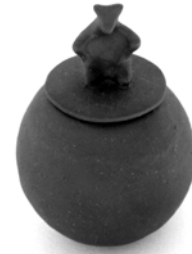


THE SANDTRAY NETWORK JOURNAL



Fifth Anniversary Edition

Stories from America's Sandplay Rooms:

Children, Adolescents and Adults Use Sandtray
to Integrate September 11

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Introducing the Winter 2001/Spring 2002 Fifth Anniversary Edition of the Sandtray Network Journal

By Gisela Schubach De Domenico, PhD

The fearsome hijacking of four passenger airplanes, the successful use of two planes to destroy the World Trade Center, a third to damage the Pentagon, and the fatal crash of a fourth plane created great suffering for so many in America, in the Middle East and all around the World. September 11, 2001 marks a day of intercultural shock and trauma. Young and old sensed more fully the exquisiteness and the fragility of life. Many were catapulted into experiencing pain, fear, terror, paralysis, helplessness, anger, loss, uncertainty, or silence. Many found themselves ready to rescue, to help, to hope and to pray. Many were catapulted into the need to protect, defend, attack, kill, and destroy.

Our mundane view of the world was hijacked. As individuals, families, nations and global community we were challenged to review, if not revise, the way we are with life and with one another. Violence and terror, life and death, helping and helplessness, power and powerlessness were offered as a mirror to each one of us. The immeasurable surprise created an opportunity to go beyond our habituated selves and to review the ways in which we meet the challenges of being human.

Many sandplay, sandtray and Sandtray-Worldplay therapists used the sandtray to help themselves, their families, friends, clients, and students explore and integrate the terror that so abruptly touched them and their communities. Using the sandtray room during such times makes perfect sense for the sandtray apparatus remains a solid cornerstone to the successful integration of trauma-in-the-present, be this trauma of a personal, familial, communal, or international nature.

Sandworldplay facilitates the manifestation, the witnessing and the exploration of life-changing and life-threatening events from an individual, a communal, an archetypal, and a transhuman point of view. Led by psyche, each builder whether alone or in-group uses the play to re-experience and re-arrange the ways his/her family, community, nation, ancestors, and humanity view life and being human. In play, the builder creates an updated personal meaning matrix that can hold his/her immediate experience of self, others, and the world. This very special type of play taps the rich reservoir of the many innate faculties of human consciousness. We sense, embody, feel, remember, think, intuit, embrace and expand into being-consciousness. We enter into the many realms of reality that give us the necessary perspective to understand the nature of life and death as a human being on earth.

The awakening of expanded presence measurably increases our access to the interdimensional realities that are frequently ignored by us, our families, and our culture. We are often surprised when, as ordinary people, we suddenly explore not only the social-communal, but also the personal, the ancestral, the archetypal, the primordial, and universal spiritual realms of reality, those realms often reserved for elders, mystics, spiritual seekers, dreamers, artists, physicists, healers or shamans. Once there, our expanded presence draws on the innate wisdom of these dimensions. As we enter into the deeper mysteries, we learn means of being-within the as yet uncharted and often tabooed territories of life.

In this special edition of our Journal we have taken care to bring you the journeys of many and to show you that the sandplay room is indeed a "laboratory of the world" where people of all ages can integrate the tragedy of September 11, 2001. You will read about the play of those who were nearby, who may have watched the burning and the collapse of the Twin Towers, those who lost family, and those who cared for the families of victims. You are offered the play of children, adolescents, and adults who lived far away from ground zero, the Pentagon, or Pennsylvania. There is an account of how one therapist used the sandtray to confront and self-witness the ways in which she was affected by the events. In doing so she illustrates how a solo sandtray play process may be used to support one's own integrative processes. Another child therapist traces the evolution of a communal client sandtray dedicated to healing the shock and the wounds of September 11. In yet another article the author traces the way in which the psyches of children and adults integrated the traumatic events of September 11 in a manner that actually expanded their capacity to meet and support their own growing edge, thus actively and synchronistically furthering their individual and social development. The group Sandtray-Worldplay processes created on September 11 and 12 demonstrate how healing visions spontaneously appear from the multidimensional planes

of existence including the ancestral, archetypal, earth and spirit realms. It seems everyone is capable of accessing the view of the ancestors, of all of humanity, of the forces of nature and of Gods, Goddesses and Spirit in order to view, sense, feel, remember, think about, and integrate frightening events that appear beyond our control.

Reading this special collection of stories from the sandtray room, you will notice how for each individual or group, the play process weaves the events of September 11 into a personal and communal rite of passage. More often than not, the play also ventures into a direct exploration of this critical moment of intercultural and global crisis. Notice how communal psyche, which manifests during sandplay, invites the players to attend more consciously to the interrelationship of all the people of planet earth. Witness how each builder enters into a dialogue with birth and death, with human freedom and human enslavement, with human interdependence and human isolation, with human love and human rage, with human helpfulness and human helplessness. Each is challenged to grow more fully human, both individually and collectively. Each strives to relate to how he/she create life for themselves and others. Inevitably each has to confront life and his/her fellow humans by either undoing or supporting these individual or collective strivings.

As I edited the accounts of my colleagues, I was deeply touched. I felt privileged to bear witness as I played with the words, the stories, the photographs posing more questions to the authors to better understand what authors and builders witnessed and experienced. It is not easy to find words that have the power to awaken remembered experiences in a reader who was not there when it all happened. So, feel your way into the space between the words, for this is not an assessment of trauma, a collection of psychological processes, or a study of symbolism. These stories contain the seeds of life, birth, death and transformation of both individual and collective human consciousness. They are precious. They mark our innate strivings to move beyond our familial, cultural, and human limitations. Sense the struggle of children, adolescents, adults, and groups to reach beyond their limited view and ignorance. Sense the deeply rooted stirring of the need to find a way to experience a place of terror and rage from a position of peace, understanding, compassion, and forgiveness. Sense the innate capacity to "not turn away," to insist on naming completely without denying anyone and any deed.

