious in dealing with uncertainty and their own moment-to-moment experiencing. Likewise, there was also the matter of members identifying as a group in bearing witness and being present together. This unfolded as I worked with members to build the container of the group from the outset, for example, in collaborating on establishing the group expectations at the time of formation, and continued as we began using expressive means that included verbal, visual, movement, rhythm instrument-based. Members affirmed the group as a safe place that they looked forward to attending. This comment grew in frequency amongst the members with each passing week and arose most frequently in answer to the Check-In question, "What do I need?"

Members were empowered in making their own choices for direction in art processes, such as the body scan artwork (Week 4), and encouraged to attend to their intuition, active imagination and the voice of the art. Honouring the words each member used to name emotions in the Spectrum of Emotions artwork (Week 5) offered a tangible way of bearing witness to each person's experiencing. Likewise, noticing and highlighting the group's natural strengths and asking for, receiving and responding to feedback during the group created an arena in which people experienced being seen and heard, and added to the sense of a level playing field. All of these aspects helped to build the identity of the group and strengthen the container.

Noticing Shifts: Illuminating the Process and Cultivating Flexibility. This sub-theme arose specific to my use of Self as group facilitator, occupying the position of observer-participant in the here-and-now of the group, this was a necessary task as part of the process of

illumination (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 152-153). This allowed the group and its members to note the change as it was unfolding, providing an opportunity to process the experience, cultivating their mindful self-awareness and increasing their flexibility.

Shifts included those expected of the group as it accomplished its developmental tasks, including forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 309). Group members also experienced personal shifts during meetings, and were witnessed by the group, as they learned to sit with uncertainty, doubt and vulnerability, and also as they made discoveries. The use of low skill high yield expressive arts processes was valuable in providing a safe, supportive context in which members were able to make discoveries and learn about themselves, making personal shifts. Acknowledging these shifts as they emerged, in the safety of the group, members began to trust themselves and gained confidence in experimenting and trusting the process. Likewise, engaging in externalizing and perspective checks with the expressive arts processes literally provided the distance often needed for members to see things from a new point of view. The exercise itself, as well as the discoveries, also facilitated personal shifts. These experiences helped to empower members in their mindful self-awareness and cultivated their flexibility.

Experiencing Push-Pull and Negotiating Uncertainty. This was a theme that arose at the outset in the findings and was related to negotiating and harnessing uncertainty to foster change. I viewed this to be the dynamic at work as part of the dialectical relationship in which the group and I were engaged over the course of our time together. A push and pull pressure, a back and forth, a receiving and letting go.

Negotiating push-pull in Self. I experienced push-pull at work from the point at which I confirmed registrations prior to the group starting to the point at which the group came to a close

on the final day. Early in the group, while experiencing this push-pull as I considered how best to respond to a disengaged group member, my mentor taught me a mindful practice that allowed me to bring it to my own assistance. Upon discussing my dilemma in supervision, about whether to approach the member or wait for her to declare her dissatisfaction, my mentor guided me to practice physically experiencing the nature of push-pull, by mindfully moving from the edge of my seat (the watching and not acting), to sitting back in my seat and feeling the support beneath me (acknowledging and bearing witness from a place of support). This timely learning became necessary and helpful in keeping me grounded and able to respond from a place of support at the next meeting, when the group member finally did verbalize her discontent. The group member herself had also experienced a push-pull of uncertainty about the group's goodness of fit, and by Week 3 had reached the point of being able to state her needs for something other than what the group offered. Likewise, when I experience a personal dilemma about whether or not to bring in my art to share with the group, allowing myself to sit with the push-pull of the situation helped me to arrive at the solution.

Harnessing push-pull in the service of the group: Dissonance Theory. Facilitating the group in the context of the various personalities present was greatly assisted by the collaborative work done at the outset on expectations for member behaviour, which I could refer to when members moved off the group plan. However, tension inevitably arose in the group as part of its process, and this was characterized by a push-pull dynamic, which the group and I had to negotiate. For example, related to a group member who openly expressed contrary views and was often quite dependent for direction and approval required a lot of my attention. This tension was important in two ways, firstly, it provided me with an opportunity to facilitate in a conscious and compassionate manner, by aligning my personal awareness with my facilitative goals. As

Rogers (2011) observed, "If I am open to learning about myself - my inner journey, as well as learning about myself as a group leader - I am eager to enter the group process...There are always things I can learn about my life path and group work. This keeps me awake and alert" (p. 69).

Secondly, in the service of the group's process, the tension provided by the member helped to create the conditions for change, as she was aware of and openly articulated the uncertainty that other members could not. This allowed the group to sit with uncertainty, an essential element described in dissonance theory, for fostering change, as Yalom and Leszcz (2005) described,

Dissonance creates a state of psychological discomfort and propels the individual to attempt to achieve a more consonant state. Individual who find themselves in a group in which membership has many desirable features (for example, hopes of alleviation of suffering, attraction to the leader and other members) but which, at the same time makes tension-producing demands....will experience a state of dissonance" (p. 277).

For this reason "*a group should include members with varying interpersonal styles and conflicts*" (Ibid, p. 278).

Managing the push-pull of programming time and space. Working closely with the group within the allotted program time, despite disruptions due to member needs, the group was able to move through the program planned with some adjustments in expectations. The group was rewarded with a rich harvest in art-making and personal learning, and the members themselves, reported on their personal growth in tolerating uncertainty, gaining flexibility and learning to "go with the flow". Space was another push-pull challenge, as the group was bumped out of the usual room on the day that we moved into the mandala work (Week 7), and had to adjust to the different surroundings and move forward. I believe the attention placed on the

strength of the group container earlier in the program served it well in managing this disruption. The group had a shared identity and trust that was not disturbed by this physical change.

Expressive Arts as Co-Facilitator and Teacher. The expressive arts were so integral to my experience and inherent to the group program that I did not initially attend to them in and of themselves. I had to review the field notes a separate time, to intentionally focus on the art and use of sound and rhythm. Doing so reminded me of the important contribution made by the expressive arts, teaching me personally, as well as acting as co-researchers and co-facilitators with the group.

