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An Exploration of Contemplative Practice in the Life of the Art Therapist

by

Kristina M. Ebsen

A research paper presented to the

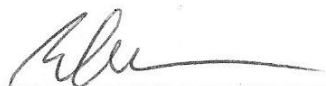
Faculty of the Department of
Marital and Family Therapy
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Marital and Family Therapy

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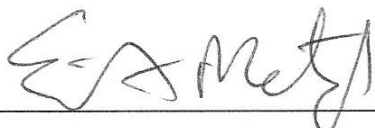
Signature Page

Author's Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Alu', written above a horizontal line.

Researcher, Art Therapist

Research Advisor's Signature:

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Research mentor, Ph.D, LMFT, RYT

Abstract

A six week self-study was conducted to explore the use of regular contemplative practice and art-making to examine effects on the life of an art therapy graduate student. This study examined a three-fold inquiry regarding the use of contemplative practices, namely Buddhist meditation, as well as weekly reflective art making to broaden self-knowledge and enhance general wellbeing.

Further implications of the use of contemplative practice and reflective art making were reviewed for clinical application in the field of art therapy, both for the client and art therapist.

Keywords: Buddhism, meditation, contemplative psychotherapy, art therapy

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An Exploration of Contemplative Practice and Art making in the Life of the Art Therapist

The Study Topic

The intent of this research project was to explore the use of contemplative practices and art making in the life of the art therapist and application in the field of art therapy. As a spiritual practitioner, I have experienced certain benefits through a personal contemplative practice that I believe could be of benefit to others. Contributors to the field of psychotherapy have also proposed the usefulness of contemplative practices. One could argue, the most common example of specific interventions from contemplative traditions include “mindfulness training.” As such practices gain popularity in treatment, the topic warrants an in-depth look at the journey one may take when integrating this into daily life.

Through exploration, this research sought to clarify a three-fold inquiry. First and foremost, the research aim was to determine how the addition of contemplative practice could enhance different areas of one’s life and wellbeing. Some subtopics worth exploration included general self-awareness or mindfulness, decrease of stress and other pathologies (i.e. anxiety, depression) and enhancement of spiritual development.

Second, the study also sought to explore areas of application to the field of art therapy. Specifically, an area of interest included such questions as, “how can having a regular contemplative practice as a clinician enhance the therapeutic relationship? What are the implications of recommending a practice or technique such as “mindfulness training” to a client?

On a third level of inquiry, and especially of interest to art therapists, was exploration around art-making. One could ask, “How could art-making affect or enhance this process?” Can

the art be useful in deepening one's practice in order to gain greater insights or as a practice in itself?

In order to accomplish this, this researcher conducted a six-week self-study by engaging in a contemplative practice and art-making. The contemplative practice consisted of engagement in sitting meditation for 5-7 hours per week and the creation of one art piece created at the closing of the week.

Significance of the Study

An exploration into contemplative practices bares significance on several levels including that specific to this researcher, the academic community, and to art therapy practitioners and those included in the broader field of psychotherapy.

For this researcher, the topic was personally meaningful for several reasons. In the past, I included regular contemplative practice of Buddhist meditation as a part of my daily life. Reflecting back at those many years of my life, I experienced a better sense of wellbeing, connectedness with others, higher level of intuition, less perceived anxiety or depression and a feeling of general contentment and peace. After certain life experiences including significant losses and fluctuation in stable living situations, I faltered with my practice and slowly lost the sense of wellbeing, sinking into more anxiety, depression and stress.

Forward several years later, it became of personal importance to include the reintegration of this practice back into my life as part of my graduate learning experience. During the decision making process to choose a graduate art therapy program, several costs and benefits were weighed. As a once practicing Buddhist, the 5-7 hour requirements weekly contemplation practice and integration of Buddhist principles in western psychotherapy theory at Naropa University were highly sought. In the choice not to attend that program, it was of significant importance to explore the benefits I could have gained through the addition of those requirements and philosophy.

The significance of contemplative practice and personal art making as a developing clinician are of great importance to this and other academic institutions. Much of the academic literature available to this researcher within the topic has been centered on the idea of enhancing

educational experience through a graduate student's contemplative practice, including those of contemplation on academic concepts. Within an art therapy program, integrating both frameworks may allow another dimension to learning that may benefit future students at Loyola Marymount University.

Moving from that of greater academic knowledge, to the core of the meaningfulness of such an exploration, include benefits to the clinician and the client within the practice of art therapy as an extension of the broader field of psychotherapy. As previously mentioned, the use of mindfulness practice in therapy is gaining popularity as a treatment modality of several diagnoses and within the treatment of many populations. Current practices include Mindfulness-Based-Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990; Stahl & Goldstein, 2010; Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002 as cited in Bell, 2009) Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999 as cited in Bell, 2009), use in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (Linehan, 1993 as cited in Bell, 2009) as well as others.

Others such as therapists using a transpersonal approach or otherwise using integration of spirituality or religious aspects in therapy may also recommend contemplative practice to enhance wellness. With the growing integration of these practices in psychotherapy, further research is warranted. In the field of art therapy, with limited research compared to the broader psychological field the need for research is magnified.

Background of the Study Topic

This research focused on the main topics of contemplative practice, especially Buddhist meditation and art-making within the context of the practice of art therapy. Meditation and art-making practices have extended back through thousands of years, therefore in order to provide a background within the scope of this paper, a contemporary perspective of academics will be taken. In order to provide a context, it is important to first define contemplative practice as well as a brief history of contemplative psychology and contemplative psychotherapy.

Contributors to the academic literature have commented there is no consistent definition of contemplative practice (deWit, 1990, Siegel, 2010) and discussions on definitions can be fit to different purposes (deWit, 1990). Founder of University of California, Los Angeles' (UCLA) Mindful Awareness Research Center, along with current director, Smalley and Winston (2010) named "explicit practices" such as meditation, yoga, t'ai chi with the inclusion of communing with nature or art-making. Along with others (de Wit, 1991) have also indicated the roots of contemplative practices are found in spiritual traditions. One definition of contemplative practices will likely be incomplete. At the core, contemplative practices could be described as specific practices, most commonly but not limited to meditation, and as Siegel frames this definition in the context of mindfulness, "involves being aware, on purpose and nonjudgmentally, of what is happening as it is happening in the present moment (2010)." Often, this is with the intention to "train the mind" (Trungpa, 2005).

Contemplative psychotherapy has been described as a combination of "joining of individual and interpersonal disciplines: bringing personal contemplative practice to the clinical practice of psychotherapy" (Wegela, 1994). In this theory of psychotherapy, rooted in Buddhist

and Shambala traditions, emphasizes the natural, healthy state of being is that of “brilliant sanity” (Wegela, 1994).” Through contemplative practice and therapeutic techniques, a client can transcend pathological problems and return to this natural state (Wegela, 1994; Trungpa, 2005).

Contemplative psychology, contains a broader context in looking at the role of contemplation in life, both secular and spiritual domains, and within a variety of religious traditions (deWit, 1994). For example, Catholic contemplative practices of prayer (deWit, 1991, Symington & Symington, 2011) especially “the Centering Prayer” (Bingaman, 2011). As Symington and Symington and Bingaman assert themselves from religious, Christian view, the authors conceptually align with de Wit (1990), who contributes that each religion has its own contemplative psychology.

Authors operating within psychotherapy frameworks and related models such as social work or pastoral counseling may look to apply these practices in their work with clients regardless of or without regard to different religious orientations. A widely popular variation of contemplative practice in use is mindfulness training. In another quote by Daniel Seigel (2010), defines mindfulness practice as “a way of intentionally paying attention to the present moment without being swept away by judgments” (p.83).

As previously discussed, mindfulness training, a type of contemplative practice has been integrated into many approaches in psychotherapy including. Researchers have found mindfulness practices shown as ways in “reducing stress, reducing chronic physical pain, boosting the body’s immune system to fight disease, coping with painful life events, such as the death of a loved one or major illness, dealing with negative emotions like anger, fear, and greed, increasing self-awareness to detect harmful reactive patterns of thought, feeling, and action,

improving attention or concentration, enhancing positive emotions, including happiness and compassion, increasing interpersonal skills and relationships, reducing addictive behaviors, such as eating disorders, alcoholism, and smoking, enhancing performance, whether in work, sports, or academics, stimulating and releasing creativity, changing positively the actual structure of our brains (Smalley & Winston, 2010).

In researching contemplative practice and its base in contemplative psychotherapy theory is helpful in providing a background to contextualizing the personal exploration and professional applications of this six-week study. Further, it may be important to also note the use of art-making is instrumental in such an examination and merits a brief discussion to provide a background in the approach and methodology of the study. As noted pioneers of the field, as well as such contemporaries such as and McNiff (1998) contend that art is a way to know the self (Allen, 1995) and can be a valuable “vehicle to understanding” McNiff, 1998). This foundational understanding informs and provides rationale for integration of the art making process.

In conclusion, taken together, a background in contemplative aspects as well as the assumed value of art process provide the framework for the personal exploration in this research study.

A Review of the Literature

Contemplative practices are part of many religious traditions (Symington, 2011; deWit, 1991) and are increasingly a topic of interest in art therapy. Contemplation comes from the root word, *Contemplio* meaning to seek truth and knowledge (Wallace, 2007). An aspect of contemplative practice (Wallace, 2007), that of mindfulness, also known as mindful awareness, has become increasingly popular as a therapeutic intervention in psychotherapy (Smalley and Winston, 2010). Mindfulness is described by Daniel Siegel (2010) as “a way of intentionally paying attention to the present moment without being swept away by judgments (p.83).” Other authors in the literature tend to confer with this definition (e.g. Wallace, Symington). The practice of cultivating mindfulness through mindfulness meditation goes back thousands of years and is well known in the spiritual tradition of Buddhism. The essence of using contemplative practice for many benefits, including to know one’s self coincides with another practice of art making to also know one’s self and gain greater clarity. This is the key aspect in the practice of art therapy (Allen, 1995). The question begs to be explored, “Where do these two areas of contemplative practice and art making converge, link or influence each other?”

