How the Creative Arts Can Be Useful Coping Tools for Adolescents

Summary of the Art Therapy Experientials

with blank slate theatre’s Production of the play “Generations”

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the impact of using creative arts such as art, music, theatre arts and writing as coping tools to create a sense of belonging, a sense of self-worth and a sense of goal direction for the adolescent actors of blank slate theatre during their production of the play *Generations*. I presented the actors with two art therapeutic experientials including a body outline and a sculpture as well as created an open art studio as outlets to express their feelings and cope with the risk-taking process of acting in an emotionally challenging play. A questionnaire was created to examine the adolescents’ reasoning for being involved in the acting troupe and whether the creative arts enhanced their ability to cope with their bio, psycho and social growth.
Teleological History

An Early Recollection

Part of the Adlerian Lifestyle Analysis was to do several Early Recollections with a client. One particular Early Recollection of mine seemed to be important to document in this summary. When I was three or four years old, I walked over a mile and crossed two major avenues alone to visit my best friend. I felt invincible. I could do anything. This illustration proved that at a young age I believed in risk-taking.

Retrospectively, I was inspired to work in the field of art therapy by a number of events that occurred over my developmental years. In seventh grade, I read a book by Rumer Godden called *The River*. The setting was India. The central character found her special genius in writing about her life. “She kept a private diary and a poem book hidden in an old box that also did as a desk in an alcove under the sidestairs, her Secret Hole” (1946, p. 7). I have carried this image of creativity as inspiration ever since reading *The River*. Thus began my teleological journey of discovery of the therapeutic benefits of creativity.

Another example of the therapeutic process was in 1956 when my brother was born with a mild case of cerebral palsy. My mother created innovative physical therapeutic projects and activities to build up my brother’s muscles. My experience with my mother and brother illustrated that therapy could be a useful tool in a person’s development.

At the age of fourteen, I discovered that my aunt and playmate had Down’s Syndrome. On one vacation, my aunt brought a copper bowl that she had made in art class to her mother, my grandmother. This bowl was beautifully crafted and was an important symbol of what art therapy could produce. My aunt was encouraged to continue working in art. She ended up as a teaching assistant in the art department of her special boarding school and as an inspiration to other children.
who had Down’s Syndrome. My aunt inspired me.

My journey progressed to high school where I discovered dramas club. I was encouraged to participate in the production of the various plays and events the dramas club produced. It was through creating sets for the plays that I discovered a sense of community, a sense of belonging, a feeling of empowerment and a sense of self-worth. I was encouraged by actively participating in the creative arts.

During the summer of 1981, I visited two inspiring landmarks. One was the estate of the author Edith Wharton, the Mount in Lenox, where a troupe of actors produced and performed some of Wharton’s short stories. Edith Wharton’s visually descriptive writing inspired me. The other experience was visiting the Austen Riggs Psychiatric Center Shop, which was filled with art created by the patients at the center in Stockbridge. The patients created weavings, paintings and clay objects at the center and sold their products in the shop, giving them a sense of purpose.

At the age of 31, I found my true creative path when on the third day of attending Parsons School of Design I discovered that I was not alone in my visual ability. I met other students who would look at visual patterns in weaving class and see the same imagery. In addition to learning about my visual talent, I began to understand my spatial ability in creating sculptures and three-dimensional products. Learning how to work through the creative process was crucial in my creative arts evolution.

This journey continued when I discovered Howard Gardner’s book, *Extraordinary Minds*, published in 1997. This book confirmed that there were multiple forms of intelligence and it enumerated eight forms of intelligences or geniuses: linguistic, logical, spatial, musical, bodily kinesthetic, an understanding of other persons, an understanding of oneself, and the apprehension of the natural world (Gardner, 1997, p. 35-36).
When I discovered that all of these experiences had a teleological order while taking my first class in Adlerian Theory, my life made more sense. There was a reason to study art therapy. There was a reason for being an artist and designer, and a spacial thinker per Howard Gardner’s intelligences. Through internships and working in the creative arts with adolescents, I was able to prove that the arts could be part of a healing process.

**blank slate theatre**

In the fall of 2009, I started working with the adolescent actors of blank slate theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota. The first therapeutic art experiential I presented was with the production of *Alice in Wonderland*.