Facilitative role of rhythm instruments and other sounds. Reviewing the field notes with a focus on the rhythm instruments, reflected just how facilitative they were in connecting every member, myself included, to our emotions as felt experiences in our bodies, as well as facilitating connections with metaphors and personal memories. Choosing, commenting upon, and playing a rhythm instrument invoked personal expressive intention. The group attunement process, which involved just a couple of minutes, was a mindfulness practice that invited each of us quite literally into the "playspace" of the group, attuning to one another in a truly sensory-based way. It also provided a very simple ritual in which the group claimed the meeting space as their own, by bathing it in the collective sound created. This helped to build the container of the group, and the silence that followed offered a natural transition to mindful stillness, as I guided the group into the Grounding, a period of somatic presence and meditation, in preparation for Studio time. Through this experience, I came to appreciate the elegance of rhythm instruments, which invited members into a process of embodied self-expression in the play space, using a familiar and accessible way that I will be sure to include in groups going forward. "Rhythm

connects us to nature, to others, and to ourselves. The art of rhythm is the art of life" (McNiff, 2005, p. 237).

The Drum as Co-Researcher: As I held the drum it held me. Engaging in responsive drumming was a decentering process for me that provided a means to express and embody my experience as facilitator and group member using my whole being. Holding the drum to play it, I was able to release the energy and experiences I carried from the group and listen to the voice of the drum reflect that back to me in sound and rhythm. The physicality of the drumming was beneficial, an aspect about which Ash (2001) noted, "*Hanta Yo* means 'clear the way.' Clear away all that is in the way so that Spirit, inspiration, and creativity have a clear route of expression. This is what drumming does, clearing away all the dross and conditioned responses so that something from deep inside can come out" (p. 28).

Working with the drum in this way, I experienced relationship as I came to know its own responsive presence, voice and language. The drum was channelling and bearing witness to me and my experiences, filled with life, an animate being, just as it is referred to in Ojibwe, *dewe'igan* (Nichols & Nyholm, 1995, p. 44). It also showed up in my dreams, when I was spending too much time on writing, "I was told to check with my drum and to take it places, it was meant to be out and going places to be played...I realized I would need to start using it with others" (personal dream journal notes, January 12, 2019). Further to its animate nature, Drake (2002) described, "From a shamanic perspective, drums are living beings, helping spirits, and allies. They deserve the utmost honor, respect and care. For this reason, one should always 'drum the beat' rather than 'beat the drum'" (p. 107). Notably, the push-pull theme previously described in relation to the field notes, arises again as a function of engaging with the drum,

When playing a drum, life force energy flows between the drumhead and the drumstick.

With practice, you should be able to feel this subtle energy pushing and pulling on the drumstick. If you allow this force to guide you, you will begin to flow along the current of will...Thus you become an instrument of creation in the material world.

(Drake, 2002, p. 28)

Listening to the responsive drumming recordings during data analysis, the variation in beat patterns and frequency in shifts offered rich reflections. This aligned with Drake's (2002) observation, "Drum rhythms cover the whole range of human feeling. Whatever the emotion, the drum seems to compensate and offer satisfying expression" (p. 13). Thus the drum offers a dynamic embodiment of experiencing, leading me to recognize my drum as my co-researcher, enticing me to wonder about what else I have to learn from it. I realize that this will take time to develop, as Kossak (2015) has noted, "Tuning in is a deliberate act that takes commitment and practice. Like meditation where sitting day in and day out builds consistency and allows the body and mind to align, tuning in takes time to understand and to integrate" (p. 145). Furthermore, the learning is lifelong, as observed by my Drumming Elder in one of the first teachings she shared with me, "You will never stop learning from your drum, I have been drumming for over 40 years and I am still learning" (Drumming Elder Val Vint, personal communication, May 30, 2018).

Studio time: bringing awareness to the creative process. The studio art engaged group members in a process of sitting with the unknown and bringing awareness to their intuitive imagination through engaging in curiosity and creative intention to make discoveries. Art-making revealed members' ways of being, perceiving themselves and their world, which helped to inform me in my therapeutic and facilitative role. The art acted as a mirror, container and modulator to group members, through sitting and working with feelings in a sensory-based way.

This was reflected in the Spectrum of Emotions created using cathartic expression in flip-books during Week 5. Likewise, again in Week 8, members experienced gradual movement from dark to light in the mandala work, which paralleled a similar shift in their emotional experiencing.

My own art process revealed to me that I bring my whole self to the work, and it is present on many levels, some of which I am consciously aware of, and others in which I am not. Like the group, the art acted as a mirror, cultivating my self-awareness, and also as a container, allowing me to explore and embody the primal, emotional, and numinous energies that were arising in my experiences personally and in facilitating with the group. The art also taught me about the experience of exploring and sitting with feelings, in particular in relation to the collage images that included Sedna, the Inuit goddess of the underwater creatures in the remote, frigid, Polar Regions. The work for the group members was to learn to sit with and feel the difficult feelings that often they may have cut their awareness off from, in an effort to cope with their predicament. This is similar to the situation described by Dougherty and West (2007) in their discussion of Sedna and people cut off from their feelings due to their mental health. They referred to the waters of the deep as the place where the emotions, are to be found, "Just as Sedna becomes able to release the mammals of her creativity in the myth, the capacity to reside in these depths with some conscious focus can allow a woman to give rise to her creativity" (p. 50).

Decentering. Making and viewing their art over the course of the group, members were able to externalize and step back from personal content in a tangible way and this facilitated the frequent shifts that I observed in their perception. A clear demonstration occurred as they engaged in a sensory-based decentering process that literally broadened their perceptual awareness. Learning to use white pencil on black paper to create scales of light by adjusting pressure and stroke to realize as many shades of gray as possible, group members were learning

to physically embody this process. Likewise, when they learned to wield the power over darkness in their images, using the black pencil to add shading, their self-efficacy was galvanized; control over darkness was theirs for all to see, in an intentional, active, and tangible way. Knill's (2005) statement reflects the transformative process available in these opportunities, "The thingly act or object...is there to be witnessed directly by the client and the professional change agent" (p. 85).