This review of the academic literature will provide, first, a beginning discussion of contemplative psychology with an in depth look at mindfulness as a psychotherapeutic intervention. Second, this paper will discuss art making to know one’s self from perspectives in the field of art therapy. Third, the integration of both concepts into the clinical application of art therapy including implications for both the benefit of the therapist and the experience of the client are explored. Last, this review of the literature will discuss recommendations for further area of study.

Contemplative Psychology and Psychotherapy

Contemplative psychology and psychotherapy are relatively new domains with very old ideas. At the basis is the idea of contemplation. It is useful to first discuss the definition. There are some differences in the definition of *contemplation*. Merriam-Webster defines contemplation as

1. a concentration on spiritual things as a form of private devotion b: a state of mystical awareness of God's being,
2. An act of considering with attention, study
3. The act of regarding steadily
4. Intention, expectation

Contemplative Psychology seeks to explore the use of contemplation in daily life, including those of religious and spiritual traditions as well as the profane, or secular (deWit, 1991).

Although related, Contemplative Psychotherapy provides a more directed view towards the Buddhist tradition and with application to psychotherapy. Wegela's definition of contemplative psychotherapy is one of "joining of individual and interpersonal disciplines; bringing personal contemplative practice to the clinical practice of psychotherapy (1994, p. 28)." According to Welwood (2002), contemplative psychotherapy seeks to blend approaches by combining eastern philosophy, especially from the Buddhist tradition, and western psychotherapy practices.

The origins of form of psychotherapy is attributed to Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche who was a Tibetan meditation master. Trungpa brought teachings and was instrumental in the field's birth at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado (Wegela, 1994).

In theory, Welwood (2002) notes a contemplative approach to psychological work differs from other approaches in concerning itself less with problem solving than an unconditional presence eliminating a divide between a "reformer self" and a "problematic 'me'" (p. 121) but emphasizes the true nature of the mind as that of "brilliant sanity" or clarity (Trungpa, 2005; Kaklauskas, Nirmanheminda, Hoffman & MacAndrew, 2008; Wegela, 1994).

In the literature, concepts related to contemplative psychotherapy can also be found to be closely related to other modes of psychology especially, transpersonal approaches. According to theorist Ken Wilber (1977 as cited in Franklin, Farrelly-Hansen, Marek, Swan-Foster, Wallingford, 2011 and Hiltunen, 2006) transpersonal psychology, founded by Abraham Maslow and others in 1968 (Franklin et. al., 2011), is often called the "fourth force" in psychology, along with cognitive-behavioral, psychoanalytic and humanistic models). The focus of the approach is to facilitate personal growth in a client by advancing their connection to spirituality by developing the self and transcending into a deeper consciousness (Wilber, 1977 as cited in Franklin et. al, 2011). Wilber, has identified three levels being the *prepersonal*, the *personal* and the *transpersonal* of spiritual development and in regards to all religious or spiritual traditions (Wilber, 1977 as cited in Franklin et. al, 2011). In brief the role of the therapist in this modality is to facilitate the client's transpersonal process (Franklin et. al, 2011).

With similarity to transpersonal psychotherapy, contemplative psychotherapy seeks to facilitate the client's "uncovering" to this natural state of "brilliant sanity" (Wegela, 1994).

Further, Wegela synthesizes “the path” in this approach to five essential features being, discovering space, clarifying view and intention, providing hospitality, opening to exchange and compassionate action (1994). She summarizes by identifying three qualities of “brilliant sanity” as that of emptiness, clarity and compassion.

Mindfulness and Other Current Practices

For the clinician, sitting meditation practice is essential to explore oneself in mind and experience and is the fundamental contemplative practice in contemplative approach (Trungpa, 2005; Kaklauskas, et.al, 2008; Wegela, 1994). However, Bell (2009) cites several meditative practices that “have become an integral part of many therapeutic approaches including mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), dialectical behavior therapy (Linehan, 1993), integrative couple behavioral therapy (Jacobson, Christensen, Prince, Cordove, & Eldridge, 2000), and acceptance and commitment therapy (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999).” Additionally, Mindfulness-Based-Stress-Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1982, 1990; Stahl & Goldstein, 2010) is another practice using mindfulness as a therapeutic intervention. Some attribute the first introduction to “health psychology” to Jon Kabat-Zinn in Massachusetts Medical Center. Since this time, use of mindfulness to other psychological disorders have increased and become increasingly determined as empirically-based (Symington & Symington, 2012).

The founder and director of UCLA’s Mindfulness Research Center have redefined contemplative practices as “Mindful Awareness Practices” or “MAPs.” Through much research, the researchers have found mindfulness practices shown as ways in “reducing stress, reducing chronic physical pain, boosting the body’s immune system to fight disease, coping with painful life events, such as the death of a loved one or major illness, dealing with negative emotions like

anger, fear, and greed, increasing self-awareness to detect harmful reactive patterns of thought, feeling, and action, improving attention or concentration, enhancing positive emotions, including happiness and compassion, increasing interpersonal skills and relationships, reducing addictive behaviors, such as eating disorders, alcoholism, and smoking, enhancing performance, whether in work, sports, or academics, stimulating and releasing creativity, changing positively the actual structure of our brains (Smalley & Winston, 2010)

There are many forms of meditation, however most can be categorized into two distinct types being that of *insight* and *concentration* (deWit, 1991; Goleman as cited in Bogart, 1990). In concentration meditations there is an object in which to fix one's attention single-pointedly such as breath or mantra with an aim to suppress other thoughts from awareness. Bogart categorizes the popular, "Transcendental meditation" in this category as well as in Yoga Sutras (1990).

Insight meditation also known as *vipassana*. This category contains what many consider as mindfulness training, which is non-judgmental explorations of thoughts, feelings, and sensations in order gain greater insights of the self. (Bogart, 1990). Different types of meditation may be integrated into psychotherapy based on the goals such as "stress reduction, working through difficult emotions or seeking transformative transpersonal experiences" (Bogart, 1990).

Applications of Spirituality

Although recognized with roots in Buddhism (Symington & Symington, 2012), mindfulness practice have been extended not only to secular, non-religious or spiritual but also to different religious traditions. In the literature both Western, namely Christian (Symington & Syminton, 2012; Bingaman, 2011) and Eastern religions have submitted research on contemplative science.

Spirituality assessments has been developed to be used in treatment. Examples of these are Counseling Assessment of Spiritual Well-Being (Ingersoll, 1998 as cited in Franklin, 2010), Shoemaker's mandala drawing "with quadrants devoted to body, mind, emotions and spirit (Dufrene & Shoemaker, 1991 as cited in Franklin, 2010) and Horovitz-Darby's Belief Art Therapy Assessment (1994 as cited in Franklin, 2010).

Art in the Quest for Self-Knowledge

Pat Allen (1995) along with other art therapists [e.g. founders and pioneers of the field such as Naumberg] believes that "art is a means to know the self." In her book, *Art is a Way of Knowing*, Allen describes her process in knowing herself by following her own imagery in her own art. She describes this process as being her "spiritual path."

Shaun McNiff agrees with Allen describing art as "vehicles to understanding" (p. 45) and suggests using art-making to exploring, investigating inquiries and developing understanding, not only for self-development but as far as even academic research itself (1998). This is contrary to popular belief, McNiff states,

In the popular mind, art have been perceived almost exclusively as a way of expressing emotion, as entertainment, and now as healing. It has not been appreciated as a way of knowing and systematically studying human experience and other natural phenomenon (p. 51).

Harriet Wadeson (2003) and others have discussed the benefit to the therapist of creating his or her own art to know the self in reflection to counter-transferences and reactions to clients.

Wadeson writes:

As art therapists, we appreciate the great gift of expression in imagery and the sensual experience of manipulating art materials that we bring to our

clients. We are aware of art's cathartic and soothing potentialities as well as its capacity to enhance insight. We are also cognizant of how making art can enrich not only the lives of our clients, but our own lives as well.

Authors here have found art useful by understanding more of ourselves in general and in relating to clients such as in reflections of counter-transference or response art.

Integrating Contemplative Practice in Art Therapy

Although limited there are case studies and examples of the combination of meditation practice and art making in the art therapy literature. In one example in the literature, Sirrku M. Sky Hiltunen, who was influenced by Eastern (Buddhist, Shinto, and Tao) and Mystic Christianity describes her adaptation of meditative veil painting and her transpersonal experience. Meditative Veil painting is one of many "action meditation" practices in SohKiDo, her trademarked methods (2006). The author believes that this technique, due to its specific action meditation practice, produces,

transpersonally-oriented art to a greater degree than some other visual arts methods. The slow process, the presence in the moment, and the emptying and quieting of one's mind allows material to be unearthed, either from unconscious, conscious, or beyond body/ego consciousness.

Others examples of personal experiences relate to use of art and contemplative practice by application to "contemplative education." In one example, Franklin (2000) describes an experience of an art therapy student.

A student found herself hating the colors brown and yellow. She had no idea why she was experiencing such strong emotion. She was encouraged to pay close attention to her feelings while at the same time to continue painting. Although the urge was to immediately alleviate herself of the pain, she was

told that perhaps such feelings were messengers ready to present something new and revealing to her. Just as in meditation she was encouraged to simply be with her experience. In gently allowing herself to touch uncomfortable sensations, to be with her somatic experience, she began to paint images of a house. Only later did she realize that the colors brown and yellow were the colors of the house she lived in as a child. It was a house, when growing up, where she was very much alone and sad. Later she spoke of having painted the isolation of her childhood, and now the isolation she frequently experienced as an adult (Franklin et al., 2000).

F. Han de Wit (1991, p. 184) discusses the idea of art expression as contemplative action in itself. Several art therapists including Franck (1993 as cited in Franklin, 2010) have reviewed using art as meditative process. Franklin et. al. (2010) trust in art to demonstrate inner process.

Implications for Art Therapy

Within the body of literature, authors in the field have suggested several implications of the use of contemplative practice especially, mindfulness in four arenas. These are implications for the self-care and personal growth of the art therapist, for the treatment of the client specifically, the therapeutic relationship, and how the use of both practices can be beneficial in art therapy education.