Notice that all of us are called to examine our role as witnesses and watchers in and out of the sandtray. Wonder what it means to "bear witness." Ponder what qualities we can cultivate so that we may truly activate and embody the witness who carries that which has been witnessed.

For my own part, the honesty of this work continues to inform the way in which I look at my daily life. It continues to raise deep internal dialogues about how I harm myself and others, how I misuse my own and the planet's resources, and how I am self-righteously insensitive in my interpersonal relationships all the while destroying the efforts of so many generations that came before me. I feel ever so deeply the naggings of my communal self: somehow, I am a part of all of humanity that has engaged and continues to engage in the cultivation of selective murder. I feel myself in the shadow of the spoken and unspoken campaigns of genocide waged in the name of peace, justice, colonization, expansion, conversion, cleansing, civilization, development, or progress.

I am forever walking upon these shores,
betwixt the sand and the foam.
The high tide will erase my footprints,
and the wind will blow away the foam.
But the sea and the shore will remain
Forever.

Kahlil Gibran

**News from the Front:
The Impact of Being with the Destruction of
the World Trade Center and the People
Within Its Radius**

By Stephanie Hagedorn, MA, LRC, ATR-BC

My New Jersey office is about three miles away from the former World Trade Center as the crow flies and about forty-five minutes by car or train. Everyone personally knows at least one person who was killed or is directly connected to someone who lost a loved one that day. We, in the commuter suburbs of New York, have lived a collective grief shared and borne by every American in the country. However, if you placed a compass point at The Trade Center in New York City and drew a semi-circle from Boston to Washington D.C., you would find that all of us within that radius are experiencing some other type of deeply connected, collective mourning that permeates everyone and everything.

Gisela asked me to write an article for the Sandtray Network Journal about what I have been seeing and holding in my practice since the destruction of the World Trade Center. Would I be willing to share? I think it was with relief that I

could answer, yes. And then arose the questions: What to share? Where to start?

When I finally did begin writing this article, I actually began by jotting down ideas for a title, which included "The Site" "Still Standing at Ground Zero," and "Holding the Big Space." When I played with titles, I realized what I did not want to write. So, sorry, no clinical report with charts and statistics and no clearly interesting case study following one particular victim's journey through their maze of recovery. Maybe later, when we are all further away from Ground Zero and some people's journeys are more complete, those articles will appear. Eventually, I just decided to write from my heart. I realized it was very full. I wanted to share what it has been like to be here amidst all of the pain and courage and tears: the being in it, the being with it, the helping, the holding space for others also living through it. The photos I include for you show holding the sadness, destruction, despair and giving support.

Physically I am tired, but spiritually I am refreshed and renewed by the work being done and the behavior I am witnessing. I am again reminded of the awesome potential of my fellow human beings: of what they can do, what they can bear when asked to, and how they rise to greatness in the face of disaster. The human spirit is a colossus inside our so very vulnerable and humble skin. Blessings on us all. Namaste.

I have been seeing a man for just over a year. When he came to therapy, he had been a Port Authority cop for twenty-two years. He also was an alcoholic, in the midst of a divorce, obsessed with a woman he was not married to, and estranged from his two adolescent children. Between November 2000 and September 2001 he did incredible work; he reached sobriety, had a nervous breakdown, left work on a sick leave, and spent the entire year dealing with nightmares, post-traumatic flashbacks, anxiety attacks, medication adjustments, anger and suicidal feelings. As all of the trauma, pain, and sadness of his life came rushing forth, he used sandplay, journaling and painting to slowly help himself do the work of repairing his heart, retrieving lost parts of himself, and recreating a man who could feel and act with self-respect. He returned to work one day a week, then two, then three. On more than one occasion, he and I looked at the viability and sanity of his occupational choice. We discussed other employment options as they appeared in his Worlds and writings. He, however, was determined to return to full time duty as a policeman. He had to see "if he could handle it," if he was "strong enough and man enough." It happened that I cleared him to resume full time duty on September 10. On September 11, he was at the World Trade Center; he went into the building with his squad of seven, five men and two women. Of the seven, only two returned alive,

one man and one woman. He was one of those lucky two. Now, he has not returned to work; he has petitioned for full disability and retirement.

For weeks, he was in shock. When he came to therapy during those first few months, he would not go near sandplay. We only talked. Next, he began to write again. Now, he has just returned to making Worlds and is courageously looking to see himself once again in the here and now.

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Wanting to hide from this pain (woman, age 25)

Three of my women clients live directly across the harbor from the Trade Center. One had stayed home sick that day. Smelling smoke she awoke and thought her own house was on fire...until she went outside. The other woman sat with her four children on the sea wall. She looked across the water, first at the disaster and then at what was no longer there. Meanwhile, they worried about where their husband/father might be. They prayed he was all right. He was traveling that day by air and all the phone lines were closed down because of overflow. Although unable to get home for several days, he did return home safely. The third woman, like so many others in the small surrounding towns, actively participated. She gave rides to and took care of hundreds of people who fled New York City by boat to the relatively safe shores of nearby New Jersey.



Destruction and help (woman, age 40)



Help (left lower corner diagonal view)

All three women saw and smelled the smoke and ash that drifted down from the City, like the smoke from Dachau...crematory smoke. In fact, all of us who live in this area breathed it and had to live in the pall of that smoldering rubble of building, friend, and fellow human being for weeks and months. The last of the fires has only just been put out.

Some of these women and many others have made Worldplays about the actual event and have expressed feelings of great brokenheartedness and compassion about what has happened.



Brokenhearted (woman, age 51)

Few words were spoken about this World called "Brokenhearted." The creator told mostly of the pain of it all:

The huge heart holds the enormously great feelings of sadness, loss, empathy, and hurt. The spiral of life, death, and life spirals over and over and over again. The pain of loss comes in repeated waves. The calcite shows the icy, cold feeling of the pain of loss. The lava is the debris and the wreckage that remains. As the wolf howls, the pleurant (the mourner), draped in white, stands amidst, witnesses, and mourns. The bubble holds God; for God is still there bringing the knowledge that all is as it should be.