Setting a personal intention invokes a living, creative art response. The first step in the mandala work was to set an intention for personal healing or growth. This process, revealed to the group members and myself the creative response that can arise in expressive art-making when an intuitive process is used in lieu of the conscious "designer" mind. I was struck by how very gentle and present this manner of knowing is, if space and awareness is attendant to it. The art that arose revealed inner wisdom and fostered healing. I was personally awed by this experience, in my own process and in witnessing that of the group members. I realized that art offers a way of being and seeing and knowing that is an encounter with life itself unfolding, "Every entry into art is a time to renew our membership in life" (Allen, 2005, p. 29).

Acknowledging Expressive Art's numinous and primal energies. Based on interviews with the art, I was given to understand that attending to this very sensual creative-expressive process with great care was vitally important. In the words of the art, " I am sacred, alive, delicate, immediate and royal, I need you to behold me, cherish and protect me" see Figure 15 below.



Figure 15: *"I am sacred"* - Collage and water-soluble pastels on multi-media paper

Themes and Patterns Arising in the Visual Art Responses. Indeed the art had its own voice and offered a way to understand experiences and discern truths that was both numinous and layered. I found certain images recurring in the art, which I discuss below in relation to the meanings that I perceived to arise.

Water as feelings, emotional life. Images of water appeared in the collages in various forms ranging from volcanic steam to morning dew on fresh flowers, to icebergs, lakes in Spring thaw, ocean waves and tropical shallows. Likewise, water appeared in the vessel that receives the black rock in Week 3, as the river that flows in the field of support in the Body Outline Inside-Outside Art in Week 4, and as a teardrop in the image of Loss and Sadness in the Spectrum of Emotions flip book created in Week 5. Water also appeared in the mandala as the marsh in which

the lily blooms, and carried the ripples of energy emanating out from the lily, my hands and the drum. Considering my facilitative work with the group, the various forms that water takes in my art would seem to denote feelings and emotional life at the various levels of awareness and experience with the accompanying qualities. For example, volcanic steam and anger, morning dew and fresh immediacy (see Figure 15), flowing water as ease of movement, and ice as frozen, immobile, numbness.

Notably, within an indigenous perspective water is also significant for other aspects that would be relevant to the healing work of the group and my role as facilitator, "Water is recognized as an element for purification, cleansing and helping to make peace...For the Red People, it is the woman who has been given the responsibility of looking after and seeking the blessing of water" (Bone, Copenace, Courchene, Easter, Green & Skywater, 2012, p. 14).

Rhythm and stillness. Lines denoting rhythm or pulse were frequently present in the art images or as part of the experience in relationship with them. Alternately, stillness could also be seen.

Rhythm. This appeared related to the movement of water in several collage images and again, in the case of the Week 3 image of the sharp stone making a splash in the vessel of water and its impact rippling out and back again. The body outline art was distinctive for having intentional rhythm lines radiating between the drumstick and my drum, as well as running through the interior of the body, and also for having unintentional rhythm lines running throughout the drawing, due to the surface on which the art had been made. Rhythm lines appeared in many of the Spectrum of Emotions images, as well as the undulating pulses of energy present in the black and white image, the Chrysanthemum of Life. Finally, in the mandala, rhythm was present as undulating ripples, radiating through the water from the drum,

which was also in contact with the pulse points on the wrists, just below the hands. Additional kinds of rhythm were apparent in the sky, with the moons and the sun, as well as the eagle in flight. Thus rhythm or vibration seemed to convey the life force on the move, or a dynamic process being underway.

Stillness. Like the other side of a coin, the presence of stillness could be seen in many of the images. For example, the collage artwork of Weeks 1 and 2, showed stillness in the watchful gazes of the fox and the woman (Figure 4). Stillness was also present in the Spectrum of Emotions images, for example in the case of Sadness and Loss (See Appendix B, Figure B13). Stillness could be seen where hands were present, for example, as previously shown in Figure 7, holding the vessel receiving the sharp black stone; and later, cradling the lily in the mandala, while resting on the pulsing drum. Stillness also presented itself in a more animated form with my experience of seeking the right side up for the art response to the guided imagery exercise, Remembering Who You Are, in Week 6, when it literally stood still on one edge for me to contemplate it, until I moved and returned to stillness, at which point it fell down and only remained still on the horizontal plane after that. So, it seemed that stillness was a way of being with, receiving, holding or facilitating a process.

Sensory oriented, 3-dimensional spaces. Each of the artworks was very sensory oriented, and the voice of the art also frequently made reference to sensory qualities. Viewing the art images, a perspective of depth was also present, as an invitation for the viewer to enter in, and immerse oneself in the image. Thus the experience of the art was dependent upon, and directly connected to the body and its senses, nothing was of the abstract, cognitive and purely symbolic domain. Images evoked immersion in space, smells, tastes, textures, sounds, movement, and sights that brought the viewer into a more sensual, body-based experience. This complements the

aforementioned rhythm and stillness and nods to the expressive-arts therapeutic domain as being based in embodied, experiential processes.

Hands: their presence and their absence. Hands made regular appearances in the art and their presence or absence tended to align with the focus of the art.

Presence of hands. When the focus or association was related to use of Self in facilitator role or in an act of service, hands were present. For example, in the collage images of Weeks 1 and 2, the first image (Figure 3, shown previously) shows a woman with equipment packed on her back, her hand firmly grasping her walking stick. In the following set of images, a grieving woman offers food held in her hand; also a surfer on a huge wave holds her hands out to keep her balance. Later, when containment is part of the imagery, hands hold bags (as previously shown in Figure 6). Likewise, in the Week 3 image, hands hold the vessel (group) filled with water, that receives the sharp black stone. Hands are also featured in the Body Outline inside and outside art of Week 4, with my left hand holding my drumstick and my right hand extended towards my father and the ancestors. Hands appear in some instances of the Spectrum of Emotions flip book of Week 5, particularly in images related to Acceptance, Groundedness, Faith and Trust, Hope and Joy, as well as Powerlessness, Embarrassment, Frustration. Hands appear again, in Weeks 7-10 with the mandala, which notably involves the drum as well, as a seemingly integral part of my identity, all held in the rippling water (see Figure 12, previously shown).

