

6.2 Centering with Sandtray Expressive Arts

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Name: _____ Date: _____

This centering exercise using Sandtray Expressive Arts Therapy allows you to center by getting in touch with both the conscious and unconscious aspects of your True Self. The unconscious manifestation of your True Self will occur through the process of *natural attraction*. The conscious manifestation of your True Self will manifest through *expressive arts*.

To participate in this exercise, follow the steps outlined below to create a centering scene, then go on to answer the questions about the activity.

1. Think about your own True Self. Who are you? Why are you, you? What do you want in life? What do you want to do in life? If you could sum up your existence in a sentence or two, what would that be?
2. Now go out into nature and collect some objects with which to create a scene in the sandtray, or on the ground at a place designated by the facilitator of your group. These should be natural objects, i.e., things found in nature like rocks, flowers, twigs, and feathers. If you are completing this workbook on your own, choose an outdoor space suitable for the activity. You may wish to carry a bag, a basket, or a bucket in which to collect your materials. To select your materials, rely on the principle of *natural attraction*. Don't put much conscious thought into making your object selections. Just allow the objects themselves to attract you. Choose objects you are naturally attracted to, without trying to fit them into some plan for your finished project. Just let them call to you on their own. Gather your materials until you feel you are done.
3. When you've gathered all your materials, select a spot in which to create your piece of expressive art. If you are doing this exercise as part of a Mindfulness-Based Ecotherapy group, your instructor may assign you a space, but if you're doing the exercise on your own, then you can pick the place.
4. Hold your answers from step #1 in mind as you complete your expressive arts piece. The goal of the piece is to portray your innermost self using the natural materials you have gathered.
5. When you have completed your piece, meditate on it for a moment or two, then go on to answer the questions below.

If you are doing this exercise as part of a group, your facilitator will have the other students in the class interpret your piece, and you will be interpreting the work of others. When doing so, answer the following questions for each piece being interpreted. If you are completing this workbook on your own, you may answer these questions about your own piece, or have a family member or friend interpret it for you.

1. What is your overall impression of the piece?
2. What can you learn about the person who created it by studying it?
3. What do the materials used in the piece tell you about the person who created it?
4. What is the emotional quality of the piece? How do you feel when looking at it?
5. Think about the elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Now examine the materials used to make the piece and assign them to elements. For example, feathers could be assigned to "air," or rocks could be assigned to "earth," or twigs could be assigned to "fire," or shells could be assigned to "water." Does any one element dominate? If so, which?
6. If one element seems to dominate, what does that tell you about the person who created the piece?
7. When you interpret the works of others, do you feel more, or less, centered?
8. When you interpret your own work, do you feel more, or less, centered?
9. Could this art you created be used as a focal point for meditation? If so, why? If not, why not?
10. Look at the materials you used to make your own piece. Why do you think you were attracted to those materials in particular, and what could they tell you about yourself?