Implications for the Art Therapist

There are several implications identified for art therapists having a contemplative practice. For one, it was suggested that having a therapist who has experienced their own transpersonal journey will be better able to assist clients in theirs (Vaughan, 1993 as cited in Franklin et. al). Likewise, a therapist who has established their own meditation practice is likely to see its' value as a therapeutic intervention (Bell, 2009). Bell further suggests there are enhancements made to

intelligence and intuition (2009). Whereas, those of the contemplative psychotherapy approach view the contemplative practice of the therapist as necessary (Trungpa, 2005; Kaklauskas, et. Al., 2008; Wegela, 1994).

Several authors have also suggested that a therapist own mindfulness is beneficial in evaluating art. Related disciplines such as art education have also discussed this. For example, Gradle (2011), while not an art therapist, uses mindfulness in evaluating art in the area of art education.

The general instructions given were: After you settle in to breathing and relaxing, letting go of everything else that is clamoring for your attention, begin to look at the artwork. Notice what draws you into the image first. What do you wonder about as you view the image? What seems marvelous, mysterious, still beyond comprehension, yet curiously fascinating? What delights you or perplexes you? What do you appreciate? What has changed for you in the image since the last time you viewed it? Does anything about the image connect you with your experiences?

Authors from the academic literature note a spectrum from usefulness to necessary for the art therapist in their own experience and in relation to others.

Implications for the Clinical Relationship

Additionally, implications to the therapeutic relationship have been discussed. Bell (2009) contends that therapy “works much better, is more efficient and more effective” when the therapist “brings a clear mind and a settled state of awareness into the room.”

There are several effects that have been identified in the academic literature in regards to benefits for art therapy treatment. These are in the areas of counter-transference and empathy. A study by Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer and Toney (2006, as cited in Franklin, 2010) identified five factors of mindfulness being (1.) acting without reactivity to inner experience, (2.)

observing, noticing and attending to sensations, perceptions, thoughts and feelings, (3.) acting with awareness, automatic pilot, concentration and non-distraction (4.) describing and labeling with words and non-judging experience. According to Franklin, the factors of mindfulness identified in this study are “essential for presence and attunement,” and avoid “cognitive distortions” on the part of the therapist.

(Franklin, 2010) writes about mindful empathic art interventions. In art therapy training a technique developed by Rabin and Walker (1987 as cited in Franklin et. al., 2010) is taught at to students. This technique is called the body-speech-mind practiced used to allow student to be better observers and develop empathy to “experience their clients as ‘people’ and not ‘cases.’

Positive implications of combining contemplative practice in art therapy have been found to include empathic, therapeutic relationship through more awareness around counter-transference and enhanced attunement.

As Treatment for Clients

As discussed, there are implications for art therapy applying to the art therapist, the therapeutic relationship and also as treatment interventions with clients. For example, a study resulting from conference with the H.H. Dalai Lama, pondering the secular use of mindfulness meditation for treatment of psychological disorders (Kenneny, Foltz, Cullen, Cavanagh, Giese Davis, Jennings, Resenber, Gillath, Shaver, Wallace and Ekman, 2011). The study concluded that a contemplative program combined with emotional psychoeducation was successful in reducing negative emotional behavior, therefore increasing emotional regulation and promoted pro-social behavior namely compassion. Contemplative practice consisted of three categories including concentration, mindfulness and directive practices, and as the study suggests the integration of

contemplative practices into psychotherapy will be beneficial as well as secular versions of Buddhist teachings.

The founder and director of UCLA's Mindfulness Research Center have redefined contemplative practices as "Mindful Awareness Practices" or "MAPs." Through much research, the researchers have found mindfulness practices shown as ways in "reducing stress, reducing chronic physical pain, boosting the body's immune system to fight disease, coping with painful life events, such as the death of a loved one or major illness, dealing with negative emotions like anger, fear, and greed, increasing self-awareness to detect harmful reactive patterns of thought, feeling, and action, improving attention or concentration, enhancing positive emotions, including happiness and compassion, increasing interpersonal skills and relationships, reducing addictive behaviors, such as eating disorders, alcoholism, and smoking, enhancing performance, whether in work, sports, or academics, stimulating and releasing creativity, changing positively the actual structure of our brains (Smalley & Winston, 2010).

As these authors have suggested, contemplative practices and a spectrum of related techniques may also be useful in direct treatments.

Conclusion

This review of the literature has examined the foundations of contemplative approaches and the subject of mindfulness practice including relationship with transpersonal and Buddhist traditions. Similarly, the integration of contemplation practice and reflective art making for personal growth was reviewed. The combination of these concepts in including reflective art making in a contemplative practice was reviewed including its implications for art therapy, for the therapist, the therapeutic relationship and within treatment for the client.

Suggestions for Further Study

There is limited literature available to this researcher in combining the practice of contemplative psychology, especially that following a Buddhist philosophy, with that of a reflective art practice to facilitate knowing one's self. Further study in this area will be helpful for individuals especially art therapists for their personal explorations and professional relationships with themselves and their clients.

Research Approach

This research approach blended several schools of thought, including contemplative psychotherapy theory as well as a Buddhist spiritual lens and mind body connection. Additionally, the integration of research approaches including those of phenomenological approach, existentialism, and arts-based research.

First, the approach to research included a spirituality-based lens, Buddhist in thought with a blend of psychological understand. This leads perfectly to contemplative psychotherapy theory. Contemplative psychotherapy has been described as a combination of “joining of individual and interpersonal disciplines: bringing personal contemplative practice to the clinical practice of psychotherapy” (Wegela, 1994). In this theory of psychotherapy, rooted in Buddhist and Shambala traditions, emphasizes the natural, healthy state of being is that of “brilliant sanity” (Wegela, 1994).” An understanding in this basic concept, allow one to evaluate the essential goal of this research, was to return to a peaceful, clear state of mind.

The use of the contemplative practice of meditation in this study, in theory, uses the framework of mind-body connection. The idea of mind-body connection is used in psychological as well as other related disciplines including integrative medicine. The mind-body connection views the mind or psyche and the body as connected in such a way that one influences the other and vice versa. Becoming aware of somatic experience as related to mental thought processes aids in healing and is the basis for several mind-body based alternative therapies such as yoga, meditation, self-regulatory therapies (Price and Thompson, 2007). This framework provides the understanding that physical changes through changes in the mind. From this standpoint, changes in the mind used in this study, such an intention and practice to quiet the mind, focusing on the

present moment, or training to mix with a virtuous concept lead to changes even to the extent in neural pathways in the brain and therefore alleviation of pathological problems.

As many of the concepts in Buddhism also relate to existentialism, this researcher is also influenced by classical philosophy and existentialism. To provide a discussion of existential philosophy is not within appropriate scope, however, it may be important to discuss general notes. In looking at existentialism in this context, Hoffman (as cited in Kaklauskas, 2008) states that existentialism basically seeks to identify universal human struggles. From a psychotherapeutic perspective, clinicians such as Bradford seek to apply principles to practice. According to Bradford, “applied philosophy is at its therapeutic best when it aims at self-knowledge practiced as reflection on the tacit assumptions of one’s self and world constructs (2007).

As part of this research looks at art as a way of knowing oneself, it is apropos that this approach will include art-based research, a phenomenological approach and qualitative case-study of the self.

Arts-based research uses the art and art process to lead to better understanding of professional and academic inquiry (McNiff, 1998). In this research, art products and process were used in this way to examine the experience of meditation sessions and extract meanings in order better know the self and provide insight to the three-fold research inquiry.

Therefore, a phenomenological approach was well suited. The phenomenological approach empathizes not the interpretation of another, such as the art therapist but seeks to explore a personal narrative and extract meaning (Quail and Peavy, 1994).

This research study will not include a heuristic approach because research does not adhere to predefined heuristic procedure. A qualitative self-study will allow for rich depth of

information that many not be available through quantitative methods. This in turn allows greater freedom in examining topics of greatest personal meaning.

Methods

This research was a time-bound qualitative self-study over the course of six weeks utilizing an arts-based, phenomenological, existential research approach using the lens of Buddhist thought and contemplative methods commonly integrated in contemplative psychotherapy theory.

Traditional sitting meditations were introduced to my daily experience at the rate of 5-7 hours per week and were structured in the following format:

First, a timer chimed to begin an approximately 5 minute breathing meditation. After breathing meditation, segue into focused meditation on clear mind or other Buddhist concept as needed based on the themes arising in the meditation. For example, thoughts encountered about grief and loss may have been explored through a meditation on impermanence. In some cases, to accomplish this, a guide was used to inform such topics of meditation. If so objects of meditation were taken from *The Meditation Handbook*, or *The New Meditation Handbook* by G.K. Gyatso. At the end of at least 35 minutes the timer sounded (gong) ending the meditation.

After each meditation an art piece may or may not have been made, with at least one per week. Notes on meditation experience may also have been taken through use of the daily log.

Throughout each day, an entry was made in order to track the following areas: Significant events of day, diet, sleep, level of anxiety, stress, energy, mood, level of mindful awareness, and any notes regarding mindful connection with clients in practicum setting.

After the six-week period, themes from all art works were extracted and organized into a matrix both horizontally and vertically. Process mediation notes and daily log entries were also integrated into the matrix to evaluate contributions to wellness and to track progress by looking at other variables in the process.

The meanings and depth of new self-knowledge based were explored. All findings were written into discussion section.