Circling the Tower (woman, age 37)

“Circling the tower” was created about three weeks after the disaster. Here was more feeling of hope, not just for survivors but for all of us, for our ability to come together. The unlit candle was the extinguished towers. The empty chair was seen as a space for the people who were lost and a place for the weary to rest. Woman kneading bread was about life going on as women care for the children.



The pit of sadness (woman age 40)

The weeper looks into the pit of sadness. Here is where everyone goes to change. Some have to go often to this pit of sadness and it does not seem fair. The weeper feels compassion for them.

From this pit life grows: the tree's roots reach below the ground and find water from deep within. The pyramid is the place of karmic death to which we all must come. Right now it is the World Trade Center that brings us there.

Inside is the egg, that which holds different possibilities for each one who goes there. The shell is in the place where everyone lies down in the pain, the loss, and the grief to await the change.

Two children, a girl seven and a boy five, came to see me because they lost their dad who worked for

Cantor Fitzgerald. Their well-to-do, older parents have given them not only every advantage, but also very conscious parenting. Their Mother did not let them watch television. In the beginning, the daughter was in silence. Since then, she has become verbal about her Dad dying and about missing him. Now, we talk about him a lot; she shares family history and stories about him.



Atlantis has sunk. Girl fishes for food (daughter of a victim, age 7)

The girl created a World where Atlantis was lost beneath the waves of the sea. A girl angler tries to get food from the sea for the cat family and for herself. She is near a rainbow and a crystal, a magic looking glass with a fiery center. There are mermaids and many fish in the water. A large dolphin is alone on one side. A dolphin family is on the other side. They are separated by the sandbar.

During the same session the girl created another World where families of animals played and lazed about while a predator lurked behind a tree.



Fireball (daughter of a victim, age 7)

On yet a different day, she asked for pastels. She drew a huge fireball of color and surrounded it with thin lines of rainbow color. She did not identify the fireball.

The girl's younger brother is mad. He is holding 'mad' for the whole family. He hits and breaks things at home. One of the first days at my office, he bit his lip and cheek so hard he cried and could not talk. Now he talks about how mad he is when he builds Worlds. He makes

Worlds over and over. They are Worlds where his favorite animals, the horses, live. He has his own collection of horses at home and he used to go horseback riding. He loves them, and knows almost all of their breeds. In the sandplay room, he uses all of my horses, names them all, makes land for them, adds water for them and creates rivers for them to play in and drink from. And then he adds the alligators to the rivers!

My out-of-town company had left early in the morning of September 11. No clients were scheduled until 11:30am. Relaxing with a cup of chai, I was putting things away in my bedroom, getting dressed, and half listening to the morning TV news so that I could catch up with the world now that my guests had gone. Breaking news interruptions announced a fire at the World Trade Center. Since I had worked in the World Trade Center for over three years in the late eighties, I sat down on the end of my bed, and watched and listened as a reporter described what they had initially thought to be a small plane crashing into one of the towers. Suddenly, I saw another plane in view and yelled at the TV, "No, no, get that plane away from there, it is too close!" I thought it was a news plane coming in for better footage. The plane struck the other building tower just about exactly where I had worked on the fifty-sixth floor, right in the middle. In growing horror I watched pieces of debris fly out of the building. My mind knew what some of that debris must be. I can only remember continuously thinking, no, no, no, no. I felt the physiological response of not being able to breathe. Tears flowed down my face.

My next response was a click into primal mothering mode. I called both of my daughters, asked them to go to their children's schools, get the children and have all of us come together. My daughter's fiancé was working in Newark, right across the river from New York City. He and a group of workmen were renovating the roof of a high rise. They sat in stunned silence, some of them crying, until the towers fell. Then as one, they all left work and came home. He joined us within an hour of the collapse.

I think every firefighter, EMS and police officer in New Jersey went to the city; the highways were filled with sirens and rescue vehicles. Everyone else I have talked with responded in like ways, either they went home to family or they went to New York to help.

Later in the day I contacted those clients I knew worked in New York, had family there, or who were alone and might be frightened. Each one of my clients has a story; some are afraid to fly or go to the mall where there are crowds, some are angry and some are vengeful. But most of them, almost all of them are moving forward, saying no to terror and yes to life. Overall, my greatest personal feeling is one of gratitude, for the safety of those near and dear to me and for the honor and opportunity to hold healing space alongside others who do this work too.



Helpers view destruction.
(Stephanie Hagedorn, therapist, age 51)

This World was initially made into a big dry sand mound. Then water was added onto the mound and the hill collapsed. Next, the sand was mixed until very damp and remade into a higher, stronger more solid mound that was really very big (extra sand was also added). A water hose was turned on to a slow flow, placed under the sand mound so that the water caused an internal collapse and a slow breaking through. Gradually another wave of collapse occurred as the underpinnings were turned to liquid. I commented, "Oh yeah, this feels just right." This took about ten to fifteen minutes of concentrated play. There was time to just sit and to watch it happen. It was just like watching the towers' destruction and collapse.

Once the tray was almost full of water and a crater shape had naturally emerged from the water pressure, the hose was removed. It is then that the two watchers come on the top of the crater edge and are identified as Mother-Father God. They are just there, in the midst of it all, just watching, being, knowing but not doing anything one way or the other. They aren't mad or sad, they aren't going to help or stop it. They just are.

Two other groups of watchers are outside of the tray looking in at the destruction. They are barred from entering the destruction site by the see-through calcite slabs.

They can see it, feel it, desire to help, cry for it, want to work to help it, but they cannot get to it. They cannot get there to help anyone. They know there are no survivors, no bodies, nothing left to fix, yet they are helpers. They are holders of this space. They are spiritually present like the Gods, but different in their humanness. They want to DO something. They want to bring healing hands, working backs, quiet comfort to those in the destruction, but can't. For now, they have to just be on the outside holding the space.