Absence of hands. When images embodied primal or numinous energies, there was an immediacy that seemed to pre-empt hands, and they were not present. For example, in the Spectrum of Emotions flip-book, primary emotions such as Fear and Worry, Loss and Sadness, as well as, Loving Connections, had no hands present. Similarly, in the black and white meditation-based image, the white Chrysanthemum of life, no hands are present in the imagery

(see Figure 11, previously shown). Of significance, this absence of hands was an image that arose during knowledge sharing in my dreams, "It is not always about doing, first it is about staying with, to feel the feelings in the group" (Personal dream journal, April 15, 2019).

A middle way arises with the appearance of the Inuit goddess of the undersea, Sedna, and the animals in the Antarctic images, whose incomplete hands and flippers suggest a way of conceiving emotional trauma, as the dispossession and repossession of emotional life. Their limbs, well insulated for contact with frozen landscapes and icy waters, suggest that movement and navigation through frigid, frozen emotional material is possible. Sedna, as goddess of the sea, plays a vital role in the ebb and flow of life, and when distressed, she must be respected and attended to by the shaman in a manner that soothes and facilitates her self-regulation. Thus she and the sea animals seem to offer hope for navigating the frozen landscape and dark waters of trauma. By using their adapted limbs to move through the harsh environment, and in accepting the company of a kind and skilful shaman, who is willing to dive into the depths, to accompany Sedna, and tend to her needs.

Roots. Images of roots appeared in the art frequently from Week 3 onwards. The first image, previously seen in Figure 7, shows roots at the base of the image, holding a heart, from which hands arise to hold the vessel that received the sharp black stone. Roots also appeared growing from my feet into the ground in the Body Outline Inside-Outside image (See Figure 11) made following Week 4. Again, in the Spectrum of Emotions flip book during Week 5, roots arose, growing from feet into the ground to convey Groundedness, and also in Loving Connection, roots extended from an interconnected circle of hearts into the ground below. Finally, in the mandala the taproot of the water lily is present, running from the mud of the earth up through the water, the drum and into the lily, carrying the life-force, as described by the voice

of the art. These images appear to convey the tangible, necessary channels that carry life-giving, nurturance and offer stability in connection, as realized in loving and caring relationships. The roots are ultimately connected to, and arise from, a fundamentally greater source, as the context reveals: the ground, the earth, the land, or that from which life arises. This resonated with a key teaching I received from Anishinaabe Elder Victoria McIntosh, "We don't own the land, we belong to the land" (personal communication, August 20, 2018).

Wildness / Life force. The images of wildness began with the very first collage picture as a woman carrying her equipment on her back moves along an overgrown path in a river bottom forest. A couple of images later, still in Week 1, wild animals appear with energy radiating from them, and Week 2 revealed images of people observing wildlife in Antarctica, and Sedna, Goddess of the undersea creatures made an appearance, a red fox gazes out from the page, watching to see if it can trust me. Images of the wilderness appear in the Body Outline art, as part of the outside field of resources, and even my body's image, with roots growing from the soles of my feet, conveys a feeling of wildness. Subsequently the white on black image, the White Chrysanthemum of life undulates in a dark space, also conveying an organic sense of growth, wildness, which is further acknowledged by the voice of the art saying, "What I offer you is a way of understanding wildness..." (see Appendix B, Figure B13 and related comments). Finally, my personal mandala situates itself in the wilderness, as the voice of the art describes, "This is the wilderness of the world and I am here to facilitate in collaboration with all that vibrates, watched over by the eagle, the sun and the moon's transition over time" (See more in Appendix B, Figure B-14 and accompanying statements). Wildness permeates all of the art, just as creative life force relentlessly arises, here it seems to be represented in its most elemental form, as a central theme to be acknowledged, accepted and learned from.

Multimodal Contributions. Reviewing the findings, it is apparent just how much richness is present in approaching my experiences within each expressive modality. Considering them together, I experienced what Kossak (2015) has described as "a larger way of seeing or knowing" (p. 23). Engaging in writing field notes widened and deepened my awareness of the group experiences for me personally and as the facilitator, by providing me with a means to externalize my observations in a manner that allowed me to reflect upon them myself, and share them with my mentor and Drumming Elder.

Engaging in drumming brought me into relationship with my experience at a visceral level of resonance. My drum, responding with its own voice, was a co-researcher that brought another way of understanding to bear on the study, as acknowledged and understood by my Drumming Elder. The immediately engaging, rhythmic, and creative nature of the drum, and similarly the other rhythm instruments, sensitized me to a domain of knowing and engaging through movement, sound and collaborative attunement that will inform my work with others going forward.

Creating art in parallel with the group's process, and according to my own time, helped me to gain perspective personally and as the facilitator through the art's process, presence, and voice. Similar to my learning with the drum, I gained a significantly deeper appreciation of the art as co-researcher, with its own voice and connection to deep wisdom, when approached on the basis of its Beingness, and given the time and attention to be witnessed respectfully.

Each of these modalities also provided for triangulation of the findings, as some themes were present across modalities. Of note some colours, were present in both the art imagery and in the drum beat patterns in notable ways. For example blue was the colour of the beat pattern that was present in every responsive drumming session, and was also the underground stream that fed

the roots growing from my feet in the large inside-outside body outline and field of support created in Week 4.

Themes shared across modalities included: wildness/life-force, rhythm and stillness, push-pull/sitting with uncertainty, setting and holding intention, learning to trust the process, and making discoveries, experiencing shifts.

Rhythm and stillness arose in the group process, the art and the drumming (which featured stillness in Week 6, see Table 1); Rhythm expressed the function of life in action, and stillness expressed the function of presence, mindful awareness, setting an intention, and bearing witness, receiving and holding new information (making discoveries). Push-pull described the felt sense and dynamic of playing the drum, likewise in the group and art processes, sitting with uncertainty, learning to trust the process in bringing something from the inside out, or from the outside in, and experiencing a shift in perspective. Each of these was present in the group work, and in my own intrapersonal work as well. Finally, being a part of/connected to a greater whole was a theme that arose across modalities.

