Chapter 1

Introduction

Some of my earliest memories are of me playing, dancing, and creating, indoors or outdoors, and mainly alone or with my dogs. Imagination and creation were always there as places to run away to and find a safe shelter. There, everything was possible; no one told me what to do or how to behave or asked me annoying questions. I could do whatever I wanted, be where my heart and dreams were.

While growing up, I turned to dance and performance. Looking back, I realized the vast contribution dance and performance made to my spiritual and emotional survival and development. They enabled me to wordlessly explore and express myself and communicate with others artistically through the body with no explanations needed. The years of solitude I experienced in nature during my work as an ecologist with the Golan Heights wolves taught me how to listen and observe, be patient and not rush the process.

With time I chose to take these loves into my profession, holding a creative space for the other's journey. Playing and creating with and for others, maintaining a safe space for their expression, exploration, and development via the arts and nature. Giving space and sharing my strengths with my clients and students, I incorporated nature, play, dance, and arts in my work, using them to support their development and enrich their creativity. With time and during the process of becoming a teacher, I started researching and conceptualizing the methods that I had instinctively developed, turning the intuitive knowledge into words and methods. My Ph.D. thesis conceptualized and developed Nature Therapy, followed other conceptualizations and publications in the arts therapy arena. In this book have collected and shared some of the interdisciplinary, *arts-based* knowledge, frameworks, methods, and concepts I have developed in the last 20 years working as an arts and nature therapist. I chose to include those that I found most relevant and supportive for therapists and group counselors practicing their healing work at this most difficult time. My hope is to help them help others.

This book was written during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic—a time of lockdowns and curfews and the resulting social isolation and economic crisis. Massive personal, social and ecological change on a global scale transformed ways of thinking, communicating, and being. Jobs, professions, lifestyles, and modes of communication were altered while new ones were created. People, organizations, and communities that lacked flexibility and the ability to find, adopt or create alternatives found coping and surviving challenging.

The experience of living in a world that changes quickly and dramatically, at a time when uncertainty and stress become routine, the potential role of the arts and the artistic process as mediums for

personal and group expression and transformation and as a means to develop creativity and flexibility becomes clear. The creative artistic process invites the creator to meet emptiness, uncertainty, and frustration with imagination, creativity, and inner strength, thereby bringing light to inner images while giving them form in reality. Imagination and the art-making process can provide people with ways of coping with uncertainty creating a new, modified reality.

This book, written in the spirit of the time, presents innovative, up-to-date arts-based concepts and methods developed by Berger to be applied with groups and individuals to improve coping strategies, development, and health.

By incorporating theoretical and practical knowledge that relate to and integrate all of the arts modalities: drama, music, dance, visual arts and to Berger's experience and innovative way of working, the book offers new practical concepts and methods to support people's journey, develop creativity and flexibility, improve communication skills, and enhance the body-spirit connection. The chapters also include reflective thoughts of the authors highlighting issues to pay attention to while using the methods and protocols and modifying for different clients and needs. Inspired by the arts as therapy approach and with creativity as its hallmark—it presents three basic coping elements: creativity, social communication, and contact with nature. These novel methods provide updated means for developing communication skills, deepening relationships, bridging personal and cultural gaps, and developing a sense of belonging. The final chapter offers an innovative framework to use virtual space as an alternative venue for therapeutic work, opening a door to future developments in the field and expanding it into new dimensions.

The book contributes to these fields:

Expressive and intermodal arts therapy group work;

Incorporating performance, presentations, and exhibitions as central elements of therapy;

Incorporating nature in therapy and group work (nature therapy)

Art-based assessment and supervision methods;

Digital-online arts therapy work;

The book also contributes to issues such as:

The arts as s therapeutic approach and the option of using the arts as a central axis in the therapeutic process;

The intermodal approach and the concept of combining and shifting between different arts mediums;

Between the body and the word – topics related to mind-body issues and the spiritual. This also includes the connection and transitions - Between nonverbal and embodied work to verbal work and the use of visual art and metaphors as a bridge between them;

The importance of the connection of art therapists to their inner artist and their creative selves;

Before presenting the book's outline and contents, I would like to present and briefly explain the meaning, implementation, and contribution of a few basic concepts related to all of the book's knowledge.