Inside the destruction space is a bone and an egg shell with a glowing white egg, reminding me that growth can come from the barrenness of total destruction. It is there in the firestorm that the new is incubated.

Stephanie Hagedorn is a Licensed Counselor; a Board Certified, Registered Art Therapist; an ordained minister; artist; business owner; writer; and seeker. She has a private practice serving adults, couples and children in Red Bank, NJ. She conducts transpersonal and experiential workshops utilizing creative therapies such as: sandplay, play therapy, art therapy, creative writing, guided imagery, psychodrama, hypnosis, Reiki, ceremony and ritual making. She presents at both her training center and at national conferences.

They are just there, in the midst of it all, just watching, being, knowing but not doing anything one way or the other.

They aren't mad or sad, they aren't going to help or stop it. They just are.

**For The Record:
California Children Respond to Terrorism
in Their Homeland**

By Stephanie L. Staie, MFT

September 11, 2001, 6:45 am was just another Tuesday. As I walked toward the kitchen to prepare breakfast for our children, I reviewed the schedule for the day. At first I thought my husband was watching another action movie, but then as the horrible events unfolded the shock of what happened seeped into my consciousness; this was real life, not some Hollywood movie. Modern day technology brought the horror of being under attack right into our living room. My own shock and fear made it very difficult for me to let my teenaged children go off to school.

I wondered to myself, how are we going to get through this? How do I help my children as well as my clients process and understand events that are unexplainable? How do I help them re-establish a sense of safety? Despite these questions echoing in my head, I focused on

my goal of giving children a safe place to express the experiences that have happened in their lives. I pulled out my material on trauma recovery and fortified myself with this information. I made copies of "Disaster: Helping Children Cope: A Handout for Parents" (Waddell and Thomas) and went to work. I was grateful that I had the sandtray as a powerful tool to help children.

The following is a record of children's sandplay, art and stories that came in the wake of this tragedy.

Navigating through the World: A Five-year-old Boy

The first child was a five-year-old who came in for his second play therapy session on the day of the tragedy. His parents have gone through a recent separation and although living together now may still divorce. The child presented with anger and separation anxiety. He had not seen the attacks on television because his mother had monitored his viewing. However, father, who works for a major aircraft supplier, was paged early that morning and had been put on alert. Mom told the boy "Daddy will probably be working a lot in the next few days." According to Mom the child did not have any noticeable reaction.

Yet when the child was in the playroom he reenacted the planes flying into the World Trade Centers by zooming around the room and crashing them into the playhouse and into the sandtray. I believe he must have overheard people talking about the tragedy at preschool where he had been earlier that day. Of interest is that the boy had similar "crashes" in this life. When mom had asked dad to leave, the family structure crashed into chaos. When Dad returned home, the emotional chaos was somewhat contained for the children, who appear to have a warm and loving relationship with their dad. However, Mom and Dad continue their conflicts and "crash" into each other emotionally and sometimes physically.

In subsequent visits the child has not used the jets. He continues his developmental movement play. He brings bulldozers into the tray, adds a "turntable" (a bridge with handrails) to turn the bulldozers around so they can actually go a different way when they reach a barrier. The obstacles, in this case, are mountains of sand, which the bulldozers flatten in order to build roads. Now the cars have a clear path to follow. They all can go on the road and over the turntable to their destinations, various flat spaces in the sand called "parking places."

He uses the "turntable" to learn about "navigating through the world." At the same time he creates experiences of "co-operation" amongst the vehicles that are building roads in order that other vehicles can travel to where they need to go (De Domenico, 1985). Likewise, he is also going where he needs to go and getting on with the business of growing up.

Managing Fear: A 7-year-old Boy

The next child is a boy who is 7 years old. His parents have divorced and his father is afflicted with schizophrenia. This boy sees his father occasionally but wants to be with him more and misses him deeply. I had only seen this boy one time before September 11 for an intake interview and this had not taken place in the sandtray room. He played with cars on the floor while his mother gave me their history.

On September 11, his "Back-to-School Night" was postponed because of the attacks. When Mom told him very casually that a plane had crashed into a building, he did not seem noticeably upset but was a little sad about his "Back to School Night" being postponed because he had been looking forward to it.

Upon entering the playroom that afternoon, this boy also went right to the toy jets, flew them around the room, while making whooshing sounds and crashed them into the playhouse, accompanying this with loud crashing sounds.

Though this mother gave her son minimal information and monitored his exposure to television news, it is quite likely that children at school had discussed the events of the day. If not, his mother's news that a plane had crashed into a building could have made a significant enough impression for jets crashing into a playhouse to appear in his play.

In fact, after the September 11 attacks there was a very significant behavioral change: the boy was now afraid of something bad happening and experienced trouble separating from his mom when it was time to go to school. In a phone consultation with Mother, I suggested she give him a geography lesson. Mother agreed and showed him on a globe the places where the actual attacks had happened in relation to where they lived. She also taught him where Afghanistan was, thus again emphasizing his safety. In addition, Mother and son made an agreement that when dropping him off at school Mother would stay for a certain period of time. This arrangement worked well.

Dueling Dragons/Colliding Powers: A Pre-teen Girl

During her session, a pre-teen girl also found it important to share her fears and feelings. She described the attacks as "mean, crazy, rude and cruel." She said that her school chose to donate the money they had raised to go to outdoor school to the New York relief effort. This girl had stayed home from school on Tuesday because her parents had been afraid of an attack in their area. Now she talked about having a fear of planes and not ever being able to visit the World Trade Center. She also worried about her uncle who is in the army.

This girl did an amazing sandtray using two dragons, a red dragon with movable wings and a resin dragon. The dragons duelled in the tray. About the red dragon she said: "He hates God and thinks he should rule the

world." Then she commented about both dragons and their duel:

Both the worlds of the dragons get mixed up when they get together. When that happens it is a thing of death and a thing of grace. There is a huge struggle going on when they try to put stuff in each other's World. What happens (then) is (that) there is a collision of power and people die.