Being Part of the Whole: Sitting with uncertainty and learning to trust the process.

Studying my experiences through a multimodal approach, I became very aware that I was part of a greater whole, with my role to play, and over time this understanding deepened. Facilitating the group, as my notes revealed, I had to sit with uncertainty and learn to trust the process, as well as model for, and coach the group members in learning this important skill. For myself, this began with the synchronicity of registrants, and the building of community that became the central ground for meeting the needs identified by group members. This also occurred in the use of rhythmic attunement and personally, for me in the drumming, which grounded me to my physical experience and to the earth. Likewise in the art, grounding and connection in a greater

source or whole was conveyed by the image of roots, the reference to wildness, and the wisdom arising in the voice of the art. These experiences led me to perceive and place my trust in what I sensed to be a greater organizing principle or wholeness at work. This felt sense connected with Eckhardt Tolle's (2005) observation regarding mindful living, "When the basis for your actions is inner alignment with the present moment, your actions become empowered by the intelligence of Life itself" (p. 199).

The group, as a conscious community engaged in expressive arts processes, became an incubator for both the members and myself, to develop our growing edges. Natalie Rogers (2011) has described this as collective resonance, "It is a moving beyond the I/we/mine to an all-inclusive sense. Resonance comes from trust and from knowing that each person in the group will support every other to be authentically herself. There is a sense of wholeness, and a consciousness that we are all One" (p. 225). Furthermore, as McNiff (2004) has offered about the process, "When we are able to soften our grip on the controls, the essential movement finds its way to natural and unexpected outcomes" (p. 148).

The process of learning through an intermodal expressive arts approach broadened and deepened my conscious understanding and awareness of being as a person and as a mindful expressive arts therapist in a way that would not otherwise have been possible. While this has taken some time, I am encouraged by the words of Carl Jung (1957) who, in discussing the topic of self knowledge stated, "Insight that dawns slowly seems to me to have more lasting effects than a fitful idealism, which is unlikely to hold out for long" (p. 106).

Playing My Drum: A Creative Synthesis

The culmination of my study is embodied in the synthesis that arose of its own accord as I worked with the data and was informed by my personal intuition and frame of reference

(Moustakas, 1990, p. 32). What arose was the image of myself playing my drum. This metaphorically embodies the relationships I found through my research, and situates me, contextually, within the larger dynamic process that is unfolding over time, as follows.

The drum's frame is made up of the group members, each an equal part in holding the frame, joined together to create a circle of community (to which I also belong).

The drum's elk hide skin holds and carries the vibrations of life force arising in response to the drum beats, in the same manner as do the embodied expressions arising from the art processes in which the group and I engage.

The rawhide laces that hold the skin to the frame of the drum at just the right tension for the drum to play well are like the facilitative relational processes in which I engage with the group members to help build the container of the group, allowing it to develop and perform with the right amount of tension (as noted in dissonance theory). For example, building safety through establishing group expectations, teaching and practicing holding space, sitting with uncertainty, bearing witness for self and one another, honouring each member's unique experience and right to choose their path.

All the laces, on the backside of the drum are gathered first into quadrants like the medicine wheel, which then come into connection together in a grip that has an Ammolite stone at its centre. This image conveys an organizing principle that provides presence and safety in a balanced structure, to support dynamic movement, centred in creative imagination, a spiritual, intuitive and sacred birthright.

Of note, the ammolite arose intuitively as a specific requirement in the building of my drum. Its place at the centre of all the drum's connecting laces alludes to the healing and transformational work that is at the centre of the group's expressive arts and community purpose.

Ammolite is formed from the fossilized shells of ancient sea-dwelling ammonites and has long been regarded highly as a medicine object and talisman, also known as Iniskim, by the Blackfoot people (King, 2019). This stone is considered by healers to have properties that assist with personal grounding, awakening and guiding people in dealing with sickness and adversity (Korite, 2019). Both the drum and this stone are considered to be living beings within the North American indigenous worldview (Nichols & Nyholm, 1995).

I am the drummer, I prepare myself before drumming by meditating and, if available, smudging as well; I bring my attention and intention to the drum, with my whole being.

This is like doing the work before the work, confirming the group registrants, providing them with the information to come, then beginning with preparing myself, personally, through mindful meditative practice, and then as facilitator, preparing the group space. Receiving the group members as they arrive, I gather them in, then discussing what we will be doing I prepare the way so the group has a sense of the path.

Holding the drum by its ammolite grip, to allow it to sing with a full, resonant sound, I lift it into playing position, aware of its stillness before the first beat. Then, I swing the drumstick, and pushing the beater forward I strike the drum and pull it back again, listening for the drum's response. The drum in turn receives and lets go of the energy through resonate vibrations. I swing the drumstick to strike the drum again, pulling it back, then repeating, moving into a rhythm with it. Trusting the process and going with the flow, I feel the push-pull and the vibration of the drum coming alive.

This reflects my work facilitating the group; first gathering them into attunement and stillness. Then as facilitator I guide the group to strike forward, into Studio. Moving into the immediacy of the creative process, the group members' life force is stirred up to the surface of

the present moment. Receiving and releasing into being, just as the drum does with sound, and just as they learn through conscious breathing, now they engage in the creative process; receiving what is arising and releasing it into being through the expressive arts. Once the members have begun to engage, I pull back to hold space for them. The group members feel their embodied energy arising with increasing awareness and at first they are uncertain in their actions, feelings and inspiration. I move around the studio, checking in with the members, reminding them to attend to their own felt experience. I encourage them to maintain a stance of curiosity and receptivity in order to be able to receive, accept and honor what arises. I attend to each of them, asking if they have what they need? I listen and respond, providing ongoing encouragement and support.