The experiential was a *Carousel* (Dreikurs, 1986, p. 68). The first part of this experiential was to set a blank sheet of paper in front of each participant. Each participant chose two oil pastels that they would use throughout the experiential. The participants sat in a circle around the papers. I played music and stopped the music every three minutes. The participants were directed to move to the next paper on their right in the circle. At the end of the exercise, each actor had put their own drawings and marks on each of the 18 papers.

The purpose of the *Carousel* project was to bring the participants closer together. The finished product created a solution to the issue that the actors were not memorizing their lines. After the experiential, the participants realized the solution to the memorization issue was to work together to help each other memorize their lines.

Since the *Carousel* I have given experientials to the actors and participants of *Bloody Merry Jammy Party, Autistic License, Seussical the Musical* (in conjunction with the St. Louis Park Jewish Community Center), *Generations* and *Spring Awakening*. Each experiential was designed to incorporate the issues of each of the risk-taking, challenging topics of the plays. Some of the issues
included coming of age, confronting autism, confronting low self-esteem, physical and emotional abuse, suicide and setting emotional boundaries.

**The Play: Generations**

Since 2006, when it was founded by Director Adam Arnold, one of the marvelous aspects of blank slate theatre was that the adolescent group has written or adapted most of the plays that they have performed. The play *Generations* was completely written by five members and guided by the director. The risk-taking topic was about generations of abuse and a brave adolescent girl who began the process of stopping this family trait through psychotherapy and involvement in a dance group in her high school. In essence, the play was an excellent example of how dance, a creative art, was used as a coping tool for the character lead.

The topic choice of physical and emotional abuse illustrated the adolescent group’s concern about their generation, and their desire to communicate how change could be made through writing about abuse. The goal was to perform in and produce a play that could make a difference in the lives of others. In Veach & Gladding (2007), the authors wrote, “Adolescents are often dramatic in their actions. Their participation in a number of ritualistic activities, such as sports or on stage, provides them with opportunities to play out parts of life in a highly charged, physical way and to keep their impulses in check” (p. 76). In fact, blank slate theatre’s thespians were doing exactly that.

In *Generations*, the blank slate theatre writers, actors and production crew allowed themselves to feel the emotions of their characters and to be emotional in order to communicate their feelings and emotions. Thus, acting became a coping tool for the adolescents who found acting out his or her issues a very therapeutic process.
Art Therapy Experientials

The two art experientials and open art studio were used during the rehearsals for the participants in *Generations*. In the beginning of the rehearsals, the group was given a *Body Outline* experiential.

**The Body Outline Experiential**

The purpose of the *Body Outline* was to do a body tracing, to project the actor’s own feelings on the inside of the outline and on the outside of the lines to create the image he/she projected as an actor in the *Generations* play. The directive was to choose partners to help outline their body with pencil. Then, I suggested the actors use symbols, pictures, words, and expressions to describe themselves or their partner. They were encouraged to communicate how they were feeling about their character in the play and how they felt about the play as they went throughout the rehearsal process.

The actors and participants were told there would be no judgment made on any of the artwork and that it was theirs to keep. Part of the directive was that the pieces would be hung up for the theatre-goers to peruse when they came to watch the play. There was only one member of the troupe who declined to talk about her work and asked that I not hang hers. I respected the actor’s wishes, did not document the piece and valued the actor’s privacy.

**Themes in the Body Outline Experiential**

There were actors who chose to participate, those who chose not to participate, those who collaborated with a partner, those who worked on their own and did not want to share, those who worked on the project and did not finish, and those who wanted to talk and share. It turned out that the troupe did not finish this experiential at the first sitting so they continued to work on it during the rehearsal downtimes and during another art therapy session several weeks later. Important
themes in the *Body Outline* experiential were hearts, hair, storytelling/biographical, and mirroring with movement and art.

**Heart Theme**

![Heart Theme](image)

**# 1**

I was disturbed by the patched together heart and the knifelike designs outside the patched heart. The artist for *Body Outline* (#1) provided her explanation. She provided love in an interesting way: scattered, earthy, controlled, me in the middle of the drawing, pieces don’t always fit. She suggested that pieces do not always fit and that the viewer and artist needed to accept imperfections. The contrast was the outside, superficial, sharp edges: shattered, stalactites, and fangs, that signified danger. This artist was a female actor who played the therapist in the play.