If we are to understand this tray independently of world events, as an expression of her growing edge, we might recall that she is the only daughter of divorced parents; her father has primary custody while her mother lives two hours away. This sandtray play may be an attempt to combine the separate and different worlds of mother and father and to learn how to negotiate between the two. However, when we view it within the context of the powerful collision of forces on September 11, this "huge struggle when they try to put stuff into each other's World" is an articulate description of what happened in our world that day, when the clash of opposing philosophies, worldviews and rules about life destroyed the World Trade Center and made plane travel more dangerous than ever before. This child is familiar with these types of collisions' in her family life. While the parents' struggles have not resulted in physical deaths, they have created emotional wreckage in her life that has been just as painful and heartbreaking. This wise child perceives and is playing with an age-old problem: how can we combine each other's "stuff" without collisions and death? I am certain her future sandtrays will reveal more wisdom and guidance on this issue of conflicting, colliding powers.

The Destroying Community v. The Nurturing Community: A 12-year-old Girl

A twelve-year-old girl, just starting middle school (6th grade), was very sad and quiet when she came in to my office. Although a bright and accelerated learner, this child had been coming to therapy for help with anxiety problems. Just a week before the September 11th attacks, she had experienced a community trauma: a psychotic ex-boyfriend of a family in her hometown entered the home of his estranged girlfriend and shot and killed a grandmother and two children, as well as wounding two teenagers. He later killed himself. This girl had played on the same soccer team and was a friend of the twelve-year-old boy who was killed in this shooting rampage. Her only comfort was that this boy had stepped in front of his grandmother to protect her. She thought that this brave act was especially wonderful.

September 11 complicated her life further. She was worried about her friend's mother who had to go with her special emergency dog to Ground Zero in New York. As she sculpted with Playdoh, she expressed fears that her friend's mom and dog would die or be injured. I told her that a company that sewed booties for the sled dogs

in Alaska (to protect their feet from the ice and cold) was also sending free protective booties to the rescue dogs working in New York. Learning of this kind gesture seemed to comfort my client a bit.

With this particular client, it was the sandtray before September 11 that was most poignant. She was in the wake of the shooting tragedy that rocked her hometown. Her September 5 sandtray, pictured below, awakened the issues of community (hometown) safety, which would reverberate on the national level after the violence of September 11. For her, the feeling of being unsafe in her hometown on September 5 became magnified into the feeling of being unsafe in her nation after September 11.



Peaceful Community Wonders about Accepting Visitors

She had this to say about her sandtray:

The community was a peaceful community wondering about whether they should let in two foreign visitors. The visitors did not want to harm the people of the community, they were just curious. The people in the community were shy and it was hard for them to survive outside the community because some people are cruel and mean and don't understand. The community decided that if the visitors were peaceful they could stay. If not, the people of the community would teach them how to be kind.

There was protection in her World that came from a triad of angels and two crystal balls used to predict the future.



Angel Trio and Crystal Balls

In describing the crystal balls she said,

They're domes that can see what's happening outside of their world. They have some knowledge and they are solar-powered. They can only see during the day and they belong to the people in the community. The angels play music so they can help outsiders understand the shy people in the community.

The angel holding the candle "lights their minds" and inspires them. A sorcerer also protects the entrance to the community. "He is the healer in case someone gets hurt. He's the hospital."

It seems as if this girl is saying that this is a well-equipped community, one with everything it needs to nurture the souls of its inhabitants. It is willing to allow outsiders in if they can be kind or if they are willing to learn kindness. This community has an angel to enlighten people about kindness. It has an angel who plays music so outsiders can receive understanding about the people in the community. And it has a healer in case someone gets hurt.

On a personal level, this girl is sorting through all the new relationships she is encountering in her first year of middle school; she is deciding who is safe to be close to and who is not; who is friend and who is foe. She is struggling with what criteria she will use to make these choices. She seems to have decided that if someone is kind, both to others and animals, that this is a potential sign of safety and friendship.

On a communal level, there is an interesting contrast between the things that destroy community, the killer in her town and the planes, and the things that hold it together, the 12-year-old boy's kindness and love for his grandmother even at the moment of death and the friend's mother's kindness in taking her emergency dog to New York to help rescue people. This girl realizes that kindness and peacefulness are taught virtues that we can all learn.

On a national level, we are confronting these same issues in light of the September 11 attacks. It is a grander scale, but the question is the same, "How do we allow people into the community (nation) and how do we determine whether they are safe or not?"

Coping with Violence: A Pre-teen Boy

As if starting middle school wasn't stressful enough, another sixth-grader was also dealing with multiple crises. This boy had been coming to therapy because his father, an alcoholic, had a big fight with his stepbrother and now the parents were divorcing. Although the boy did not actually witness the violence, he had come home to see the house a mess, doors broken and blood on the

floor. During the course of therapy this boy's family had stabilized, everyone had processed the crisis of the fight, his father had moved out, and the boy had adjusted to the new visitation schedule.



Rainbow with Blackbirds

In his therapy session the week after the attacks, he said, "When I look up and see planes I wonder if they will they crash into buildings or spray some sort of chemical on me." In this session he painted. He talked about the planes being overhead as he painted a rainbow on a sunny day with two large black birds in the middle of the rainbow.

Telling a Story without Words: A 14-year-old Girl

In contrast to her more verbal brother, this boy's 14-year-old sister was typically reluctant to talk when she came to therapy. This session, the week after the attacks, was no different. She had mentioned in the past that she didn't like to dwell on the bad things. On this day she was very specific and said, "I want to make a sandtray but I DO NOT want to tell a story about it." "Okay," I said as I made sure to have my pen and paper ready. She built two adjoining Worlds.



Adjoining Halloween and Nature Trays

In the first tray (left) she used dry sand. Into the tray she placed some scary trees, a cemetery gate, a skeleton peeking over a headstone, a snake, assorted ghosts and

mummies, the grim reaper, a patch of pumpkins, hear-no speak-no see-no evil gargoyles, a headless Victorian woman and a humorous Frankenstein monster holding a one-ton anvil. As she finished the first World she said, "That's my Halloween scene, now I want to do a nature scene."