Definition of Terms

contemplation: (1.) a. concentration on spiritual things as a form of private devotion; b: a state of mystical awareness of God's being (2.) an act of considering with attention, study; (3.) the act of regarding steadily (Merriam-Webster Online).

meditation: (1.) discourse intended to express its author's reflections or to guide others in contemplation (2.) the act or process of meditating (Merriam-Webster Online)
Private religious devotion or mental exercise, in which techniques of concentration and contemplation are used to reach a heightened level of spiritual awareness. The practice has existed in all religions since ancient times. In Hinduism it has been systematized in the school of YOGA. One aspect of Yoga, *dhyana* (Sanskrit: “concentrated meditation”), gave rise to a school of its own among the Buddhists, becoming the basis of ZEN. In many religions, meditation involves verbal or mental repetition of a single syllable, word, or text (e.g., a MANTRA). Visual images (e.g., a MANDALA) or mechanical devices such as PRAYER WHEELS or ROSARIES can be useful in focusing concentration. In the 20th century, movements such as TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION emerged to teach meditation techniques outside a religious context (concise encyclopedia, Merriam-Webster Online).

spirituality: (1.) something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such (2.) clergy, (3.) sensitivity or attachment to religious values (4.) the quality or state of being spiritual (Merriam-Webster Online)

mindfulness: (1.) bearing in mind, aware (2.) inclined to be aware (Merriam-Webster)

Buddhism: religion of eastern and central Asia growing out of the teaching of Gautama Buddha that suffering is inherent in life and that one can be liberated from it by mental and moral self-purification (Merriam-Webster Online)

art therapy: Art therapy is a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art

making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. Research in the field confirms that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to become more physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy and functional, resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behavior, reduce stress, handle life adjustments, and achieve insight.

(American Art Therapy Association)

mandala: (1.) a Hindu or Buddhist graphic symbol of the universe; *specifically:* a circle enclosing a square with a deity on each side that is used chiefly as an aid to meditation
(2.) a graphic and often symbolic pattern usually in the form of a circle divided into four separate sections or bearing a multiple projection of an image (Merriam-Webster Online)

wellness : the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal
(Merriam-Webster Online)

Design of Study

The goal of this study was to explore contemplative practice and art marking for the art therapist and further application to clinical work in the field of art therapy. Overall, there were three tiers of interest and inquiry around these topics.

The top level aim of this research was to explore contemplative practice and the benefits to wellbeing. As the reader may recall, the journey to this research in the graduate program included the desire to combine contemplative practice as a component to graduate learning and reflection, to benefit my personal and professional life. Therefore, as the nature of this research was based in in-depth personal reflection, the natural choice was to complete a self-study.

In order to accomplish this, a six week self-study was designed to go from a baseline of 0 hours of formal practice per week to 5-7 hours per week. The 5-7 hour determinant came from the literature as cited in Franklin (2000). This is the requirement for graduate students at Naropa University to enhance self-knowledge, academic learning experience and better connect with clients in psychotherapy.

In choosing a contemplative practice, a formal sitting meditation was chosen. This researcher has used formal sitting meditations previously in past practices and is familiar with the format. The breakdown of components of the sitting meditation will be further discussed in later sections.

To determine and measure wellbeing and subtopics of interest, such as self-awareness, effect on stress and other pathologies, namely anxiety and depression. A daily log was created track perceived experiences using a Likert type scale. A sample worksheet is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Week of:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Hours of sleep:	(((((((((((((((((((((
Significant Happenings/Daily Notes:							
Stress Level:	(((((((((((((((((((((
Depression Level:	(((((((((((((((((((((
Anxiety Level:	(((((((((((((((((((((
Mindfulness:	(((((((((((((((((((((
Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes:							
Meditation Notes:							

Table 1

Also tracked in the log included areas of interest based in the second tier of inquiry, namely questions regarding how a clinician's regular contemplative practice can enhance the therapeutic relationship in art therapy. Furthermore, as many therapists are increasingly including mindfulness practices in therapy, another question arises, being "how can we better understand the implications of recommending such a practice or aspects of a practice such as mindfulness training to a client?" To address these questions, a section in the worksheet is dedicated to evidence of notable client interactions in relation to contemplative psychotherapy framework or helpful interventions.

On the third level of inquiry, this research sought to review how the art-making could enhance this process such as gaining greater insights or as part of a contemplative practice in itself. To address this area, the design of the study centered around weekly art-making reflecting on the meditation of that day. Data taken in this method was later analyzed horizontally and vertically to extract themes and derive meaning from the practice.

Sampling

This research will be a self-study and therefore will not require outside participants. It may be important to note demographic information. At the time of this study, this researcher was a 28-29 year old Caucasian woman in the second year of art therapy graduate program. This researcher identifies as heterosexual, partnered, of middle-class socioeconomic status and identifying as a non-religious Buddhist.

As part of the graduate program, the researcher was involved in a 20-hour per week practicum traineeship at a local outpatient clinic seeing children and families for individual and

family art therapy. Additionally, this researcher maintained flexible employment varying from 2 to 6 hours per week.

Gathering of Data

Data-gathering in this study was collected in two ways. First, several areas were logged daily to evaluate pertinent events of the day, stress levels, awareness, and other variables that could impact findings. The log form was prefabricated and printed for easier accessibility in order to better ensure consistency.

Second, art was created at the culmination of every week to further explore inner experience during the meditation sessions. Over the course of six weeks, six pieces of art were utilized to analyze findings.

Analysis of Data

Data from the art was categorized and analyzed both vertically and horizontally by formal elements, art process and symbolic content. Data taken from the artwork was cross analyzed by log entries. Themes that emerged were extricated and informed meanings.

Results

Presentation of Data

The art works created at the end of each week are illustrated below along with a narrative summary of each piece.



Figure 1

After the first week, the art piece pictured in Figure 1 was created. The piece is mixed media created with a magazine image, covered with pastel overlay. The overlay has color emanating from the center in the following order: white, yellow, pink, lavender purple, and pale blue. On top of the image is line drawing of a heart created with pencil, then pen and ink. The heart sits atop a wire wreath created from wire threading. The main image is laid over a digital image on tracing paper. The printed image was created by merging two images of a blue moon and fetus in utero selected from Google Images and manipulated using Adobe Photoshop.

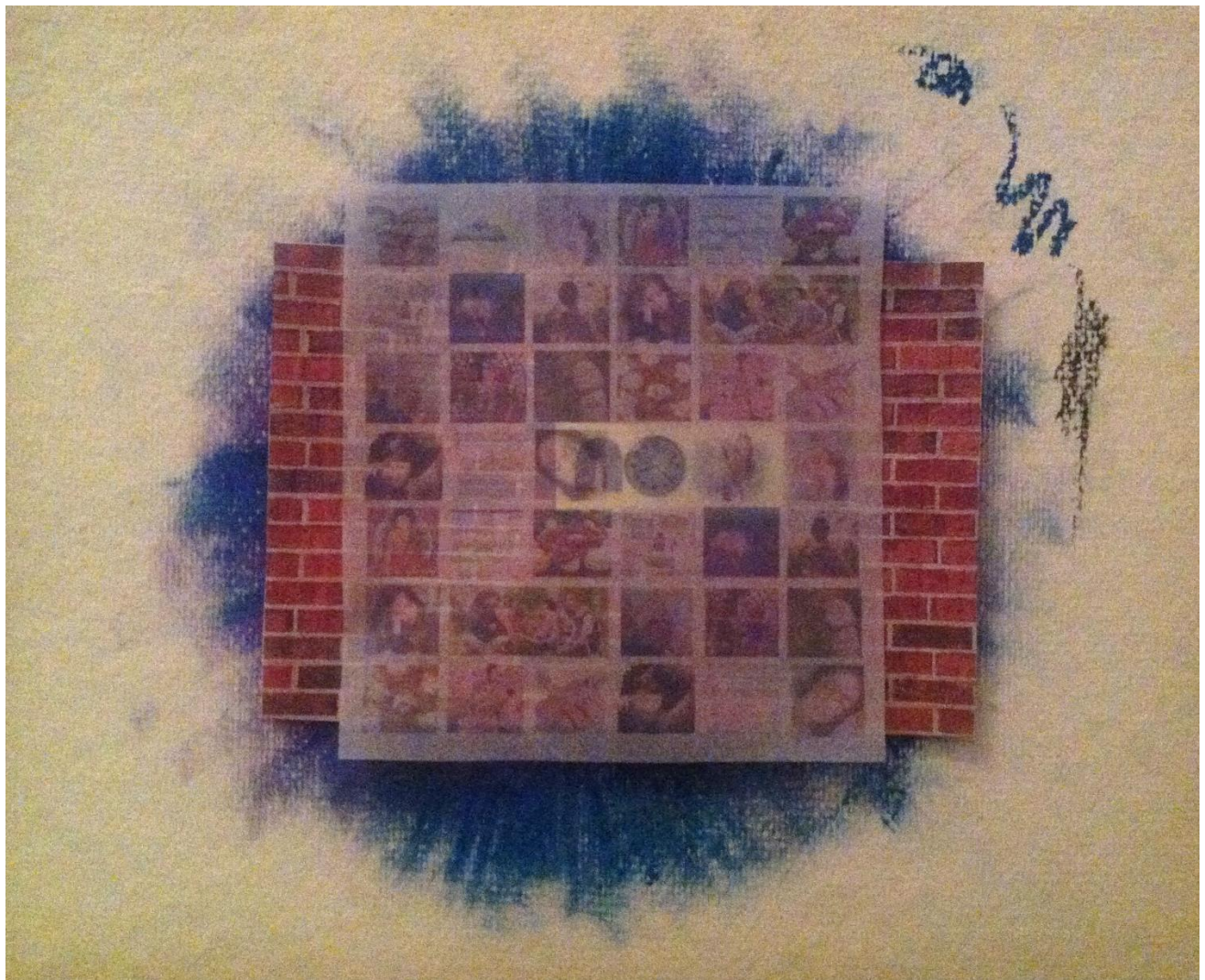


Figure 2



Figure 3

After the second week, the art piece pictured in Figure 2 and 3 was created. The piece is mixed media and comprised of several layers. The top layer contains images symbolic of themes in transient thoughts during the mediation which were selected from Google Images. The small images were cropped and arranged in pattern. The pattern of images was then printed on tracing paper. The second component of the brick wall was created by selecting a brick wall image from Google Images and cutting it to create two opening flaps. Cardboard pieces were cut to size and glued to the brick wall image in order to create depth. The background image was created using a carefully trimmed heart image taken from Google Images. Oil pastels were used to create color emanating from the center in the following order: rich yellow, fuchsia, indigo and deep purple.

The brick window is placed on top and opens to reveal the heart underneath. The doors of the brick wall are overlaid with the tracing paper image and another image created using Microsoft Word reading “now” and colored yellow in the background. Incidentally, when lined up the clock image on tracing paper image aligns with the “O” from the “now.” This piece was left unsecured to the base.