Arts, Group, Performance, and Nature:
Elements for Development and Coping

The basic understanding that any form of play or artistic activity contributes to wellbeing and development underlies all of the expertise the book presents. Such activities allow people to express themselves, release tension, widen perspectives, and connect with their strengths. They help people to connect to each other in a way that can bypass differences of age, gender, culture, and language (Berger, 2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2019; Berger & Lahad, 2013; Sajnani & Johnson, 2014).

Furthermore, they relate to and activate the brain's right side and deeper parts, connecting the person with emotional, spiritual, and embodied-physical knowledge (Berger, 2015a). However, in the context of this book's therapeutic application, it is essential to relate to the challenges that accompany such a creative process:

Every creative process includes challenges to overcome and an ongoing dialog between imagination and reality, right- and left-brain hemispheres, internal and outside worlds, oneself and the other. The process begins with the individual connecting with themselves. Inner sensations, feelings, thoughts, perspectives, and wishes present themselves as images and metaphors. An attempt is then made to transfer them as artistic shapes and forms to the concrete world outside of the creator's mind and body. During this process, the creator will need to use inner strength and creativity to identify ways of presenting their inner perspectives in reality. They may wish to create the image in gouache paints on a large surface, but only chalks on a small surface will be available. They may want an hour for a horizontal creation, while in practice, only 20 minutes on a table will be possible and in co-work. They may wish to express and explore it via large movement or loud sounds and music, but the space cannot allow it. The encounter with such gaps between fantasy and reality may happen in any creative process and any medium – drama, music, dance, and writing.

Entering the creative process and, in so doing, making the transition from imagination to reality invites the creators to learn how to work with frustration while expanding creativity and flexibility. The use of artistic-expression in therapy has additional hidden benefits: Planning and making artistic choices as well as sharing and presenting the work to the other develops self-confidence and assertiveness that will help the person in similar situations in life.

Initiating and assuming the active position needed for creation and experiencing the satisfaction of seeing the creation take shape fosters hope and develops belief in personal strength and abilities.

The cyclical shifting between creation and destruction, beginnings and endings, and chaos and order that most of these creative processes embody helps people connect to life cycles, process issues relating to control and loss, and develop flexibility and hope.

Working with different art materials and different mediums allows the person to connect and express themselves in symbolic and nonverbal ways while releasing tension, engaging robustly, and expanding perspectives and meanings.

Creating with a partner and presenting the work to others develops communication skills, a sense of belonging and acceptance, partnership, and acceptance.

In the context of these benefits, it is essential to emphasize that arts therapy is not merely another psychotherapeutic method used to develop awareness, trust, and relationships, widen perspectives, and gain insight into life. Incorporating active creation in the overall therapeutic process provides nonverbal and symbolic means to achieve psychological benefits and develops crucial abilities and skills, with creativity, expression, and initiative at their center.

The development of creativity is linked directly to the development of flexibility—which is probably one of the critical skills needed to cope and survive in a changing world such as ours. All of the knowledge imparted by the book relates to these attributes. They are anchored within the artistic act, moving between imagination and reality. They use the group, performance, and contact with nature to develop them further.

Fantastic and Dramatic Realities

The concepts of *fantastic reality* and *dramatic reality* are relevant to all creative work varieties in any art form. Both relate to work starting with engagement, continuing with imagination, and finishing with the creative process emerging from it. They relate to and expand Winnicott's term, *potential space* (Winnicott, 1971), which is essential for understanding the centrality of play and imagination for child development. These terms correspond with additional terms such as Turner's ritualistic *liminal space*, Johnson's *developmental transformation*, *play-space*, and others (Berger 2015a).

The first fantastic reality was defined by Lahad, who connected it to daydreaming (Lahad, 2002; 2014). It is a space located in the imagination zone that is available for people at any time, allowing them to create their preferred symbolized realities. It is a space where expression is in the language of symbols, images, and metaphors and where the three basic reality rules—time, space, and role— are manipulated according to the wishes of their creator, establishing a space in which everything is possible and allowed. Lahad, who developed the term in the context of his work and research in trauma prevention and treatment, claims that being present in the fantastic reality relaxes and releases tension and connects to hope and happiness (Berger & Lahad, 2013; Lahad, 2014). Lahad claims that the fantastic reality encompasses the dramatic reality (referred to later) as it includes all the person's wished-for activities, whether in contact with others and enacted or just within the person's mind. Lahad termed it fantastic since it could stay in the fantasy realm or be embodied in interaction or self-

enactment. Thus, fantastic reality may stay within the person's mind and change their inner perception of things, or it may be enacted externally, which at times will correspond with dramatic reality, which asserts 'action = drama.'