![Heart Theme](image)

**# 2**

These hearts in *Body Outline* (#2) were collaboratively executed by two actors, one female and one male. One heart was done as an organic inside heart and the other heart was done as a
decorative, symbolic heart on the outside. These hearts were drawn side by side. According to the actor and dancer this was done as a comparison of a technical heart versus an emotional heart. Inside the hearts they collaged words and objects. They placed a half smile in the technical/medical heart, which according to them illustrated guardedness. In the emotional heart they placed a key, which opened up what was inside—including mood swings of an actor. They stated that a person in one of the hearts illustrated lack of control of his/her emotions. Another design was an empty smile. A picture of a monkey depicted the swinging of emotions that could be goofy and fun at the same time. When asked about an empty smile and a half smile, the dancer and actor proudly declared the meaning was that neither heart or smile was full.

The actors were very observant about their participation with their Body Outlines. They took the experientials very seriously and really communicated their true reactions to their experiential: what was going on inside and outside of their body in the acting and dancing in the play Generations.

In this Body Outline (#3), the actor used a heart and hand which generated energy, sunny emotions and connected herself to all the actors illustrating the power of the group. This was done by the lead actor who stated that her emotions go in many directions. The henna design symbol, a mind symbol, was important to the actor and represented a ceremony.
This group of actors and dancers were incredibly receptive to working with me. Some had worked with me before in another production and some were performing with blank slate theatre for the first time. It was exciting to see how they responded to the experientials. They put a lot of expressive energy into their art work. It was very gratifying to hear them explain their experience working on their own projects and how it helped them while rehearsing. “Groups in high schools that use creative techniques help adolescents express their emotions appropriately, behave differently, and gain insight into themselves and others” (Veach & Gladding, p. 71). This could be said about the art therapy experientials that I have provided blank slate theatre. The art was an expression of the emotions felt by the actors and dancers while they were rehearsing. In addition to the experientials, the open art studio enabled them to express their frustrations and other emotions that they could not express while acting.

In collage #4, this actor used paint, oil pastel and shiny paper. The actor spent a lot of time painting and using the art to express herself. This glittry gold heart expressed her energy and happiness performing with the troupe. She was nine years old. She was also an important character in the play. She was the first to memorize her lines. She also used the open art studio during every rehearsal she attended, illustrating how an open art studio can help actors express and release their energy through art. All the other actors loved her.

# 4

Hair Theme
In the play *Generations*, the character of *Little Teagan* wore a wig to match the color of the *Older Teagan*. Both actors had long, full heads of hair. Hair was a topic in the play. *Little Teagan* was the inner child that the *Older Teagan* confronted in her attempt to heal herself from the *Generations* of abuse.

In *Body Outline* (#5) below, the actor illustrated the importance of the hair. However, what was significant was the lack of facial expression in this portrait. The actor chose not to use any facial features as if the character had no face or significance to her family during her childhood. The use of the word *STATIC* was a significant metaphoric description because there was a tension between the *Younger Teagan* and her *Mother* when she was growing up in the play. *STATIC* symbolized the repressed energy of the abuse.

# 5

Again, the representation of hair was significant in the self-portrait in *Body Outline* (#6). The actor was *Teagan’s Abusive Mother*. The face had the illusion of eyes, nose and mouth. However, the face was, in fact, a photo of a forest landscape, which the actor related to as she preferred to be outdoors and taking long canoe trips in Canada. There were a number of contrasts in the
painting/collage. There were hot and cold color contrasts in the dress patterns and the blonde hair was wild. The actor was not wild in her normal life. She played a particularly hard part and was challenged to play the *Abusive Mother*, perhaps given that the actor was not an abusive person.

The actor spent a lot of time working on her body outline and also did many extra drawings to process the difficulty of playing the *Abusive Mother*. She used a great deal of control when doing her drawings. All of this actor’s drawings emphasized a need to control her emotions while portraying the difficult personality of this character. This was an excellent example of the creative art therapeutic process.

![Image](image_url)

**# 6**

The actors’ struggle to empathize with their characters and still be their own selves was clearly an issue for them. This seems to be a universal issue for actors of any age. In particular, adolescents, who have limited life experience, are vulnerable to this activity. In Dalabroux, Goldstein, & Winner, (2008), the authors summarize their research of the effectiveness of positive art-making experiences to repair the actors’ moods when experiencing negative emotions by stating that “...creating a work expressing more positive emotions than one actually feels is a more effective
coping strategy” (p. 295). This particular actor used her positive emotions to buoy her negative feelings about playing her difficult character. It is clear she soothed herself with her favorite scenery. This is an excellent example of mood repair.