She proceeded to do the next World (right tray) and filled it with playful Dalmatian puppies, a resting deer, a family of bears, a family of buffalo, a wolf howling, a trio of owls, small animals (dog, squirrel, snail) on the wooden bridge at the center of the tray and a "pond" with ducks, a beaver and a turtle.

Not having her story to elucidate what was happening in her Worlds I turned to the Sandtray-Worldplay™ Training Workbook for Level Two Intensive by Gisela De Domenico. Reading the section "Themes that Occur During the Play therapy Process Over Time," I concluded that this teenager was working out the "experiences of chaos, cataclysm, death and destruction, including self-destruction" in the Halloween World (De Domenico, 1986). I see self-destruction in the headless Victorian lady and in spite of all the dark and scary things in the tray that may speak to chaos, cataclysm, death and destruction, there is a corner that holds a golden tree bedecked with valentine hearts. The tree may speak to this child's capacity to hold on to the positive and to not dwell completely on the bad things. This also may be seen as an attempt of the psyche to integrate the golden tree and loving hearts with the more awful and difficult aspects of life.

The Halloween tray with its death, destruction and darkness is side-by-side with and balanced by the Nature tray containing scenes of togetherness, peacefulness and gentleness. And yet within this primarily peaceful and gentle place there is also room for the appearance of the "aggressive untamed animal force, the primitive, the wild, the raw" (De Domenico, 1986) as wolf howls from one corner, expressing powerful feelings, perhaps even those strong feelings most adolescents wrestle with daily!

This child's psyche is negotiating the twists and turns of having death and chaos, peace and order existing simultaneously in her inner and her outer worlds. Perhaps she is learning how to negotiate the place where others have created chaos, death, and fear while still acknowledging the place where nature and life are affirmed, where togetherness and gentleness are preserved, and where families are able to survive the forces trying to tear them apart.

Building Adjoining Worlds: A Nine-year-old Girl

The next girl's play is strikingly similar. This nine-year old originally came to therapy on September 14 because she was having difficulty focusing, forgetting to turn in assignments at school and struggling with Mother about going to bed. She also created two trays, a wet one, which she named "A Halloween Tray" and a dry one

called "A Day at the Beach." While selecting the miniatures for her Worlds she passed by the jets and said, "Definitely no jets!"



A Halloween Tray with Crossroads

She placed some scary trees, a cemetery gate, a skeleton couple, a grave and headstone, a crossroads made with black gems with a skeleton standing at the middle, pumpkins and a coffin into the tray. Like the girl before, she did not want to tell a story.

Death imagery is prevalent in this tray. Use of the skeleton couple is interesting because according to the mother she and her husband had been fighting a lot recently. The girl's mother comes originally from New York State. Her father flies regularly for his job and goes to New York frequently. That week he was unable to work and the tension was high in the family.



A Day at the Beach

The adjacent tray was called "A Day at the Beach".

She shared the following thoughts:

There is a sand castle, some sea glass, a fairy chasing butterflies and a Victorian lady collecting shells. There are colorful sea creatures playing in the ocean waves. It is a really nice, relaxing day.

In this World we see "the experience of a place and time of joy, pleasure, sensory delight, playfulness and humor" (De Domenico, 1986).

The proximity of the two trays suggests the joining of the opposites. It appears that through these very different Worlds this child's psyche is also negotiating the balance between places and experiences of darkness, fear and death and places and experiences of light, peace and life.

Both girls' psyches chose to sort and create opposing Worlds, each in their own unique way. It is interesting that both Halloween Worlds took form on the left-hand side, while the nature trays followed on the right. The teen's tray seems remarkable because it is not as clearly divided in terms of light and shadowy images as the elementary school girl's tray. This may be because the teen is further along in her development. She is able to express the apparent paradox of a golden tree sprouting hearts in the midst of a World of death and destruction. She can depict both the benign and wild parts of nature.

Digging Out: A 14-year-old Boy

The next Worlds were made by an abused 14-year-old who has suffered much physical and mental abuse. At his high school they were tuned into CNN, the news network. All the kids were watching the events of September 11. He told me about watching the people jumping out the windows of the World Trade Center. He called the attacks "a tragedy." His biggest worry was that they would not find all the people under the World Trade Center.



Buried Vehicles

When he built his sandtray he used his favorite miniatures, vehicles. Some of the cars were buried and bulldozers scurried around trying to dig them out. An ambulance was also buried. He draped an American flag atop a mound under which other cars were buried. Then he constructed a "tower" out of sand and crashed a jet into it. He shared how he would have liked to "be at ground zero, driving a bulldozer and helping them dig out."



Digging Out

This sandtray was the most difficult for me to witness, as it was a more direct reenactment of the tragedy. I felt such great sadness that he and all the other children are having to have experience these tragedies in their lifetimes.

However, I know that the experience of tragedy is not new for this 14-year-old boy; he is no stranger to death, destruction and chaos, as these experiences have happened repeatedly in his own family.

Indeed, when he came to therapy the following week, he shared about the night he cried when his sister was removed from their home. She had reported to school authorities that her mother's boyfriend had molested her and had attempted to rape her. He was devastated and used the same word, "tragedy," to describe this very personal event in his life. I noticed how I hoped that one day this boy, like the girls described above, might be able to build a World where he could experience joy and delight.

The following week he again did vehicle play in the sandtray, but this week's tray was much different as there was road building going on and cars were parked next to each other, no longer buried or upended as before. Some cars were towing other cars. Bulldozers were moving dirt out of the way so other cars could get through. I sensed that this boy's play of rebuilding, constructing and making connections was coming from the healing power of his own psyche. He couldn't help the rescuers dig out at Ground Zero, but here he could "dig out" his own life.