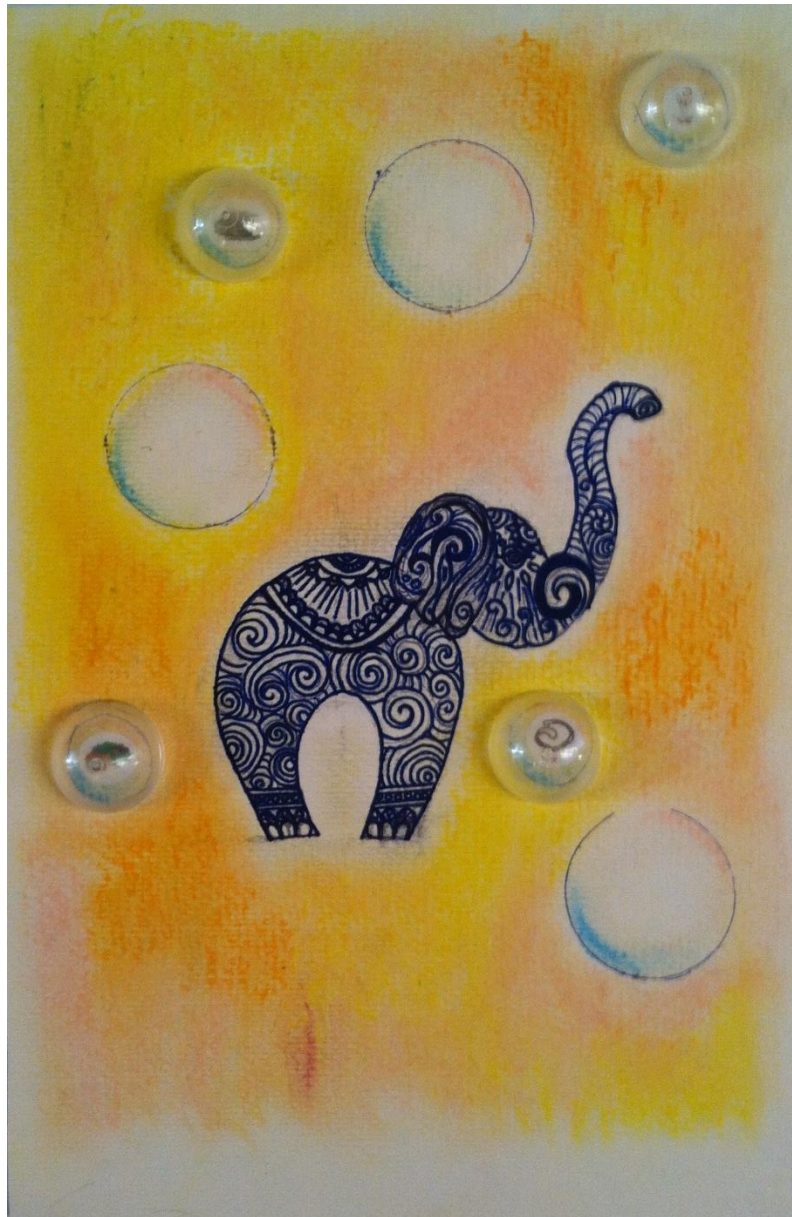


Figure 4

The piece created the third week, “Taming the Wild Elephant” (Figure 4) is a stylized white elephant in pen and ink. The background is created in chalk pastel using yellow, pink and some orange. Bubbles were create holding images representing themes from transient thoughts arising during the meditation session immediately prior to art making session. The smaller bubbles containing the images are overlaid with plastic half-spheres to create depth.

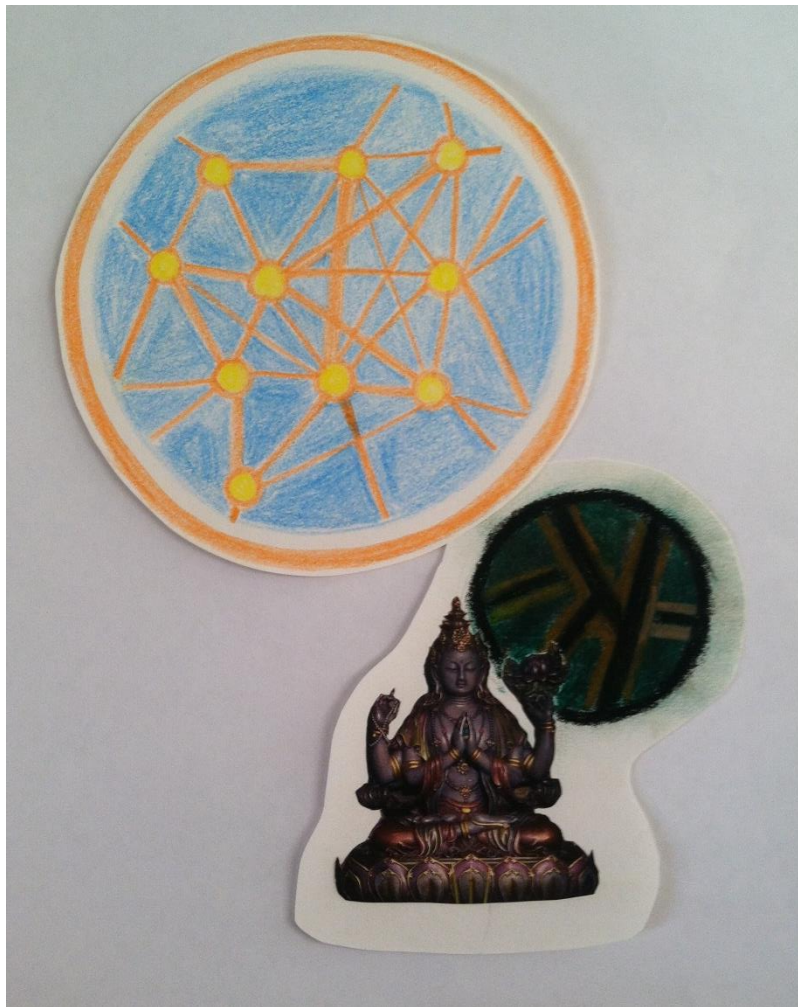


Figure 5

After the fourth week, the following two pieces (Figure 5) were constructed. The first collage image was carefully selected and cut, then pasted to drawing paper. The mandala to the right of

the image detailed colors of green, rust and black from oil pastels. The larger separate mandala features connections in orange between small yellow circles against a blue background. The pieces are free-floating and unsecured.



Figure 6

Fifth image, illustrated in Figure 6, began as a line drawing of lotus flowers inspired by art from a local artist. The pencil drawing was overlaid with chalk pastels in white, yellow orange and pink. The lotus flowers were then outlined in regular and fine tipped Sharpie marker. The main flower is located on the bottom right and is differentiated from the others by lighter coloration. Some of the pencil has been left intentionally.



Figure 7

The final piece shown here in Figure 7, was constructed around an image of a lotus flower with a heart shaped front petal and light emanating from the center. This image came from the inside label of a plastic water bottle. The art piece has three layers. The center image sits atop a round mosaic constructed from small squares cut from blue, indigo and black magazine pages. The center images is surrounded by rays of yellow toned collage strips cut from magazine pages. Bamboo skewers with the tips cut were interspersed and adhered to the center image by hot glue.



Figure 8

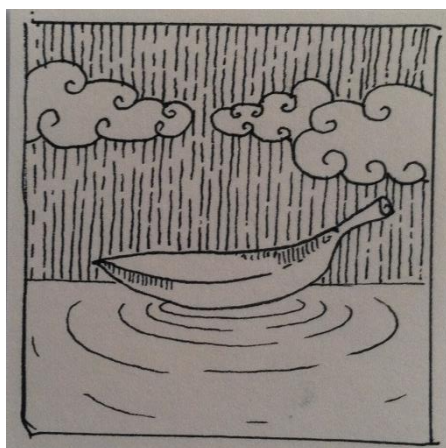



Figure 9

After some of the meditation sessions as part of the 5-7 hours, art was created in the form of “zentangle” (not pictured) or drawings in zentangle squares after meaningful imagery arised during the meditations. Such imagery prompted Figures 8 and 9 which serve as a sample of these pieces. Figure 8 features the figure of the bodhisattva Jizo, and the style inspired by another artist. Figure 9 stemmed from a quote held as part of contemplation during the meditation that night. The portion of the quote being, “When water is turbulent it clouds our ability to see what lies beneath it. When water is clear, it lets us see right through it to the bottom of a pond” p.35 (Wegela, 1994). Each drawing was created in fine tipped marker.

Analysis of Data


Analysis of the art pieces was collected and first categorized vertically. These categories included (1.) formal elements such as space or composition, color, and line equality (2.) the art process which includes the way in which the art was created (3.) media choice and materials used (4.) symbolism which describes the images and content of the pieces. Additionally, data taken from the logs was synthesized and integrated as averages. The logs recorded daily amount of sleep, significant daily events, stress, anxiety and depression levels, mindfulness, and

meditation notes to track elements of wellness. The results from the analysis are illustrated in the following tables.