Energy moves through the drum, passing out into the air as a resonant voice and through the grip as grounding vibrations, passing into my hand, and moving through my body down into the ground, connecting me to the earth. I listen to the drum's response and, maintaining presence, receive what is arising, letting both move through me, informing how I play the drum, the beat pattern and its shifts. The drum is receiving and letting go in a relational dance with me, reflecting my own creative flow and inviting me to be part of something bigger, guiding and teaching me through this living, moving, vibrational process.

Likewise, in the group, upon attaining a rhythm of careful, steady support in a setting that is safe and accepting, the group members become more comfortable. Tolerating uncertainty, they are able to receive and accept what arises, cultivating flexibility, to go with the flow. They learn to trust the process and as they do, they begin to make discoveries about themselves and what their own self-expression through art can teach them. Able to share their uncertainty in a community of safety and support, they move more deeply into their creative process. Together

we learn to feel the feelings, sit with and bear witness to the processes each is experiencing, and through which each is also growing (collective resonance). I attend with intention, close listening, care and humility, to hold the container of the group with stability and tenderness, tending to the rhythm and tone to discover this group's song.

The group members find themselves connecting to their own life force and inner wisdom, they begin to rediscover and reclaim their personal power, integrating their experiences with cancer into their lives. They share their transformative discoveries, bearing witness to themselves and one another. Together, they realize they are not alone, they are returning to wholeness, each finding that their voice belongs. Through the community of the group they learn that they can also connect into a kinship that they will cherish. The group members know that they are part of a greater whole, and I feel the great privilege of being a part of that with them.

Implications for Practice

Undertaking this project provided me with an intensive and immersive expressive arts-based experience. It was inherently reflexive in nature and thus radically deepened my learning and contributed to my maturation as an expressive arts therapist. The intermodal processes used would be highly beneficial to engage in for therapists when moving into new areas of practice, and for new therapists starting out in their chosen area and context. Through the writing and arts-based processes I learned directly about my relationships, personally and professionally, with the expressive arts modalities, the group members and the group as a whole, as well as with my Self.

The addition of a mentor, with whom I met over the phone for supervision intermittently throughout the study, provided an outside perspective that facilitated balance and impartiality in my reflective process, and enriched my group facilitation and learning in a way that would not have been possible in isolation. Therefore, I recommend including a mentor as part of this

method for facilitation of learning and professional development processes. A modification that could be considered is group supervision, provided the membership consists of therapists with related learning goals.

The experience provided through this method of study confirms the importance of immersing in expressive arts as part of supervision and reflexive practice. It is a means of companioning the group experience, and of connecting with the personal aspects of self that the therapist brings into the work. What is discovered through this process can be of service to self and others, as a part of the larger whole.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the nature of its process, as an introspective view of my personal experiences while facilitating one 10-week mindful-based expressive arts group for people living with cancer. Thus, the themes and patterns of relationship are mine to report, limited to my experiences with one group of people, and not attributable to another. However, this study is also supported with respect to validity by the triangulation measures that were possible thanks to my co-researchers, which in addition to the visual art, the Drum, and the field notes, also included my Drumming Elder, and mindful expressive arts therapy mentor, both of whom witnessed and confirmed my conclusions. Due to the absence of literature in this area, more research is needed to replicate my findings and to identify the consistency of the patterns of relationship and themes I have identified.

Future Research Directions

Further studies regarding the experiences of the person who is group facilitator in expressive arts therapy-based groups is necessary to provide a broader base of evidence for meaning-making in this field. Additional studies that include responsive drumming in individual

or group form would be of interest. This study offered very preliminary but intriguing data on drumbeat patterns and shifts, in relation to my experiences as group facilitator and a beginning drummer and beginning expressive arts therapist, in the shifting flow of group dynamics. Studies that would allow for replication and expansion of awareness in the drumming realm of self-expression would be interesting to consider in this field.

While this study considered the perspective of the facilitator alone, further study that places the findings in relation to the facilitator alongside the experience of group members would be of interest to note areas of convergence and divergence. It would also be interesting to do a comparative study of the perspectives of group members attending a group of this kind before and after the facilitator has undergone the learning process that this study involved, to examine what differences, if any, are present. I am fortunate to be involved on a research team reviewing the literature related to the evidence in support of mindful-based expressive arts therapy for adults with a physical illness (Rieger et al., 2018), and am also engaged on a team considering the group members' experiences participating in this kind of group. These and other contributions in the field will hopefully create additional opportunities for learning about the intersection of the facilitator and the group member's experiences, and will no doubt propel enquiry in new research directions as well.

Conclusion

Undertaking this study has been a journey into my Self and my use of Self in a way that has deepened my awareness and understanding of expressive arts therapy more than I could have imagined. I know that I am not alone in this work, besides my community of practice, I also have Art and Rhythm as my teachers and collaborators, and am connected, part of the greater Whole. This I know through all of the ways I have been taught, and I am grateful to the creative life

force that moves through me, my work and those I will companion and guide. Working with people living with cancer, I found a poem shared by Paolo Knill (2004) to be most resonant and summative, a very suitable way to close.

The Essence of the Arts in Healing

What is it, then, that an Expressive Therapist is doing
if he doesn't prescribe medication,
doesn't anesthetize, doesn't give injections,
doesn't disinfect,
doesn't cut, doesn't sew, doesn't bandage?

His "medication" is the art material,
his anesthetic is the breathing out and into the belly,
his injections are the laying on of hands,
his disinfecting are the sense-ualities
of getting in touch with what is touched,
his cutting is allowing the pain to be expressed,
his sewing is to serve the emerging,
his bandages are the ritual, the song, the music,
the dance, the storytelling, the enactment,
the image-ing.

Yes,

the tools might be different,
yet it is always the wound itself which is healing.
(Knill, 2004, p. 69).

APPENDIX A

Statement confirming being informed of study reviewed, discussed and signed by group members at week 1

September 28, 2018

I am a participant in the Fall Expressive Arts Counselling Group and I am aware that Miriam Duff is conducting a study on her own personal process as the group's facilitator using her observations and experiences of this group as content for her study. This will assist in her development as an Expressive Arts Therapist in training and allow her to fulfill in part her requirements for her Diploma in Expressive Arts Therapy with WHEAT Institute.