Pendzik defined another term, *dramatic reality* (Pendzik, 2006). This space opens when a person takes the images that arose in the fantastic reality and creates them, actively and symbolically, employing a creative process in the real world. One can relate to the dramatic reality as the transition from the inner images stored within the person's body-soul into visible artistic and symbolic forms created, performed, and present in the real world, outside the person's body. The transition to the dramatic reality occurs when the person becomes active, takes a crayon, begins drawing, gets up from the chair, and starts dramatizing, dancing, or playing. Every artistic activity starts and remains, at least briefly, in the fantastic reality, transforming the images, symbols, and figures that emerged in it towards their expression in the world through drama, art, music, writing, or dancing into shapes in the dramatic reality. The dramatic reality can be addressed as an island of imagination within the real world. It reveals the inner symbols while being seen by others. It should be experienced as a legitimate alternative to the reality that, while different from it, exists parallel to it (Pendzik, 2006; 2013).

Along with these two concepts, it is vital to understand another process, *the dramatic reality's depth* (Pendzik, 2013). As in Ende's book, *The Neverending Story,* one can imagine the dramatic reality (as well as the fantastic reality) as a vast and endless world whose borders are as broad as the person's imagination. Like Lucy, in Lewis' book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,* one can enter this space via a magical door located in the concrete world. One can enter, move about, and explore it to whatever depth is desired. One can also stop near the entrance door – at the edge of the concrete reality and get involved in concrete play and creation with fixed and structured roles. One can voyage deeper and become submerged in the dramatic reality, utilizing more abstract and open play and creative expression while fashioning the space, roles, and time to suit current needs. In this case, one can create an entire imaginary world existing in this made-up reality present in symbolic ways within the concrete one.

In practice, these terms' application means that different games and creative processes can be located at different depths of dramatic reality. For example, structured box games such as monopoly, taki, and draughts, drawing inside the lines, or playing a known melody will take place on the dramatic reality's edge in a limited and narrow dramatic space. In contrast, improvised dramatic play, dance, playing music, or drawing an abstract picture will take place in the depths of the dramatic reality, far from its entrance door. The ability to enter the dramatic reality's depths is related to the essential trust a person has in the world and their experience in play and creation. It involves internalizing the potential space developed during childhood and its subsequent development (or regression). Identifying and understanding the characteristics of our clients' fantastic and dramatic reality will help to offer a suitable creative intervention. Offering too deep or too shallow intervention might cause boredom or anxiety and can be developed into different abstention forms.

For example, a person that suffers from anxiety will, in most cases, prefer a more structured, less abstract creative process. Directions and rules that are clear and utilize concrete language will provide certainty and foster safety. Using hard art materials such as pencils, art lines, hard chalks, and smaller drawing surfaces will provide safety while using hand paints and clay may be overwhelming and create flawed products. Attention to the unique characteristics of the art materials and forms while

coordinating them with the client's attributes will help the therapist choose and offer appropriate forms of artistic intervention. This concept and understanding also relate to the concept of distancing that will be presented later.

The more that the client and group work creatively and within the dramatic reality, the more they will expand their creativity, coping mechanisms, and developmental abilities (Berger & Lahad, 2013).

The therapist's ability to hold, enter, stay, and work within the depths of the client's fantastic and dramatic realities is essential for the client's creative work and development. These abilities on the part of the therapist foster trust, provide modeling and inspiration, and support the client's journey in "Neverland." Professionals who avoid entering their client's dramatic reality will find it is not easy to connect with them in symbolic ways. They may even unintentionally harm their client's work and journey. This situation highlights the importance of therapists being connected to their creative selves, an element that can be developed through involvement in a creative activity on a regular, perhaps weekly, basis. Maintaining a connection with our creativity is similar to the river's reliance on the spring for its flow and the spring's dependence on the rain. So, too, art therapists need the connection to the spring of creativity and spontaneity to work creatively with their clients.

All of the expertise presented in this book relates to work that takes place within the fantastic and dramatic realities. These realities offer frameworks, concepts, and methods that participants are invited to encounter through the arts for skills development and knowledge acquisition to help them in the concrete world.