There are many discontinuous lines in this Body Outline (#7). The body is vague here, shapeless, a suggestion of arms and shoulders and mostly hair. There is a suggestion that the character the actor was playing might have an issue with her body, given that she played the role of the Abusive Grandmother. This actor was one of the playwrights of this play. She knew the emotional impact this play would have on the actors and the audience. She may have been unhappy about being labeled abusive.

The actor used death as a commentary in the interior and exterior of her Body Outline (#7). The interior is mostly negative with bad, loneliness, and death. She placed words like disconnect, depression, death, blind, anxious, sad, anger and abusive on the exterior of the outline. An interpretation of this artwork suggested that this actor struggled to stay positively while she played the Abusive Grandmother. She used the word happy for her hair. Could it be interpreted that this was the only body part where this actor could detach and be
happy with while playing this part?

When asked about her *Body Outline* (#7), the actor spoke of having a real-life family of eccentric artists. Her family was her core. She spoke of her three dimensional head as symbolic of having more than one thought in her head and of having or feeling music in her body. This could be why the lines were disjointed. She also spoke of the *Abusive Grandmother* role as being negative. Her character in the play was angry, abusive, lost and in denial of the sadness of losing a child. The actor played the part of someone who had lost a child, was coping with death, and felt vulnerable and sad. The actor spoke of the contrast between the interior and the exterior words of her *Body Outline* (#7): the interior striving for happiness and with nothing natural on the exterior. This juxtaposition of emotions illustrated the reason the actor chose to draw her body and hair as she did. This *Body Outline* illustrated that the actor was truly in touch with the emotions she had to conjure up to play this difficult role.

In *Body Outline* (#8), the participant was a lead dancer in the play. She wanted her collage/painting to hang upside down to express her movement and positive energy in the play. She literally put her whole body into her performance. This wordless *Body Outline* was unusually simple. The colors and the fabric textures she used expressed her body flexibility and her joy of movement.
CREATIVE ARTS AS COPING TOOLS FOR ADOLESCENTS

The fun element of *Body Outline* (# 9) was that this actor could fit on the full page of paper she was given for this project. She was the nine year old mascot of the troupe. The actor portrayed her positive energy with this part in the play through the action on the *Body Outline*. She was resourceful and took all the scraps from other drawings for her collage. There was a defined outline of her body done with string. Her portrait illustrated a deliberateness in her approach to this experiential. She expressed joy, happiness and a naiveté. The ribbon and colors were examples of her youthful exuberance. It was as if this actor and the character were the same person. The actor played Teagan’s *Younger Sister*. There was something young and positive about this piece and the actor who created it.
Theme of Mirroring with Both Movement and Art

*Body Outline* (#10) and *Image* (#11) illustrated how two dancers collaborated both with their *Body Outline* and with their dance movement in the play. Their dance movement was a collaborative effort, which ironically expressed what they had illustrated in their *Body Outline*. These dancers clearly worked very well together.

In their *Body Outline* (#10) experiential these two dancers took opposite parts. He cut the collage pieces with scissors while she tore each word or saying. They deliberately overlaid their bodies when they outlined their bodies so there was only one head and two bodies with brick patterns. The bricks echoed the stone wall in the blank slate theatre rehearsal space. The male worked on the concept of being a dreamer of future lives picking up wisdom along the way. The dance movement they did in the play was about mirroring each other. They used phrases such as *born for each other, on your head, in my mind, whatever you do affects your future/now, words of wisdom, sleep, love, emotions, hands on each other, half words, half pictures, can see emotions, most honest, and can be whatever I want to be*. Other pictures were of a gloomy girl with balloons, eyes and the illusion of a bridge.
The actors and dancers loved their body outlines so much they helped get them displayed in the theatre’s entry hall for every performance. This illustrated their passion for their creations and their interest in sharing their art with the theatre-goers.
The Sculpture Experiential

Each time I presented an experiential to the blank slate actors, I never knew what to expect as a result. The Sculpture experiential was no exception. When I brought my bins of recycled toilet paper and paper towel rolls, egg cartons, plastic apple packaging, various boxes, containers, packaging, boards, tape, glue, staplers, paints, wire and other assorted recycled stuff for this experiential, the actors were given a directive to create a group or collaborative sculpture that would bond the cast together. During rehearsals the dancers rehearsed separately from the actors. This caused a schism in the group dynamic of the play. The purpose of this sculpture was to bring together the two groups. It was an attempt to help the actors know and work together with the dancers in the final rehearsals before the play went to the stage.