I understand that as Miriam is receiving clinical supervision as a practicum student and in relation to this study group content may be discussed, however my personal identity and health information will be protected and kept confidential. Her study will not affect my participation in the group in any way, but may enhance her presence as the facilitator.

This activity has been shared with me as a courtesy and for ethical transparency, there is nothing I am required to do in relation to her study.

If I have any questions I may discuss them with her or contact her site supervisor, Elizabeth Payne, Lead PSO Clinician, at 204-787-2189.

Signed _____ Date _____

Name printed: _____

APPENDIX B

Visual Art in chronological order, accompanied by the voice of the art as discerned through the interview process

Collage (Group Week 1)



Figure B1 Week 1 Collage, pencil crayons and oil pastels

I am: on a journey, I come prepared, my equipment strapped on, my hand purposely grasping my walking pole. I know this path, dappled with sun and shadow, I follow it with interest in what I will discover along the way this time. I breathe the fresh air and feel my body move along, the ferns brush against my legs as the path curves in and out of the green forest bottom. I hear the rustle of the wind in the trees, the sounds of life all around me. I am with the forest now and that is all there is.

I need: the focus, the movement, the quiet attentiveness of following the path and listening.

What I offer is: nurturance, learning, familiar yet new; exercise and challenge, adventure, discovery.



Figure B2 Week 1 Collage

I am (pie) an invitation to feast on pie, a tasty comfort food, woven golden mandala of goodness, part of Fall, when this group is happening.

I am (hills) a perspective of the bigger picture, with its multiplicity of forms and falling light, shadows interplaying, inspiring, a feast for the eyes.

I need (pie) to be appreciated, smelled, tasted, savoured, served, shared, cut and plated - each piece a triangle - change - a wedge of the whole.

I need (hills) to be seen in the moment that the sun is at an angle to offset the undulating landscape, the fine air holding and embodying the golden evening light.

What I offer is (pie) nourishment, comfort and an opportunity to savour the goodness of what the earth can give and, created by hands, shared in community.

What I offer is (hills) perspective, a sense of awe and your place and time in creation, you are part of something much greater, and beholding it is your job.

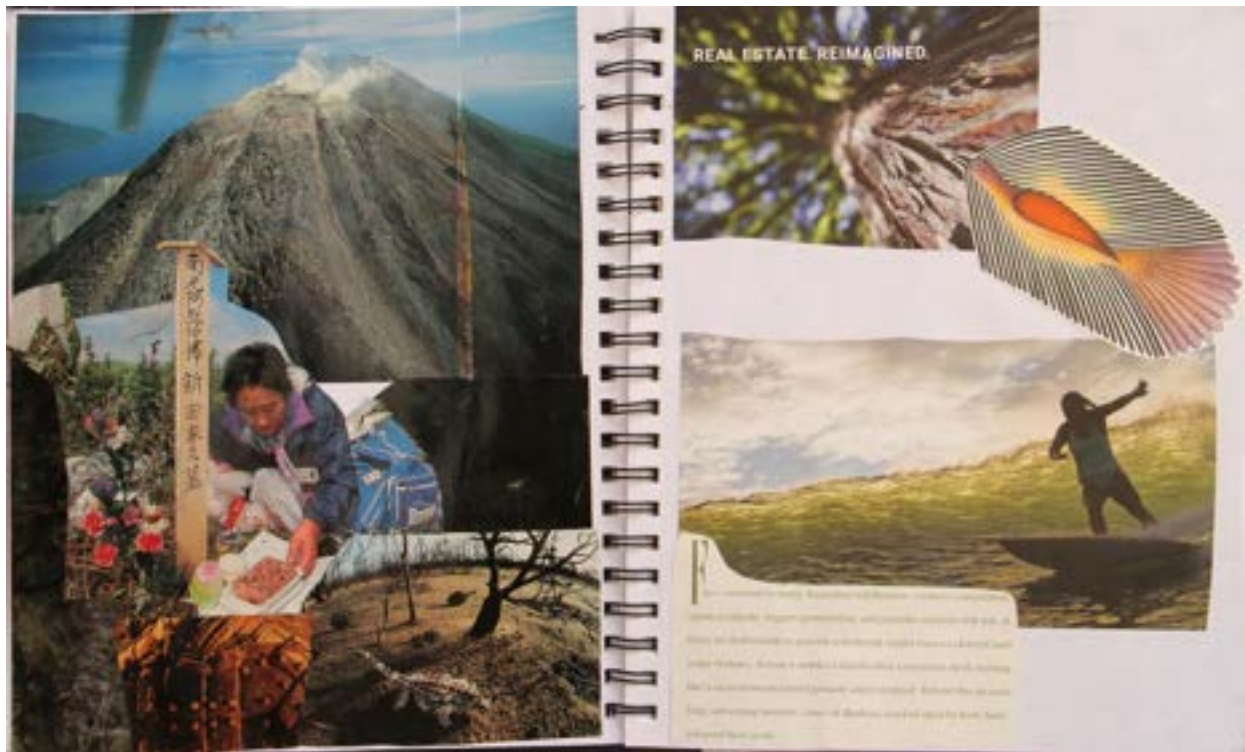


Figure B3 Week 1 - Collage and oil pastels

I am holding it all - the rumbling volcano - hinting at the deep anger, the grief and witnessing; honouring, making offerings for what has been lost, the raw, burnt out wasteland and its armour, its horned and scaly creatures.

The movement that fire can open up for new life, expansion and flow if balance can be attained.

I need your moment-to-moment attention, respect, compassion, acknowledgement, humility and willingness to engage as change agent.

What I offer is amazing vistas, experiences that you won't find anywhere else, a transformative opportunity, if you have the courage to stay the course!



Figure B4 Week 1 - Collage and oil pastels

I am going deeper, the old wise inner numinous knowing and animal energies Being, inside of you, looking out, recognizing the pulse of life.

I need you to understand that this is deeper, older, primal energy and sacred work, you embody or bring this by your being, respect me, I am present.