Aesthetic Distancing

The concept of *aesthetic distancing* is a crucial element in any form of intervention that uses arts in the process. It relates to the distancing that occurs in the transition from concrete and verbal dialog to an artistic and symbolic expression. The distancing and the shift of form it entails—being created and seen in visual art, drama, music, dance, and writing—enables the person to observe the issue from additional perspectives, providing a space to process, make meaning, and transform (Berger, 2019; Landy, 1994; Glass, 2006).

The art therapist's role is to choose the right amount and type of distancing for the specific client or group. One that is too distanced, *over-distancing*, may make the participants feel remote or disengaged from the presentation and its connection to their story. On the other hand, under distancing, one that is too close might make them feel flooded and unable to touch and address the issues it triggers (Landy, 1994). In both situations, the results might be similar – minimizing the emotional involvement with the issue and sometimes reducing contact with the therapist or group members.

Identifying the amount, level, and variety of distancing needed requires a high level of attentiveness, knowledge, and training. My recommendation is to maintain a curious and exploratory mood while checking with the clients if the offered artistic intervention suits them; in case it does not – change it. Hopefully, this collective inquiry process will attract the clients to the process, engage and strengthen

them, and develop motivation. It will provide participants with a sense of cooperation and control, elements that are empowering, and support development.

Since the protocols and methods comprising this book are all arts-based and use the concept of distancing, it is essential to emphasize that different clients and populations may need different adaptations and matchings. It is advised to check and make sure that the distancing that the intervention protocols suggest correlate and match the kind and level of distancing that your clients need. In case they do not, make appropriate adaptations to fit their artistic styles and needs. More on this issue and its meaning for complexities and challenges in process is presented in Chapter 7; in the pyramid assessment and supervision model.

Another concept related to the choice of artistic medium for intervention can be found in Chapter 8 (Talking in a Variety of Creative Languages) supervision model, relating to Jennings's EPR model. As it presents the different phases of the dramatic and creative development of the child, it helps the therapist to choose a suitable artistic medium for intervention (Berger, 2015; Jennings, 2010; 2012).

Arts as Therapy

This arts-based therapeutic approach is rooted in the understanding that the creative process and the active use of the arts for self-expression and communication is therapeutic by itself (McNiff, 1992). It uses the arts as a central medium in therapy, conducting most of the work within the artistic process, moving from one artistic intervention to another. The therapist's role is to choose relevant artistic and playful genres and activities to promote specific clients' needs. This entails considering their aims, issues, developmental phase, culture, and artistic styles, as well as issues related to the dynamics and relationships with the therapist and group members (Chapter 7).

Using this approach also enables the therapist to use the creative process and art-making to respond to them. Instead of using words for echoing, confronting, reflection, and mirroring, the therapist can share a song, drawing, dance, sculpture, and so-on. While working from within the dramatic and creative space, performing with such artistic resonance can bypass cognitive defense mechanisms and support and enrich the clients' learning and development. They are fun and empowering to use, inspire and cultivate the client's creativity, artistic freedom, and expression. It is important to say that one can also use this arts-based approach with a less directive facilitation style. For example, in the *open studio* approach where the primary role of the therapist is to organize, maintain and hold the space, to provide materials, witness and support the process, as the clients wish to conduct it (Shapira, 2014).

Granting the arts and the creative process a central role in the process requires a high level of artistic understanding and skill on the therapist's part and a strong connection to the inner artist. It encourages them to keep the river of creativity alive, flowing, and available for use spontaneously in the here and

now. Regular involvement in different forms of art-making and receiving art-based supervision or therapy can help therapists maintain and develop their creative selves and improve their abilities as creative therapists.

The art as therapy approach is parallel to the *art within psychotherapy* approach using the arts as another medium in verbal psychotherapy (Berger, 2014). All of the methods that this book presents employ the art as therapy approach. They use and transfer the therapist's assessment thoughts and understanding about the process into artistic interventions.

Low Skills – High Sensitivity/Anyone Can Do It Techniques

The concept of low skills/high sensitivity invites the therapist to search for artistic intervention that will be easy to operate and work with without any need for previous artistic knowledge or technical skills while having a high emotional or sensational impact (McNiff, 1992). All methods that this book presents follow this idea. They are easy to be used, such that anyone can use and benefit from them.