The concept of the directive was to have each participant create his/her own sculpture and then bring the pieces together to create a group sculpture that represented each of them in the house, home and family. It was an attempt to join the Generations characters into a family.

As an artistic expression of joining forces, this experiential failed miserably. However, by doing their own individual sculptures, the actors and dancers expressed the fact that the group was not cohesive and was unable to join forces. There was an undercurrent of dissonance in the group and it came out in the individual sculptures. The Director and I recognized that this was a thermometer for the lack of cohesiveness in the group. In essence, this Sculpture experiential worked because by its failure it succeeded in communicating what was truly going on in the group. It helped open up a discussion with the troupe of how the actors and dancers needed to come together.

There were six documented sculptures that the actors would share. Each piece was an example of the individual’s approach to the sculpture. None of the pieces worked together at all. There was no thematic reference, nor a reference to the play.
BRAIN SCULPTURE

This very self-contained sculpture illustrated how individualistic the sculptures became. This actor spoke of this piece as a *Brain*. The green symbolized the fog from the smoking in his character’s brain. This sculpture was the size of an apple and could be held in one hand.

FABRIC SCULPTURE

The image of the *Fabric Sculpture* showed a collage of color and textures tied together by the sewing hoop. I suggested that this actor was attempting to keep some kind of control over the complexity of her role in the play. This was an example of self-expression, but it was not related to the group. The grayed *Fabric Sculpture* suggested a depressive element from this artist. This actor never identified him or herself.
It was particularly hard for these actors and dancers to communicate what they were thinking when they created these pieces. The actor who created the *Individual Sculpture* below as a tree in a garden. What is unusual about this sculpture was the combination of a two-dimensional painting of the flower with a three-dimensional sculpture of a tree. This was clearly the actor’s personal expression. He/she had difficulty describing the meaning of this piece. The combination of materials was interesting as well: wire, cardboard, metallic paper and paint.

**INDIVIDUAL SCULPTURE**

The dancer who created *A Leg Forward* knew her role in the play and communicated it perfectly. This was the only piece that truly related to the play and was not just self-expression. This could have been combined with other pieces if other work had been related to the play. The possibilities were endless... more legs, or feet in motion, for example.
A LEG FORWARD

WIRE AND PLASTIC SCULPTURE

The *Wire and Plastic Sculpture* was an interesting sculpture but did not relate to the play. The actor never described his/her reasoning around the piece.
The Open Art Studio

The rehearsal space turned into an open art studio, which was totally unexpected. It seemed that the actors needed an expressive outlet while they were rehearsing such a powerful and emotional play. The materials preferred were oil pastels and paints, some fabrics, ribbons, collage and other odds and ends. The pictures on the wall below were products of the Open Art Studio.

These pictures from the Open Art Studio were displayed in the theatre to illustrate the various forms of expression of the actors and dancers while rehearsing Generations. There are self-portraits, designs, collages and poems. This Art Therapist worked with these adolescent performers and encouraged multiple forms of self-expression to help them learn how to cope with their emotions and actions.
The Questionnaire/The Survey

During the rehearsals of Generations, I created an anonymous survey to explore the reasoning behind the actors’ and dancers’ participation in blank slate theatre. One could evaluate this survey as a qualitative questionnaire. Eight out of 15 actors participated in this survey. Yet, the answers really give the essence of the participants’ lives.

Questions, Answers and Data

Question One: What would you be doing in your spare time if you were not doing theatre arts?

The choices ranged from sitting around, doing drugs and alcohol, spending too much time on the computer, getting into trouble, reading, writing/journaling, all aspects of music, sports and making art. The mode in this survey was spending too much time on the computer or sitting around. There was an overwhelming negative reaction to the topic of drugs and alcohol. Reading, music and art were positive answers as well.

Question Two: Coping skills are considered an emotional outlet, whether for bio, psycho or social reasons or just a way to occupy time. What can you identify as a creative art that is a coping skill for you?

The choices were Art, Music, Theatre Arts and Writing. The mode for this group was clearly Theatre Arts. Six out of eight chose theatre arts. Music was second.

Question Three: Are you going through anybody changes? Yes or No?

Six out of seven answered NO.
Question Four: Which extracurricular activity helped you with your body changes?

The choices were Art, Music, Theatre Arts and Writing. The mode for this group was clearly Theatre Arts.

