



Out of the Head and Into the Heart, Walking the Walk to Your Professional Values

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The open-hearted way of the therapist is a path anyone embarking in the world of therapy undertakes, whether this is consciously or, at times, subconsciously. Professional values are at the core of all practice; however, at times, the head can get in the way of following the natural, intuitive nature of the therapist. Using Sand as a medium can allow for a coming home to the heart and fully embody a client-centered approach and a heart-centred approach to providing therapy.

The open-hearted way is only permissible by unlocking the gates of allowance and acceptance, allowing all parts to be present. When vulnerabilities lurk in the dark, Sand can bring them out in the light compassionately, non-judgmentally, and with love and kindness. Allowing the therapist to be seen, heard, and understood, as well as their true nature and essence of being as a human, is permitted both at a personal and professional level.

The acknowledgment of personal vulnerabilities, however, may not always be as easy as it is made out. At times, the expectation of the invincible therapist becomes real. There is a place, however, for the heart's fragility and delicate nature to be heard. Exploring personal values, morals, standards, and ethical practice through the Sand allows for this; in times and places where things may seem difficult, the Sand can become the friend of the therapist. It is a place to go to, to truly reveal what needs to be seen, and to gain access to inner wisdom and untapped potential to allow the therapist to truly step into their full potential and power as they become whole in the Sand.

The fully authentic, genuine self-process can be daunting and bring about discomfort, possibly even resistance for the therapist, who, with all their training, can be their own worst critics. The ability to be fully present as the self is not afforded to all if the act of taking the step onto the path is not fully committed. There is sometimes a need for brave investment into self in difficult times to truly embrace the challenges the therapy space can present. It is in these times the torch that the sand tray bears witness to can allow the authentic self to be seen.

Discovering elements of not knowing can be uncomfortable and may even cause unease, especially in a world where the expectation may be that a 'therapist is meant to know so many things.'

The open-hearted way of the therapist proposes that there can be contentment in the not knowing, and releasing expectations can bring about true authenticity.

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Underneath the therapist is the authentic person. The person who doesn't know it all, despite all those expectations. The person who doesn't actually have to know it all. The path home to accepting self comes from congruence, compassion, and the ability to be comfortable in the not knowing. Navigating and understanding the process of expectations can allow comfort in the discomfort, curiosity in the apathy, passion in the indifference, and clarity in the ambiguity.

At times, rational understanding needs to sit with the discomfort to explore the feelings at the root of discomfort, fully, open-heartedly, and with permission, to recognize the self in a caring profession that constantly considers others.

So, at times, a re-evaluation is necessary. Sand is a gift that helps us tune into our inner wisdom, allowing our authentic selves to shine through and revealing the keys to unlocking the gates of our full potential. Sand in and of itself can become a self-supervision tool, awakening and meeting needs that aren't always evident.

Becoming the adventurer of our own path as a therapist leads into the many great journeys in the Sand that can be embarked upon, leading to hopeful optimism and passionate meaning and purpose.

Curiosity in the Sand of the therapist's ways brings wisdom, perception, and insight through the magical openings the Sand offers.

Tapping into the undiscovered heart and soul gold allows the advancement of the therapist into realms of the unknown. The possibilities are endless, and the potential significant in growing the ability to flourish in the uncharted territory awaits!

See examples of completed sandtrays created by the author to illustrate this below.



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Tray 1 The boat tray is the journey home to self, navigating the expectations from others and self in order to move into the acceptance of not knowing, and discovering the uncharted territory of not needing to know everything.



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Tray 2

The flower one is the open hearted way of being an integrative sand play therapist tapping into my passion and clarity and learning to love and express my authentic self.



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Tray 3

The warriorress one is me tapping into my undiscovered heart and soul gold as a therapist and my ability to explore, accept and challenge my vulnerabilities and the realms of self that I felt uncomfortable revealing, but by finding my inner strength and finding comfort in the discomfort I have managed to venture into uncharted territory.

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