Conclusion

I felt honored to collect these children's stories for the record. It is important that their experiences, their feelings, their thoughts and their words about the life-changing event that happened to all of us on September 11, 2001 be shared with others. Just when devastation threatened to swallow them up, each of their psyches could be trusted to provide what was needed. As play therapists we are privileged to provide the space and time for our clients to experience this healing process. The children's ability to negotiate such extreme

circumstances in life is inspiring and motivating. One day they will make decisions about our world and how it is to be conducted. My belief is that they will be able to do so with clarity, consciousness and compassion.

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Because we all share this small planet earth, we have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. That is not just a dream, but a necessity.

The Dalai Lama

Third Building Phase: The war comes

A plane crashes in the sand.

Two commando soldiers come and face off on the left side of the World

September 11 appears in my World. Yes, this event is big and terrible ... the passengers are dead. A plane is supposed to fly people safely ... this plane has failed terribly. Human destructiveness has defeated human technology. This crashing plane is an attack ... it is an intrusion into the middle of what becomes the American side.

The beads and Hindu dancer are observing this confrontation: the soldiers are angry ... they are equally enraged with each other ... both are confident they are in the right and they will prevail. They stand in front of their respective countries ... they stand in defense of their respective culture. They feel rage, indignation and fear. They think the others are a threat to them ... they must prevail over them. The others are evil. Both sides have the mutual intent of war, murder, and annihilation. The soldiers tell each other "we will only lay down our arms when the threat is over."

Fourth Building Phase: Cultural portraits

Then the American and the Middle Eastern cultures show their faces in this World:



The Middle East (lower right) views the American West (upper left).

A Statue of Liberty comes into the U.S. side

A building with a cockroach on it

A large Barbie figure with her hands on her hips

A friendly looking witch in front of Barbie

A boy with a jet pack and a propeller hat

A nun wagging her finger

A wizard in a robe with a beard holding a globe

Snow White

A pyramid with a spider on it

A helicopter

An eastern saint

The Statue of Liberty emits the idealism of American culture ... justice for all ... fair play... acceptance of others who are different ... the principle of balance and unity in mankind.

The cockroach brings to life the decay and the corruption of our institutions that have dealt unfairly with both others and our own American citizens by exploiting them ... or ignoring the effects of our actions on people. The cockroach represents our injustice ... and our injustice is also a source of harm to the Middle East side in this World. This kind of injustice is insensitive to individuals and cultures.

Barbie embodies the open, confident, brazen, somewhat banal American woman ... she personifies our American freedom as culture. Barbie feels confident ... innocent ... sexually free... she also has some vanity. Her presence here is larger than life ... the religious fundamentalists view her as a threat. To them she represents American decadence. This female of power and fearlessness seems wrong to them ... she infuriates them. They want her to be afraid ... subdued ... demure. Fundamentalists fear and abhor her presence in American culture too ... they fear and abhor the fruit of U.S. freedom. Barbie's American philosophy of life is, "the world is my oyster ... It's okay to be me, female. Indeed, we have liberated men and women from the strict roles that stifle them ... we have conquered the boogey man, the fear of authority, men's fear of women and women's fear of men. We have created freedom from persecution. We have opened the door for enlightenment for all people."

The friendly witch is viewed as the devil incarnate by the fundamentalists ... yet; this witch is harmless, friendly. Her power is whimsical. She means them no harm. She is Grandma with a scary black suit... she is Crone... she is a wise and nurturing female... she loves. She balances the male, Shiva-like, destructive power. She "allows" Barbie's freedom to be genuine and carefree. As Barbie ages and becomes wise she becomes this crone. The crone is free of male control ... she has power ... she loves others ... but fundamentalists and men fear her in general because she cannot be controlled.

The good witch says: "We have slain the dragon, the monster of ignorance. I am not evil, devouring woman. I am Wiccan. I am sorcery...I am alchemy, transformation of human understanding."

people arose after the glorious age of the pyramids ... it rests on this building block.

The eastern saint is filled with thoughts about those Americans ... they are corrupt ... they are living in sin ... God hates the Americans ... He hates them enough to want them destroyed

The helicopter lands and takes off ... this is how wealthy countries and aggressive countries affect other nations ... there is no responsibility here: the helicopter's purpose is to land troops ... or to rescue troops. This helicopter is waging war ... it is retaliating. It is an American helicopter that is waging war and landing troops.

Fifth Building Phase: What are the riches of culture?

A golden snake coiled around an egg right in the middle between the soldiers.

A moping angel comes in front of the golden snake.

The Chinese have a snake in their house to "guard the wealth." Snake guards the riches ... perhaps this snake is guarding what is essential to each side ... safety ... culture ... authority to direct one's own culture. Perhaps it does not only have economic meaning. Perhaps it has more to do with freedom and culture than wealth.

This snake is right in the thick of battle ... but the soldiers do not see it. The snake is at the core of the fight ... it is protected at all costs by the very soldiers who do not see it.

The moping angel looks like a devil figure ... it is bored ... "it's the same old, same old, boring fight." This angel is also in despair: "Here we go again ... this is old." When it becomes a devil, it thinks devilish thoughts: "How easy it is to make this happen with humans."

Final Experiencing and Conclusion: Love works against fear as cultures meet

As I am with this World, I realize that a millennia of human history is before me. Here is an on-going evolution.

Both the American and Arabian/Islamic cultures are facing one another at their "growing edge" of that evolution.

The nun and the saint face off. Each aims to convince the other that they are misguided and unholy. They wish to correct one another. They are saying the same things to one another. Yet, they do not hear or listen to the other. Both remain holy, controlled, and adamant until they discover: "I am holy and you are holy - how can we save what is good without creating war?"



Observing the different ways both cultures face off or meet.

I meet the soldiers and hear them wonder: "How will we know when the threat is over?"

The Wizard and the Witch are the working force in this World. They hold the wisdom of their respective cultures. The Witch and the Wizard can meet one another:

The good witch addresses the magician: "Your globe and my broom are alike ... we are alike. You are NOT patriarchal, fascist, male energy... you are a man of wisdom who wants to protect your people and your way of life. I am the joyous mother ... you, the joyous father. Our people will survive this and grow to understand one another."