Week 1		
		
Categories	Data	Notes
Formal Elements:	<p>Color: Dark Blue Base, Radiating Color sequence: white center, yellow, pink, lavender, light blue</p> <p>Layering, 3-D elements</p>	
Art Process:	<p>Phase 1: Started by sketching elements of meditation. Created heart first sketched in pencil, then went over in Sharpie pen, leaving pencil lines in.</p> <p>Phase 2: Looked through magazines to choose meditative image, used colors to radiate from root chakra (core, stomach area of the figure). Colors are in order from white (center), yellow, pink, lavender, blue. Went over entire figure to minimize unique features of the model.</p> <p>Phase 3: For background, returned to a previous project in combining the two images of the fetus and the blue moon. Had previously collected the blue moon image from Google Images, searched for fetus image to fit the contours of the moon image. These were merged, changed level of transparency and</p>	

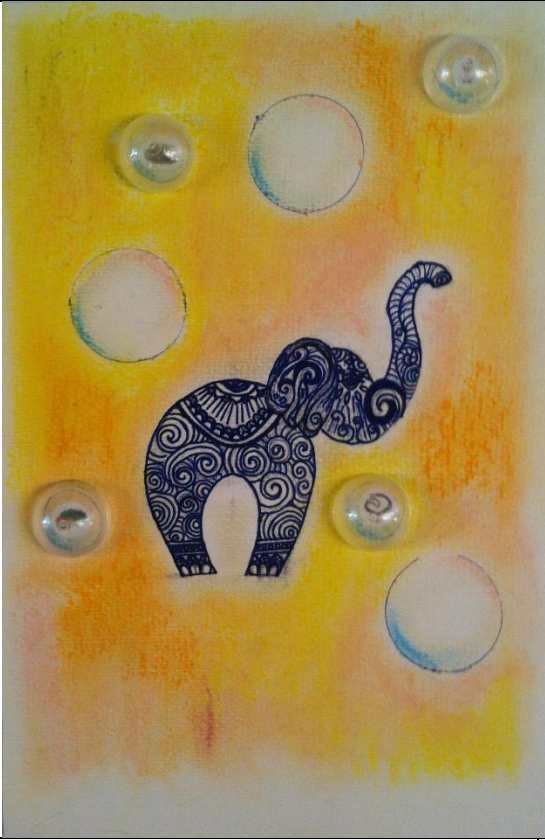
	<p>removed background. This was printed on tracing paper meant to be placed on top of a rope drawing underneath but this was visually unsatisfactory and so was omitted.</p> <p>Phase 4: Searched for material in home suitable coming out from heart. Spent at least half hour fashioning piece from thin jewelry wire. Repetitive process.</p>	
Materials:	Metal wire, drawing paper (some tooth), pencil, Sharpie pen, collage image, oil pastel, collage images (fetus and moon) from Google Images printed on tracing paper)	
Symbolism:	Fetus, moon, meditative figure, heart, radiation of light color, radiation of sharp, dark material, missing background/grounding	
Living Data:	<p>Hours of sleep: 5 hours (average)</p> <p>Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Not significant</p> <p>Stress Level: 4 (average)</p> <p>Depression Level: 3 (average)</p> <p>Anxiety Level: 4 (average)</p> <p>Mindfulness: 2 (average)</p> <p>Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: Not significant</p> <p>Meditation Notes: High levels of anxiety, body discomfort. Urge to stretch and adjust. Paranoia involving environment.</p> <p>Thoughts about material objects to make mediation more comfortable.</p> <p>Warm peace, pink yellow relaxation</p> <p>Increased comments about relaxation during mid-week to later week.</p> <p>Pressure to create beautiful art for project.</p>	

Table 2

Week 2		
		
Categories	Data	Notes
Formal Elements:	<p>Color: Heart in black and white, google image anatomical drawing; radiating color from center: yellow, plum, dark blue and indigo</p> <p>Circle/mandala. Scribbles left on paper.</p> <p>Layering, movement. Piece was left unsecured.</p> <p>Accidental coordination of the “o” in “now” and clock image line up exactly.</p>	
Art Process:	<p>Phase 1: Began by sketching idea of heart, emanating light, under bricks and now in center.</p> <p>Phase 2: Searched Google Images for anatomical heart drawing, copied then sized, printed and cut.</p> <p>Phase 3: Created mandala of color from yellow toward indigo and purple, taking time to blend and using more pressure and material than usual. Resisting against using “too much” material. Scribbled to test color.</p> <p>Phase 4: Contemplated on transient thoughts that emerged during meditation. Selected an image for each and fashioned into pattern grid. This grid was then printed on tracing paper.</p> <p>Phase 5: Searched Google Images for brick wall, created “now” word in a favorite font, similar to a brand of vitamins I had recently been taking. Printed these images and constructed wall window. Added depth by cutting and</p>	

	adhering cardboard strips. Patterned grid and now where placed and glued to the wall window, allowing to overlap and movement of the hinges.	
Materials:	Watercolor paper (tooth), oil pastels, google images printed on white paper and tracing paper, oil pastels, cardboard	
Symbolism:	Brick wall, radiating color, heart, now, stressors: stack of books with top open, meditation cushions, woman showering, Tibetan Buddha image, Microsoft Outlook Calendar screen-shot, mala beads, office desk, two young women embracing at school graduation, woman with tea looking away, saddened woman looking downward, college students on lawn in discourse, child creating art, mizuko kuyo Jizo, small solitary Jizo statue, crumbled papers, pink cupcakes, hand holding cell phone, intimate couple, Microsoft Word screen shot, woman sleeping, wall clock, fully-clothed woman with bright energy in yoga clothes	
Living Data:	Hours of sleep: 5 hours (average)	
	Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Days in which deadlines approached resulted in higher levels of anxiety. Deadlines that were not met results in higher levels of depression in the follow days.	
	Stress Level: 4 (average)	
	Depression Level: 3 (average)	
	Anxiety Level: 4 (average)	
	Mindfulness: 3 (average)	
	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: Reports of increased mindfulness throughout the day by remembering the art	
	Meditation Notes: Contemplation on root of anxiety, procrastination, self-cherishing. Felt disappointed in realization of relatedness, worry of poor reflection and therefore self-concept. Focusing on compassion to self and others Trust in self Anxiety over assignments Self-cherishing as root of suffering Barriers, loving fearlessly	

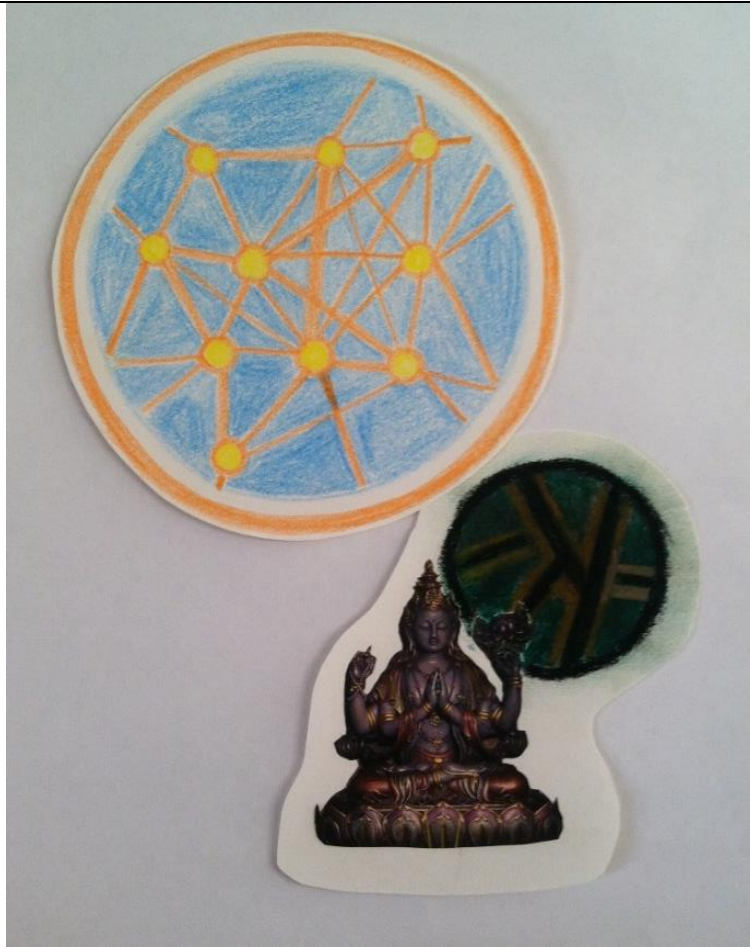
Table 3

Week 3		
		
Categories	Data	Notes
Formal Elements:	Yellow, pink background White elephant with detail in blue ink Clear plastic bubble halves Bubbles distributed evenly with elephant centered	
Art Process:	Phase 1: Spent much time conceptualizing style of elephant. Went through a few sketches. Drafted elephant in pencil then went over with pen. Became frustrated in not having the materials I wanted, blamed partner. Became apathetic, drew bubbles in ink. Filled in background and colors in bubbles. Phase 2: Searched and chose images for inside of bubbles and sized to fit. Phase 3: During the week searched for plastic bubble halves and placed without adhering.	
Materials:	Watercolor paper Chalk pastels Google images printed on white paper Pencil, pen and later fine tip Sharpie marker Plastic bubble halves	
Symbolism:	Elephant “Zentangle” designs on inside Google Images of healthy food, mala beads, books and woman in yoga pose	
Living Data:	Hours of sleep: 5 hours (average)	

	Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Days in which deadlines approached resulted in higher levels of anxiety. Deadlines that were not met results in higher levels of depression in the follow days.	
	Stress Level: 4 (average)	
	Depression Level: 3 (average)	
	Anxiety Level: 4 (average)	
	Mindfulness: 3 (average); notes of forgetfulness during one day	
	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: At times, moments of clear attunement	
	Meditation Notes: Preoccupied with health beginning Theme of emptiness Silent observer Prior to mediation found difficulty to be motivated, uncharacteristic of prior weeks Feeling anxious and avoidant Transient thoughts are intrusive like “training a wild elephant”	

Table 4


Week 4



Categories	Data	Notes
Formal Elements:	Circular, mandala Dark range of colors: deep purple, dark green, rust, black Light colors: light blue, yellow, orange	
Art Process	Phase 1: Sketched out rough ideas of piece. Phase 2: Delicately cut out figure from catalogue and adhered to paper. Then created mandala to the right of the figure. After mandala was created cut out the piece. Phase 3: Created Larger mandala on separate paper and cut out.	
Materials	Collage images Colored pencil Oil pastels	
Symbolism	Deity with many arms, purple tone Lines in green, black, rust Lines in blue, yellow and orange	Death, impermanence Interconnectedness
Living Data	Hours of sleep: 5 hours (average)	
	Significant Happenings/Daily Notes:	
	Stress Level: 4 (average)	
	Depression Level: 3 (average)	

	Anxiety Level: 4 (average)	
	Mindfulness: 3 (average)	
	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: Not significant	
	Meditation Notes: Self-grasping Missing and loneliness Anxious about deadlines Jizo, reflecting on losses Connection with others Impermanence	