What I offer you is an opportunity to know and be part of something sacred, to feel the pulse of life and connect to old wisdom, to know what this is.



Figure B5 Week 1 - Collage and water-soluble pastels

I am sacred, alive, delicate, immediate and royal.

I need you to behold me, cherish and protect me.

What I offer is immediate experiencing on a sensual level, an experience of awe and wonder, privilege.

Collage (Group Week 2)

Figure B6 Week 2 - Collage

I am a place of light and warmth in a dark, clear, cold, yet ethereally lit, night. I invite those who wish to move to join me, while bearing witness to those who cannot or will not, grounded by their own weight, black tar or stony disappointment.

I need an openness to movement, a collaborative spirit, receptivity, a willingness to enter in and join.

What I offer is community, compassion, safety, support, shelter, encouragement, space, witnessing kindness, an invitation to be together, seen and heard, transformation, migration to a new place and way of being. Light and warmth, in the dark night of the soul.



Figure B7 Week 2 - Collage

I am a place to discover, an end of the world that is remote, mysterious, different from anywhere else you'll go. Much of me is frozen and some is liquid, yet creatures live here, life is present and change happens. I am also a place where vulnerability is very real and trust is important.

I need to be seen, respected, and treated with caution as there are hazards; so come with a guide, come with preparation, support and community.

What I offer you is a place to make discoveries, experience awe and wonder and even playfulness. And there is Sedna, who moves in the sea beneath the surface, tending to the animals and sea creatures.



Figure B8 Week 2 - Collage

I am watching you.

I need to know that I can trust you.

What I offer you is my attention, my awareness of you as a Being in the world, the possibility of a relationship.



Figure B9 Week 2 - Collage

I am support and containment, an inviting place to arrive and rest, with sacredness, nature and community.

I need to be seen and experienced in order to be appreciated.

What I offer is support and containment as well as nourishment, playfulness and restorative pleasures.

Art Response - Water Soluble Pastels (Group Week 3)

Figure B10 Week 3

I am receiving this bitter black hard grief, holding the vessel of the group, to accept and allow it to be included and absorbed and supported, seen and heard in the hands of love.

I need to allow this to be just as it is.

What I offer is yielding, soothing, safe landing, seen, heard and held in open receiving hands of support, rooted in the ground of love and compassion.

Body Outline Art, Inside and Outside, Field of Support - Oil Pastels (Group Week 4)

I am connected to the rhythm of life
rooted in the earth beneath my feet,
open to the life force moving through
my body, engaging my heart, mind and
soul. I am a communicator, a vessel of
loving-kindness, an energy conduit, a
healer, a human.

I need love, relationship, connection,
family, teachers, creative spirits, nature,
being in the world, my drum and stick,
my story, my ancestors, the river, the
trees, the sun, the blue sky and the
eagle, humility, my skirt for modesty,
the support of the earth, the space of the
sky, the warmth of the sun.

What I offer is myself; awareness,
being, absolute engaged presence,
vibration, love, witness, compassion,
creativity, guidance, connection and
relationship.



Figure B11 Week 4 - Image drawn on assembled left over paper from the group session (36" wide poster paper)

Spectrum of Emotions Flip Book - Oil Pastels on folded 18"x 24" Cartridge Paper

(Group Week 5) 13 Images shown in sequential order.



Figure B12 Week 5



Figure B13 Week 5



Figure B14 Week 5



Figure B15 Week 5



Figure B16 Week 5



Figure B17 Week 5



Figure B18 Week 5



Figure B19 Week 5



Figure B20 Week 5



Figure B21 Week 5



Figure B22 Week 5

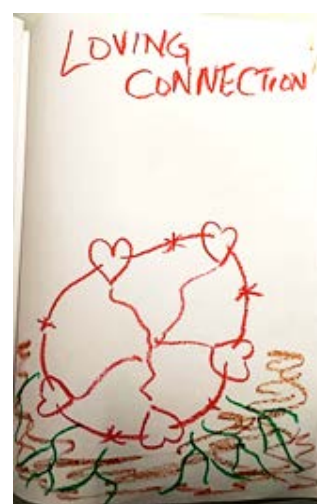


Figure B23 Week 5



Figure B24 Week 5

I am changeable, mobile, receptive & expressive. An embodiment of the range of emotions experienced in facilitating the group and in my use of self.

I need to be aware of these many aspects as essential to being wholly authentic and present.

What I offer is balance, self-awareness, open heartedness, humility and acceptance of my human being, as facilitator and as myself.

Remembering Who You Are Meditation and Personal Signature in the Universe Image
(Group Week 6) - White Pencil Crayon on Black Pastel Paper



Figure B25. Week 6

I am the Chrysanthemum of life, all energy radiates from me to fill the universe.

I need space to unfold in my own way and time, understanding and acceptance for my manifold ways.

What I offer you is a way of understanding wildness, light divine, truth in its many aspects, and a way of being that is not confined by templates yet, is still connected to a source and contained by the nature of its energy, which vibrates and undulates. It has its own properties, which can be felt in the body, sensed in the heart, perceived in the mind and embodied through the spirit.

I move and change in my form; I am constant however, in my presence, necessary to living beings, held in the space of nonbeing.

I am Love incarnate. Cultivate a loving attitude and you will increase my magnitude.

Personal Mandala (Group Weeks 7 - 10) - Pencil Crayons on Black Pastel Paper

Figure B26. Weeks 7-10

I am here, gently cradling the water lily, its root an umbilical cord rising from the mud, passing through the drum, the life force vibrates, the drum beats, reverberating through the water, connecting to my pulse-points and supporting the lily. Purple hands facilitate transformative change in the context of safety and support. This is the wilderness of the world and I am here to facilitate in collaboration with all that vibrates, watched over by the eagle, the sun and the moon's transition over time. The red feather of inspiration, love and creativity touching my left knuckle and pointing to the new moon and the blue feather of spirit, intuition and truth touching the water by my right knuckle and pointing to the old red moon.

I need time and focused, receptive presence, trust.

What I offer is a sacred space to bloom with love and support, in the wildness of the world.

Loving, caring connection and tenderness.

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