

THE ART ACTIVITY BOOK FOR RELATIONAL WORK

100 ILLUSTRATED THERAPEUTIC WORKSHEETS TO
USE WITH INDIVIDUALS, COUPLES AND FAMILIES

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Introduction

The worksheets in this book have been developed and designed from many years' therapeutic clinical practice with clients. Some of this work has been with individuals, some with couples and some with families. The content of the worksheets has been informed by the main themes and relational issues that people bring to the counselling room, along with key aspects from psychodynamic, narrative, cognitive behavioural and systemic theories. It's assumed that most clinicians will be familiar with the theoretical ideas mentioned in the chapters. They are included in order to provide the basic frameworks from which the worksheets have been developed.

Some worksheets ask specifically focused questions, while others aim to act as springboards for creative exploration, in which therapeutic change can arise. There are no instructions about how to use these pages, other than for clients to respond to the questions and tasks posed on the worksheets; they are open for interpretation in whatever way is most helpful. Their aim is to be an aesthetically-designed invitation for people to draw, paint or write their responses to these relational themes. Sometimes the worksheets may simply provide visual focus for issues being discussed. They can be valuable for work in the session, or for clients to complete at home. Having experienced how hugely beneficial it is to encourage clients in becoming creative about their problems and dilemmas, I wanted to combine this idea with the theoretical aspects, as described in the chapters.

People can find it helpful, soothing and mindful to doodle or colour in whilst thinking about difficult or painful experiences, and this can be incredibly cathartic. Each page gives an opportunity for people to do this whilst simultaneously focusing on the discussion points. The questions on the worksheets can simply be used as a visual prompt for people to start thinking about what the important issues are to them, to act as reminders for any 'homework' to be done in between sessions or as an outlet for producing creative works of art to do with their identity, relationships or ways of communicating.

The worksheets (which can be photocopied as well as downloaded from www.jkp.com/voucher using the code GUESTACT) have been divided up into the themes of the four chapters. There is much overlap, as many could be included in more than one chapter. The book isn't intended to be used from beginning to end, rather that specific pages are chosen by the client or practitioner as to what would be the most helpful and relevant. It's assumed that people using this book would be working within the safe arenas of therapy; if anyone chooses to use this book in isolation, please ensure that access to appropriate professional support is available, in case of any unexpected emotional responses to the themes presented here.

Chapter 1

Sense of Self

It's essential for our wellbeing that we have understanding about ourselves, in order to know what makes us feel happy, stimulated and motivated. It's also important information which impacts on how we develop meaningful relationships with others. People tend to begin this process of developing their identity in adolescence, some more consciously than others, and continue to do so throughout their adult lives. Part of this development is learning what our emotional needs are and how we express these to others.

Theoretical perspectives

Psychodynamic theory

Many of the worksheets in this chapter are aimed at helping people get to know themselves better. Some aim to identify emotional needs and to help people be proactive in defining who they want to be. This extends also to how they want to be in their relationships. Many of the pages focus on exploring our experiences from the past, including those from childhood, adolescence and previous relationships. The aim is to gain understanding of how these experiences have affected and shaped us.

The people around us are strong influences on the development of our sense of self, especially in our formative years throughout childhood. This is influenced by how we were related to by others, how much our needs were met and by whom. We absorb ideas of what a male, a female, a grandparent, a brother, a daughter, a teacher and so on is with an almost infinite list of roles. These ideas and understandings translate into meanings we attach in adulthood to the certain roles. In their book, *Family Therapy: 100 Key Points and Techniques*, this is described by Rivett and Street:

Each person will be shown in their development certain ways of reacting to stress, being encouraged to relate to certain types of people and to have clear messages on how to produce and react to emotions. Each individual will be

presented, through his or her family history, with a blueprint of how a male or female life should unfold... The script will provide the framework on which a person will construct a self image... All family members are potentially able to experience the role of every generation: A woman in her later years may experience being a grandmother, a mother and a daughter...there is always a part of the self that is a forever a daughter and forever a mother... Try as we may we are unable to lose the experience childhood: the experience of being cared for in a certain way, of having certain behaviours expected of us and being given certain knowledge of ourselves and others. (2009, p.24)

Systemic theory

Few of us live in total isolation. There has been a shift in many arenas of psychotherapy to acknowledge the importance of significant people around us, in our families, our colleagues, in our communities, our cultures and the socio-political climates in which we live. Systemic theory uses this basis that a person is viewed *in the context* of how they live – that we are all parts of systems and subsystems – and this is hugely influential on how we behave and who we become (Bateson 1972). Rivett and Street write about viewing people as a part of the family system:

From this perspective it is more accurate to describe individuals as communicating certain behaviours rather than describing them as a particular type of person... every behaviour is at one and the same time both an expression of that person and a communication to others... Individuals who live together and share intimate moments and tasks such as childcare, caring for the elderly, financial budgets, etc. have a continual stream of communication that contributes to the definition of who they are... Individuals are therefore part of the communication system we call the family and to be involved in a communication system continually is at the core of human identity... The cycle of interaction...becomes the focus and primary source of change...individuals are defined and maintained by circular interactional patterns of which they are a part. (2009, pp.9–14)

Narrative therapy

The focus here becomes what is socially constructed by our language alongside the context in which we live. Michael White and David Epston are prominent names in the development of these ideas. Writing about therapeutic conversations, White describes how people 'find themselves interested in novel understandings of the events of their lives...fascinated with neglected territories of their identities' (2007, p.5). Many worksheets in this chapter aim to be springboards for such conversations, providing a focus point for these explorations.

White and Epston termed the phrase 'externalisation' to describe the therapeutic benefit of placing someone's problem outside of the person and their identity, in order that the person gets clarity and new perspectives about how to deal with the problem. In *Maps of Narrative Practice*, White (2007, pp.24, 25) writes how a lot of those 'who seek therapy believe that the problems in their lives are a reflection of their own identity'. Also that their problems '...come to represent the "truth" of their identity'. Whilst being careful to stress that these conversational techniques are not about people disregarding responsibility for addressing their problems, he claims that new perspectives can be gained from creating a distance between a person's sense of self and the issues. He states, 'When the problem becomes an entity that is separate from the person...new options for taking action to address the predicaments of their lives become available' (2007, p.26).

Some of the worksheets in this chapter provide a focus point for people to explore these ideas about externalising problems, to inspire understanding for themselves and to help facilitate conversations about the ideas. White continues to describe this process:

Externalising conversations...make it possible for people to unravel some of the negative conclusions they have usually reached about their identity under the influence of the problem... [They] have opened many possibilities for people to redefine their identities, to experience their lives anew, and to pursue what is precious to them... It is in the rich characterisation of problems that people's unique knowledges and skills become relevant and central to taking action to address their concerns. During this process, people become aware of the fact that they do possess a certain know-how that can be further developed and used to guide them in their effort to address their problems. (2007, pp.26, 43, 59)

The worksheets focusing on these externalisation ideas (the last 6 in this chapter) have been directly developed using the techniques described in White's work, to provide visual platforms for such conversations.