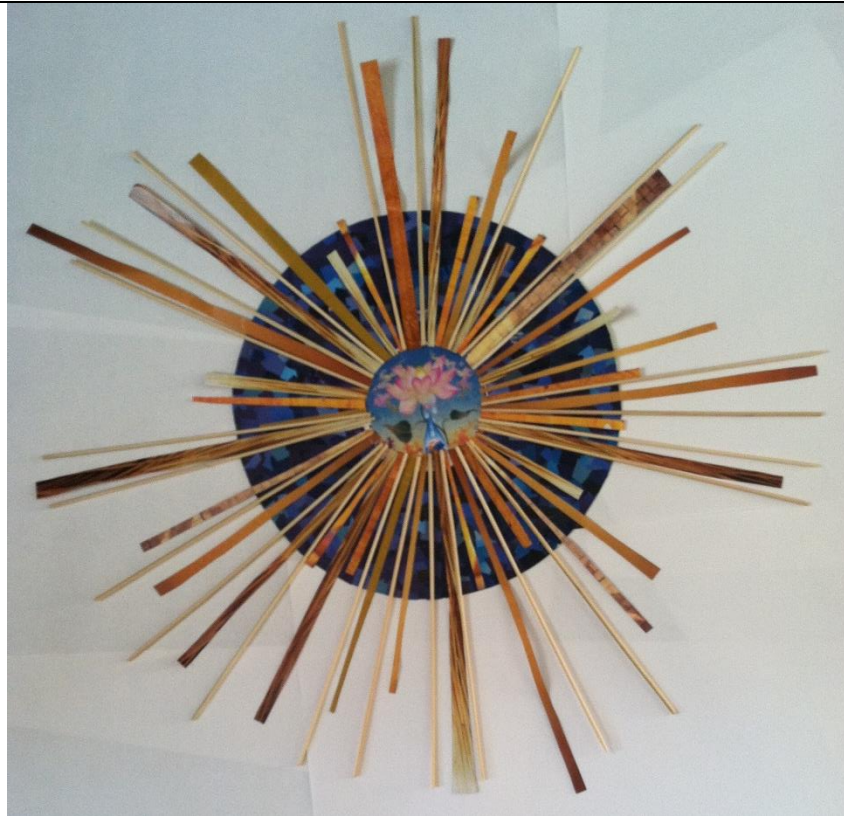
Table 5

Week 5		
		
Categories	Data	Notes
Formal Elements:	<p>Circular-mandala shape</p> <p>Entire piece is of color</p> <p>Delicate transition from lights in main lotus to yellow, orange and pink</p> <p>Thick black lines define lotus flowers, thin lines define details</p>	Line quality and this style was my media and favorite medium before program, most comfortable
Art Process	Began with circle outline, Drafted lotus flowers roughly in pencil. Went over in chalk pastels using white to highlight particular flower. Spent much time detailing and paid attention to line quality.	
Materials	<p>Drawing paper (some tooth)</p> <p>Chalk pastels</p> <p>Pencil</p> <p>Fine tip Sharpie Marker</p>	
Symbolism	<p>Mandala</p> <p>Four Lotus flowers</p> <p>Containing line</p>	
Living Data	Hours of sleep: 5 hours (average)	
	Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Not significant	
	Stress Level: 3 (average)	
	Depression Level: 1 (average)	
	Anxiety Level: 3 (average)	
	Mindfulness: 3 (average)	

	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: On days with lower stress level, anxiety and depression also low. Felt more confident in session, connected with Clients and formed more creative interventions and variety of materials.	
	Meditation Notes: Peace and clarity Calm Self-acceptance	

Table 6







Week 6



Categories	Data	Notes
Formal Elements:	Circular-mandala shape in center image, background, radial pieces Sharps (although trimmed) Dark colored mosaic background	
Art Process:	<p>Phase 1: Striped label from bottle and adhered to white paper. Then using a template cut image in shape of a circle.</p> <p>Phase 2: Using magazines searched for golden toned pages and cut into strips. The strips were then arranged and adhered to the image. Bamboo skewers were then used to fill in spaces and frame larger golden strips.</p> <p>Phase 3: Mosaic was created by using a template to cut a large circle from segment of poster board. Then searching through magazines for blue colored pages. Sections from the pages were cut into small pieces, mostly squares. The process of arranging, layering, and adhering mosaic pieces was repetitive, soothing and meditative. The components were then layered and glued into one art piece.</p>	
Materials:	<p>Inside of water bottle label</p> <p>Bamboo skewers</p> <p>Radial collage strips in yellow tones cut from magazines</p> <p>Dark blue collage pieces cut from magazines</p> <p>Poster board remnant</p>	

Symbolism:	Lotus with heart shaped leaf and radiating center from yellow to white Leaves Water Earth has been omitted	
Living Data:	Hours of sleep: 5 hours (average)	
	Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Not significant	
	Stress Level: 3 (average)	
	Depression Level: 2 (average)	
	Anxiety Level: 3 (average)	
	Mindfulness: 3 (average)	
	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: More mindful interventions, connection and response in therapeutic relationship	
	Meditation Notes: Love fiercely and without fear Thinking of experience in Temescal (sweat lodge) in Mexico. Create space to recognize delusions and fear, compassion to others Protecting self from harm from others, just as would treat others Abundance of love	

Table 7

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Thumbnail						
Formal Elements	Color: Dark Blue Base, Radiating Color sequence: white center, yellow, pink, lavender, light blue Layering, 3-D elements	Color: Heart in black and white, google image anatomical drawing; radiating color from center: yellow, plum, dark blue and indigo Circle/mandala. Scribbles left on paper. Layering, movement. Piece was left unsecured. Accidental coordination of the "o" in "now" and clock image line up exactly.	Yellow, pink background White elephant with detail in blue ink Clear plastic bubble halves Bubbles distributed evenly with elephant centered	Circular, mandala Dark range of colors: deep purple, dark green, rust, black Light colors: light blue, yellow, orange	Circular-mandala shape Entire piece is of color Delicate transition from lights in main lotus to yellow, orange and pink Thick black lines define lotus flowers, thin lines define details	Circular-mandala shape in center image, background, radial pieces Sharps (although trimmed) Dark colored mosaic background
Art Process	Phase 1: Started by sketching elements of meditation. Created heart first sketched in pencil, then went over in Sharpie pen, leaving pencil lines in.	Phase 1: Began by sketching idea of heart, emanating light, under bricks and now in center. Phase 2: Searched Google Images for anatomical heart drawing, copied then sized, printed and cut.	Phase 1: Spent much time conceptualizing style of elephant. Went through a few sketches. Drafted elephant in pencil the went over with pen. Became frustrated in not having the materials I wanted, blamed partner. Became apathetic, drew bubbles in ink.	Phase 1: Sketched out rough ideas of piece. Phase 2: Delicately cut out figure from catalogue and adhered to paper. Then created mandala to the right of the figure. After created, cut out	Began with circle outline, drafted lotus flowers roughly in pencil. Went over in chalk pastels using white to highlight particular flower. Spent much time detailing and paid attention to line quality.	Phase 1: Striped label from bottle and adhered to white paper. Then using a template cut image in shape of a circle. Phase 2: Using magazines searched for golden toned pages and cut into strips. The strips were then arranged and

<p>Phase 2: Looked through magazines to choose meditative image, used colors to radiate from root chakra (core, stomach are of the figure). Colors are in order from white (center), yellow, pink, lavender, blue. Went over entire figure to minimize unique features of the model.</p> <p>Phase 3: For background, returned to a previous project in combining the two images of the fetus and the blue moon. Had previously collected the blue moon image from Google Images, searched for fetus image to fit the contours of the moon image. These were merged, changed level of transparency and removed background. This was printed on tracing paper meant to be placed on top of a rope drawing underneath but this was visually unsatisfactory and so was omitted.</p> <p>Phase 4: Searched for material in home suitable coming out from heart. Spent at least half hour fashioning piece from thin</p>	<p>Phase 3: Created mandala of color from yellow toward indigo and purple, taking time to blend and using more pressure and material than usual. Resisting against using "too much" material. Scribbled to test color.</p> <p>Phase 4: Contemplated on transient thoughts that emerged during meditation. Selected an image for each and fashioned into pattern grid. This grid was then printed on tracing paper.</p> <p>Phase 5: Searched Google Images for brick wall, created "now" word in a favorite font, similar to a brand of vitamins I had recently been taking. Printed these images and constructed wall window. Added depth by cutting and adhering cardboard strips. Patterned grid and now where placed and glued to the wall window, allowing to overlap and movement of the hinges.</p>	<p>Filled in background and colors in bubbles.</p> <p>Phase 2: Searched and chose images for inside of bubbles and sized to fit.</p> <p>Phase 3: During the week searched for plastic bubble halves and placed without adhering.</p>	<p>the piece.</p> <p>Phase 3: Created Larger mandala on separate paper and cut out.</p>	<p>adhered to the image. Bamboo skewers were then used to fill in spaces and frame larger golden strips.</p> <p>Phase 3: Mosaic was created by using a template to cut a large circle from segment of poster board, then searching through magazines for blue colored pages. Sections from the pages were cut into small pieces, mostly squares. The process of arranging, layering, and adhering mosaic pieces was repetitive, soothing and meditative. The components were then layered and glued into one art piece.</p>
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	jewelry wire. Repetitive process.					
Materials	Metal wire, drawing paper (some tooth), pencil, Sharpie pen, collage image, oil pastel, collage images (fetus and moon) from Google Images printed on tracing paper)	Watercolor paper (tooth), oil pastels, google images printed on white paper and tracing paper, oil pastels, cardboard	Watercolor paper, chalk pastels, Google images printed on white paper, pencil, pen and later fine tip, Sharpie marker, plastic bubble halves	Collage images, colored pencil, oil pastels	Drawing paper (some tooth), chalk pastels, pencil, fine tip, Sharpie marker	Inside of water bottle label, bamboo skewers, radial collage strips in yellow tones cut from magazines. dark blue collage pieces cut from magazines, poster board remnant
	Fetus, moon, meditative figure, heart, radiation of light color, radiation of sharp, dark material, missing background/grounding	Brick wall, radiating color, heart, now, stressors: stack of books with top open, meditation cushions, woman showering, Tibetan Buddha image, Microsoft Outlook Calendar screen-shot, mala beads, office desk, two young women embracing at school graduation, woman with tea looking away, saddened woman looking downward, college students on lawn in discourse, child creating art, mizuko kuyo Jizo, small solitary Jizo statue, crumbled papers, pink cupcakes, hand holding cell phone, intimate couple, Microsoft Word screen shot, woman sleeping, wall	Elephant "Zentangle" designs on inside Google Images of healthy food, mala beads, books and woman in yoga pose	Deity with many arms, purple tone Lines in green, black, rust Lines in blue, yellow and orange	Mandala Four Lotus flowers Containing line	Lotus with heart shaped leaf and radiating center from yellow to white Leaves Water Earth has been omitted
Symbolism						