About the Book

Five units follow this introductory chapter, each one relating to a different aspect of the field and presenting novel arts-based frameworks, concepts, and methods to be used in individual and group contexts. Each chapter includes the theoretical background, examples from practice, and a detailed protocol that illustrates ways to use it in practice. Also included are reflective thoughts that highlight issues worthy of attention and ways to adapt the method for diverse clients with different needs and from varied cultures.

Unit 1, Performance-based therapy, encompasses four chapters on this topic.

Chapter 2, Performance-Based Therapy, presents the option of using performance as a central axis in therapy. It highlights its potential contribution, ethical issues, and complications that such work can raise while offering a framework that avoids, addresses, and overcomes them.

Chapter 3, Living Statues, presents the idea of using street theater for therapy and the living statue method as central components of the therapeutic process. It describes its application in direct and indirect ways while highlighting its unique characteristics and contributions.

Chapter 4, From Aggression to Creation, presents the idea of using elements taken from protest art to promote expression and change. It offers a practical protocol for using exhibitions, graffiti, spoken words, and rap with people coping with behavioral difficulties and social deprivation issues.

Chapter 5, By Covering We Reveal, presents the option of creating and using giant masks for performance while gradually reducing the masks' sizes and revealing the persons hidden behind them. It offers a practical method of empowerment and overcoming social avoidance while developing communication and expressive skills, and trust.

Unit 2, Chapter 6, From the Body to the Word, relates to the intermodal approach and the option of incorporating movement, voice, visual art, story-making, and drama in the therapeutic work. Calling upon concepts from shamanism and ritual, drama therapy, trauma treatment, and brain research, the unit offers a framework and protocol to transition from the pre-verbal, embodied knowledge, mediated by the deeper parts of the brain, to words and cognitive insight, mediated by the cortex. This unit contains one chapter that was co-written with Dani Yaniv, Ph.D.

Unit 3, Observing the Arts - Seeing the Soul, opens with an introduction that presents the need for arts-based supervision and assessment frameworks, their basic outline, aims, and principles. The unit continues with three chapters, presenting new methods to be used with individuals and groups.

Chapter 7, The Multi-Dimensional Pyramid Model, presents this multi-dimensional model offering a unique pathway for exploring the dynamics, narratives, culture, and creative phase of the client or group and provides an integrative tool for arts-based assessment and supervision.

Chapter 8, Talking in a Variety of Creative Languages, explores the connection between the therapist's choice of an art form for intervention and the client's response provides a fresh arts-based perspective on understanding resistance and overcoming it. The presentation integrates examples from practice, highlighting ways to incorporate the model in supervision.

Chapter 9, Shifting Roles, another arts-based supervision model, posits four theater-roles available to the arts therapist. This new taxonomy suggests a framework that can be used to explore and explain how the therapist's inappropriate choice of roles can cause resistance and freeze the process. Methods of working them through are offered.

Unit 4, Nature Therapy, includes three chapters presenting this unique therapeutic method that takes place in nature and relates to nature as a partner in the therapeutic process.

Chapter 10, Nature Therapy: A Theoretical and Conceptual Framework, starts with reflective thoughts sharing the author's journey culminating in creating nature therapy. It continues by presenting the unique eco-social-therapeutic philosophy of nature therapy, showing the links between people's separation and detachment from nature, the climate crisis, and the spreading of psychological adversity such as depression and anxiety. It goes on by presenting key theoretical concepts demonstrating their possible application to various populations. The chapter shows how nature therapy can broaden, deepen, and advance therapeutic processes and help people reconnect with nature.

Chapter 11, Nature Therapy Models, elucidates different phases and attitudes of the person-nature relationship by presenting four models to be used with different populations and varied practice needs.

Chapter 12, Nature Therapy – Ethical and Professional Considerations, presents fundamental ethical issues and unique considerations emanating from the involvement of nature in the therapeutic process, contending that these must be kept in mind for the client's safekeeping and nature. It continues with issues relating to the field's professionalism, association, training, and recognition.

Unit 5, Chapter 13, Virtual Art Therapy, presents the idea of digital and virtual therapy and the Zoom video conferencing application in particular as alternative and suitable substitute spaces for conducting arts-based therapy. The chapter reflects on the meaning that the transition to the virtual space involves, highlighting the complexities it causes while sharing fresh concepts, methods, and principles that can help implement such practice to support clients. This chapter was co-written with Dafna Liber, Ph.D.

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