

Play & Creativity in Psychotherapy. (Eds) Marks-Tarlow, T., Solomon, M., Seigel D. W.W Norton

Review by Dr Carol Gregory

In the introduction of *Play & Creativity in Psychotherapy* Terry Marks-Tarlow ponders on the fact that 'Psychotherapy is a serious business ... and psychotherapists harbour a tremendous amount of responsibility encountering deep unhappiness, trauma, and ... horrors in their patients. Given such a sombre state of affairs what does play and creativity have to do with psychotherapy. On the surface, one might think 'very little' ... our conviction is that play and creativity have everything do with the deepest levels of healing, growth, and personal transformation'. This book amply reflects the editors' conviction.

Published last year (2018) and edited by Marks-Tarlow, Solomon and Siegel, the eighteen chapters are written by both clinicians and non-clinicians, each of whom bring their own unique perspective and knowledge to this arena. Chapters range from those founded in neuroscience e.g. Chan and Siegel's chapter on Interpersonal neurobiology, self and creativity, Allan Schore's 'Early Right Brain Development' and Jaap Pansepp's chapter on play and the construction of Creativity to those dealing with the arts such as 'Rage comedy and creativity in the theatre' written by Jonathan Lynn, (author, script writer and film director). Some chapters are essentially clinical case studies, while others introduced me to clinical areas that I am only just beginning to think about and consider in my own work, such as Pat Ogden's contribution 'Play Creativity and Movement Vocabulary.

As to be expected from a multi-authored book the quality is sometimes rather variable, but there is more than enough to make it a stimulating read, and sufficient chapters to give food for thought for one's own clinical practice. A chapter on 'Developing Resilience with the Improvisers Mind Set; getting people out of their stuck places', written by Zoe Galvez and Betsy Crouch, both life and professional coaches and improvisers, is a wonderful description of how you can learn to do 'improv', which they have developed into a training course (IMPROVHQ). The descriptions of creating a safe environment, in which people learn to listen Intentionally, Make the teammate your hero, learn the Power of presence, being Open to yes, Voicing your ideas, made me yearn to be able to link up with such a group locally.

The idea that 'in improv we learn to honour our voice and speak with humility and conviction' made me reflect on the reading of reformulation and goodbye letters – how do we use our voice? What can we notice, and learn, and use as we reflect on how a patient reads their letter? Chan and Siegel review in a very accessible way, assisted by Marks-Tarlow's beautifully simple but informative illustrations, the current state of knowledge of the function of the Default Mode Network, its possible role in play and creativity and its interaction with the Salience Network and Central Executive Network. New

to me is the fact that when alone and not external-task focused, i.e. when the Default Mode Network is activated, the mind is in an inherently relational state. The authors suggest that one way to remember this is by using the acronym OATS (Other and The Self network). This state offers a neurobiological foundation for experiences such as transference, countertransference and perhaps in CAT terms the ongoing relational patterns described by reciprocal roles.

However as Marks-Tarlow states no matter how many books we read, workshops we attend, or supervisions we absorb, in the heat of the clinical moment we must put all this aside ... and the science of clinical practice blends with the art of timing through an unpredictable and present-centred dance of leaning and following.

This book has much to offer the CAT therapist. The work of play and creativity is uniformly understood by the authors to be a relational matter and so speaks to the heart of the dialogic perspective of the cognitive analytic therapist with many ideas to encourage, to contemplate and nudge us to expand our ZPD, as well as for being on the whole a very good read.

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