The wizard declares: "Culture creates a container for life energy. Culture directs the life force. You cannot come into our country and destroy our culture without destroying the structure that contains the aspirations of our young men and directs them toward growth instead of the destructiveness of terrorism. There was a void and men fell into it. They became extreme. This globe balances these forces within our society. It keeps us stable. This alchemy must come from within a people. We need to have the freedom and support to grow in our own way. If you destroy us mindlessly, the violence of the extremists can grow. Rip us from our cultural moorings and you invite disaster. Let us grow in our own way, with our own dignity and identity."

The gold is in the middle. It is not really economic advantage or political military advantage. This gold holds the potential of two cultures meeting in harmony.

Our respective cultures need a "numinous place" to meet, a place to agree on basic respect for a way of life, like a statue of liberty for the entire world. It comes from all of us working together. It will come out of the ashes of this war as the work of love. It needs to be something bigger than all our weapons, money, and religions. It becomes a lodestone, a place that transcends the inevitable corruption and realistic imperfection of the intentions of our institutions, leaders, and religions.

As I am with this gold in the middle, I realize that those of us who are less afraid need to show those of us who are more afraid not to be afraid. That is the incremental way love works against fear in relationships and in societies. That is how a tolerance for difference develops and thrives. Something of golden value is at stake here: the growth of both cultural "leading edges" is a labor of love. It is the alchemical globe that will create that gold.

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Our respective cultures need a "numinous place" to meet, a place to agree on basic respect for a way of life, like a statue of liberty for the entire world.

ELDERS SPEAK



Many received the following e-mail message from the Hopi People shortly after September 11, 2001. It is medicine for our minds and an offering given to us from the Elders of the Hopi, a people who, in fact, have survived hundreds of years of terrorism and cultural oppression in their native American lands. They have borne witness for many centuries and their sharing is an inkling of what level of awareness may arise within us as we embody the witness and continue our struggle to "see

what we are doing and to name what we are witnessing" and to "hear what we are saying and to listen to what is being said."

The Elders Speak

Oraibi, Arizona. Hopi Nation.

You have been telling the people that this is the
Eleventh Hour.

Now you must go back and tell the people that this is
the Hour.

And there are things to be considered:

Where are you living?

What are you doing?

What are your relationships?

Are you in right relation?

Where is your water?

Know your garden.

It is time to speak your Truth.

Create your community.

And do not look outside yourself for the leader.

This could be a good time!

There is a river flowing now very fast.

It is so great and swift that there are those who will
be afraid.

They will try to hold on to the shore.

They will feel they are being torn apart, and they will
suffer greatly.

Know the river has its destination.

The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off
into the middle of
the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the
water.

See who is in there with you and celebrate.

At this time in history, we are to take nothing
personally.

Least of all, ourselves.

For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and
journey comes to a halt.

The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves!
Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your
vocabulary.

All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner
and in celebration.

We are the ones we've been waiting for.

The Sandtray Network 2001

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The 2001 Network Council:

The Sandtray Network is a non-profit organization governed by the Council Members Bijili Elizabeth Abbey, Gisela De Domenico, Auguste Elliot, Jill Guice, Mary Herza, Helen Horton, Julia Richardson, and Diane Simon. We welcome you to consider joining our Council.

2001 Network Committees:

Most of the work of the network is done in committees. We greatly appreciate any members who give time and energy to the Network Community by joining the following committees:

Journal: Gisela S. De Domenico and Jill Shira Guice
Archives: Auguste Elliot
Finance and Membership: Bijili Abbey
Internet and Advertising: Jill Guice
Publicity and Retreats: Mary Herza and Diane Simon
Hospitality and Volunteer Coordinator: Helen Horton and Julia Richardson
Newsletter:
Mailing: Elizabeth Miller and Bijili Abbey

2001 Network Membership Announcement:

We invite anyone interested in the various educational, healing and transformational applications of sandtray to join and support our Network.

To join us or renew your Sandtray Network Membership: Fill out the enclosed Member Application, contact us at sandtray@dnai.com or download a membership application at www.Sandtray.org

2001 Journal Editors:

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Disclaimer:

The articles contained in this Journal represent the views and opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the attitudes and opinions of the Sandtray Network. Some articles may be printed to stimulate thought and, in some cases, to arouse controversy. We print these articles so that you may read what your colleagues and other professionals are doing and thinking. We also believe that learning is enhanced when all sides of an issue are exposed, allowing each individual to develop his or her views. While you may not agree with all the views expressed, we hope that this Journal will stimulate you to respond and share your views, expertise and experience with Journal readers.

This Journals has been posted on the Sandtray network Website in 2006 in an continuing effort to make available information about the many different ways of using Sandplay – Sandtray – and Sandtray-Worldplay to improve the quality of life, to promote opportunity, education, growth, health, and interpersonal relationships.

Our current Council has chosen to serve the Network until 2007. We will leave the publications available for the general public. Unless new leadership emerges we will close the organization. We hope you enjoy the site and share these writings with others.

The Sandtray Network Council of 2006:

Carol Azzarro; Gisela Schubach De Domenico; S. Auguste Elliott; Mary Herza; Julia Richardson; Elaine Whittman

The Sandtray Network Mission

- We actively promote learning, healing and creativity through the use of the sandtray.
- We share and witness authentic experiences of the human psyche in the sandplay journey:
 - We offer substantive presentations and experiential explorations at our community meetings
 - We inspire and develop the exchange of ideas and information in our journal, on-line, and at our conferences.

Our Objectives are

- To support the many ways of using the sandtray
- To promote the use of the sandtray for the benefit of the local, national and global communities
- To compile a resources and reference library for the use of the community-at-large
- To disseminate information about sandtray methods to the greater community
- To implement the use of the sandtray in a wide variety of settings
- To explore the use of sandtray as an interpersonal communication tool to bridge ethnic and cross-cultural barriers