Living Data		clock, fully-clothed woman with bright energy in yoga clothes					
	Hours of sleep: 5 Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Not significant	Hours of sleep: 5 Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Days in which deadlines approached resulted in higher levels of anxiety. Deadlines that were not met results in higher levels of depression in the follow days.	Hours of sleep: 5 Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Days in which deadlines approached resulted in higher levels of anxiety. Deadlines that were not met results in higher levels of depression in the follow days.	Hours of sleep: 5 Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Not significant	Hours of sleep: 5 Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Not significant	Hours of sleep: 5 Significant Happenings/Daily Notes: Not significant	
	Stress Level: 4 Depression Level: 3	Stress Level: 4 Depression Level: 3	Stress Level: 4 Depression Level: 3	Stress Level: 4 Depression Level: 3	Stress Level: 3 Depression Level: 1	Stress Level: 3 Depression Level: 2	
	Anxiety Level: 4 Mindfulness: 3	Anxiety Level: 4 Mindfulness: 3	Anxiety Level: 4 Mindfulness: 3; notes of forgetfulness during one day	Anxiety Level: 4 Mindfulness: 3	Anxiety Level: 3 Mindfulness: 3	Anxiety Level: 3 Mindfulness: 3	
	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: Not significant	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: Reports of increased mindfulness throughout the day by remembering the art	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: At times, moments of clear attunement	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: Not significant	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: On days with lower stress level, anxiety and depression also low. Felt more confident in session, connected with Clients and formed more creative interventions and variety of materials.	Mindfulness/ Clinical Notes: More mindful interventions, connection and response in therapeutic relationship	
	Meditation Notes: High levels of anxiety, body discomfort. Urge to stretch and adjust.	Meditation Notes: Contemplation on root of anxiety, procrastination, self-	Meditation Notes: Preoccupied with health beginning	Meditation Notes: Self-grasping Missing and loneliness	Meditation Notes: Peace and clarity Calm	Meditation Notes: Love fiercely and without fear	

Paranoia involving environment.	cherishing. Felt disappointed in realization of relatedness, worry of poor reflection and therefore self-concept.	Theme of emptiness	Anxious about deadlines Jizo, reflecting on losses Connection with others Impermanence	Self-acceptance	Thinking of experience in Temascal (sweat lodge) in Mexico. Create space to recognize delusions and fear, compassion to others Protecting self from harm from others, just as would treat others Abundance of Love
Thoughts about material objects to make meditation more comfortable.		Silent observer			
Warm peace, pink yellow relaxation	Focusing on compassion to self and others	Prior to meditation found difficulty to be motivated, uncharacteristic of prior weeks			
Increased comments about relaxation during mid-week to later week.	Trust in self	Feeling anxious and avoidant			
Pressure to create beautiful art for project	Anxiety over assignments Self-cherishing as root of suffering Barriers, loving fearlessly	Transient thoughts are intrusive like "training a wild elephant"			

Table 8

Meanings

Loss and Impermanence

At the forefront of the symbolism in the imagery are echoes of recent personal losses. The greatest of these being the spiritual injury of terminating a pregnancy and the sudden and unexpected termination of a nearly 15 year sister-like friendship.

The most explicit image in my artworks referring to the pregnancy is present in (Figure 1) in the earliest piece as the fetus in the moon. The blue moon correlates to the rare occurrence two moon occurred the month I carried the pregnancy. I conceived on the first moon and prompted the miscarriage on the second.

Other reflections are shown in the symbolism of the bodhisattva Jizo (Figure 2, Figure 8). In battling my myriad emotions of guilt, remorse and grief I began healing after researching Buddhist Mizuko kuyo ceremonies in Japan. This ritual is conducted by women who have experienced abortion, still-birth or the death of a young child. In Buddhist religious mythology, a bodhisattva is a being, who like the Buddha attained enlightenment but has chosen not to reach nirvana until all other beings have done so. Similar to a patron saint in Catholicism, this bodhisattva remains to help the souls of the unborn dead navigate through the netherworld. Contemplating and engaging in ritual tribute to Jizo through the art process allowed me to find peace and begin to heal.

Related to this, the concept of impermanence was often a theme in my art work through both product and process. Most of my pieces remained unsecured (Figure 1, 2, 3, and 5). There were part of pieces left raw. This is a pull to not “finishing” a piece and remaining forever a work in progress. If the piece is not completed there is the option of not letting go.

Anxiety and Self-Grasping

At the start of most meditations, the amount of stress and anxiety I was experiencing became clear as I sought to let go of my looming to-do lists as a graduate student with deadlines, even those pertaining to this research project and those of a challenging practicum traineeship.

Aspects of this are reflected in the art through the symbols of books (Figures 2 and 3), screen shots of Microsoft Outlook (Figure 2) which acts as my calendar to organize my deadlines and Microsoft Word (Figure 2) in which I write my assignments.

In the art process, I found myself often feeling pressure to create “good art,” and fear of scrutiny. This is a subject I had thought I had tamed during my graduate experience.

The Lotus

Symbol of growth in all areas leading to the goal of an actualized life. These are profoundly spiritual and professional. The lotus is a common symbol in Buddhism which is connected to attaining enlightenment. For me, the value of knowing myself also symbolized within the lotus, the more personal insight the greater the metaphor of coming out of the mud and blooming into my authentic self.

Interconnectedness and Abundance of Love

The prickly, dark metal and uninviting wire radiation around the heart in Figure 1, and the brick wall shown in Figure 2 reflect emotional boundary to connection with others. The hearts in the early pieces (Figure 1 and 3) also reflect this coldness in contrast to the last heart symbol in Figure 7. However the rich colorings surrounding the hearts demonstrate an inner need for connection with others. Throughout the study, the warm colors (yellow, orange, pink)

representing love begin to permeate the pieces beginning with Figure 4 and continuing through the last piece.

Interestingly, in the final piece, the skewers which are reminiscent of the wire surrounding the heart take on a related but different meaning. The barriers to emotional vulnerability, a mechanism of self-protection from hurt and suffering, are replaced with a more open boundary. Still a boundary that protects the self just as would protect others but not closed, ego-cherishing. This is something spiritually, that I have struggled with for many years. I valued others before myself and often allowed myself to suffer for others. In contemplating this I found a balance in trying to create space to recognize delusions and fear, to combat with compassion and assert myself. Loving fiercely without fear combatted my sense of isolation and loneliness.

Additionally, in week 4, (Figure 5) the upper mandala speaks to the idea of interconnectedness specifically. In the meditation captured during this art-making session on the last day, the lotus with the center petal shaped as a heart reflects a mantra of an abundance of love. Contemplating this allowed me to also connect in a more meaningful way with clients and others in my personal relationships.

Peace in Light of the Dark

Peace, similar and perhaps synonymous with clarity, was often a key component to meditation practice and often experienced as somatic in the abdomen. In the first piece (Figure 1) this is particularly relevant as the colors radiate from the center. To extend this, most radiation of color in the images also extends from the center.

Towards the end of the six week study, I felt an equilibrium beginning to emerge as a perception of peace within the chaos. This is reflected best in the final piece in which the heart

lotus radiates out from a background of dark mosaic pieces emphasizing the clusters of stressors and reminders or even repeated ruminations of those losses and other sufferings.

The themes arching over the symbolism in the art products and the process reflected herein, are representative and demonstrated the level of spirituality as a basis for my interpretations and objective in life. In my framework of Buddhist core values especially of compassion, acceptance of impermanent nature of things, acceptance of pain and suffering as part of life, and letting go of ego-ness. F. Han deWit expresses, that these are the three marks of existence in Buddhist philosophy (as cited in Kaklauskas et. al, 2008).

Conclusions

The research process was yielded many insights. Overall, this research process of entering into a contemplative practice with an art-making component allowed me to explore and better know myself, further my spiritual development and develop a deeper sense of connectedness with others which has benefitted my clinical work.

There were also many challenges. For one, the timing of the research was one of great stress. This was influenced by two variables. First, grief reaction over great losses eventually lead to a reemergence of depression symptoms. This was also compounded by the workload and pressures of graduate learning and challenging practicum site.

It is important to also note that although a person value is self-reflection, felt a parallel process to many of my clients and friends in resistance or hesitancy to delve deeply into areas of my life causing me pain. Even for a seasoned meditator, getting back into contemplation is challenging, on top of the requirements of a graduate student requires self-discipline. This is difficult to do while battling depression.

Furthermore, although the findings of this study were personal meanings, there is a broader range of observations that can be applied as implications for clinical practice. First, allowing for contemplative practice in the life of the clinician can yield several benefits as was illustrated in this study.

Second, the on-going quest for self-knowledge and growth as we expect our clients to do the psychological work especially in respects the art leads to greater understanding and perhaps empathy of clients.

With that, there is much more to be explored. Suggestions for further research include a wider spectrum of application of contemplative psychotherapy theory in academia. As of now, virtually the only literature on the subject comes out of Naropa University. As this university also holds art therapy graduate program, there is some intermingling of the two fields in research (e.g. Franklin). However, the link between this framework and art therapy is worth further study.

Of further interest is the effect of contemplative practice on the art therapist. How are others in the field using aspects of contemplative practice, including mindfulness in their lives and what benefits spill into their professional life?

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