Question Five: Do you have any psychological issues that are impeding you in some way?

Seven out of eight said NO.

Question Six: Which of the following do you employ to help you cope with your issues?

Four out of eight chose Writing. One would assume that these actors would be journaling.

Question Seven: Do you have any issues with your social life or relating with your family, community or making friends? Answer YES or NO.

The answer: five out of eight said NO. There are still three who said YES.

I took this number seriously as it looked like almost half of the participants had trouble socializing.

Question Eight: Which of the following creative arts would help you with your socializing?

Choice of Art, Music, Theatre Arts and Writing.

Clearly the top choice of eight out of eight chose Theatre Arts. Music was a close second.

Question Nine: By being involved in a creative arts group, be it Art, Music, Theatre Arts or Writing, what is most important to you? The choices were using your creativity, feeling a sense of belonging, being able to express yourself, doing the things you love to do and being able to do things you are unable to do at home or anywhere else.

This question was the most meaningful question for me. It illustrated the adolescents’ reasoning for why they were involved in the creative arts. The first answer was the love to do the creative arts. The second answer was using your creativity, and third, was a sense of belonging.

One would assume that this is a biased series of questions. However, this answer truly showed the passion these adolescents had for theatre arts. These creative participants truly felt a sense of
belonging with the other members of the theatre group.

Question Ten: Which of the following are goals in your life? The choices were: study theatre in college, to be a famous actor, to write scores for plays, to be a playwright, to do stage production, to be a famous writer, to be a famous artist, or to be a famous sculptor?

The answer was five out of eight wanted to study theatre arts in college; five out of eight wanted to be famous actors and four out of eight wanted to be writers. Clearly these participants felt encouraged to be artists, actors and writers. One answer was “I want to do writing, art and sculpture but I do not want to be famous.” The humility of this comment was especially interesting.

Question Eleven: Please write about your goals:

Out of seven answers, four of the participants wish to be in some form of theatre. Other options mentioned were to be an economist, a journalist, movie director or lawyer, and the owner of multiple canoes. The overall summary, however, was to be happy, to be successful, to be surrounded by good people and live in a supportive community.

One could assume that blank slate theatre had an influence in being a supportive community to these participants. The actor who wanted to be an economist said that he/she had no goals involving theatre and that becoming an economist” is a dream not a goal.” Question Twelve: How has blank slate theatre helped you? Please circle one or more: build self-esteem, build a creative community for you, improve your view of life or fill in the blank?

Six out of seven answered build a creative community for you. There were two participants who believed that blank slate theatre helped build their self-esteem. Three out of seven felt that blank slate improved their view of life. In the other fill in the blank column, two filled in make new friends and one wrote “getting to experience theatre in a new place and new way.”

Implications of the Survey

Though not all of the participants answered the survey it did illustrate some very
interesting data contributing to this research into adolescents using creative arts as coping tools. In addition, the summary of this survey illustrated that the participants clearly felt a sense of belonging.

**Summary: Creative Arts as a Useful Coping Tool for Adolescents**

The importance of encouragement and a good self-concept were important contributors to the theme of creative arts being used as coping tools. Each adolescent needed to believe in his/her own self-image in order to participate in the creative arts community of blank slate theatre. Believing in themselves enabled the actors to show their talents and believe in what they did. If there was any low self-esteem, the participation in other creative art groups as in Cukierkorn (2008) and Hocking (2010) became the creative spaces to learn and use multiple forms of art. Thus, these talented youth utilized their personal creativity and intelligence as a form of coping with their emotional reactions to what they were experiencing.

It is my intention to continue to work with blank slate theatre productions and other theatre groups to help the actors process while rehearsing their roles in plays through creating art therapeutic experientials. Since the last play blank slate produced, an older, more experienced actor stated that he wished more theatre companies did these experientials. He believes it helps him get to know the other actors in a way that is really useful in the rehearsal process. In a sense, his comment illustrates that he needs a closer sense of community in his acting career. I would say it also attests to the need of useful coping tools while practicing his theatre arts form of creative expression. I believe this art therapeutic process enhances his acting experience.

Because I have been doing these experientials over three years, I believe it has influenced all of the actors who have done these experientials and will increase their ability to cope over their creative lives whether acting, painting, writing or dancing. They will have a better sense of community and a sense of self-worth. The questionnaire responses illustrate that they all have a true sense of what their personal goal directions are and will be.
References


