

## **Therapy As a Sacred Ritual**

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By Douglas Mitchell, MFTI, Expressive Arts Therapy, Topic Expert Contributor

Therapy as a sacred ritual might sound a bit pompous to some. After all, therapy is often considered something of a “have to,” not a “want to.” I would like to consider that therapy is something other than a way out of struggle, depression, and pain. My clients teach me each week that something beautiful is explored, born, or manifested in our weekly get-togethers. As they make their weekly voyage to therapy, they pledge to themselves the opportunity to discover the full range of their experience.

Like a good cup of coffee in the morning, therapy is like a morning jog-so-you-can-get-going kind of ritual. Whether writing morning pages in our journals to scribe our thoughts, or pulling the garden vegetables from the earth for tonight’s dinner, therapy has its place in our lives. It is like sacred nourishment for our soul. It is a commitment to understanding ourselves more intimately, completely, and thoroughly, by doing our weekly sit-in with our therapist.

As my clients cross the threshold of becoming, I see the meaning therapy has become to them and the rituals that they encounter.

### **Setting the Stage**

Upon making the first appointment, it has begun. The ritual begins with a friendly, “Hi, how are you.” The client’s “call” embarks on finding a therapist who will see, feel, and hear them most authentically. They seek to connect their experience with someone who will honor and embrace them. Testing the waters, they may begin with a brief explanation of their story in a “give and take” sort of fashion until a connection is made. Upon feeling a spark, the conversation deepens, which consummates an appointment. This reciprocal dance begins the sacred ritual of setting the stage of meeting, time, and place.

## **Entering Sacred Space**

After arriving, entering the room, closing the door, and with sacred agreements signed, both the client and I begin entering into the depth of what will be shared and discovered. While sitting in front of me and releasing the tension, the client intimately begins the next ritual. The sacred opportunity to be fully seen, heard, and felt has begun. Time and space become a blessed opportunity away from tiring commitments, chores, and obligations. There is sacredness in saying the unsaid and feeling the unfelt before me as their therapist. A trust begins to unfurl as the holy journey to revealing and expanding is explored. Highs and lows, struggles and gains, celebrations and sorrows are all fruit for the harvesting. As my clients explore the depths of their experience, I enter my role of providing safety, empathy, and challenge. Each week, building on the last session, the client and I meet with a greeting and enter into sacred space.

## **Bridging the Gap**

Often clients enter therapy with some blockage to unravel, relationship to untangle, or goal to achieve. As we work through the existing sludge to get to the other side of their desire, I notice that my role vacillates among many. The roles of mentor, educator, and guide work many vantage points to include inner-child work, adult development, and familial understanding. The gap of our work together contracts and expands as we discern emotional terrain, physical symptoms, and insight. Weekly, as we deepen, each of these becomes a sacred practice. Commitment to healing, commitment to knowing, and commitment to discovery become not only tasks, but a revered journey. Our deepening relationship begins to transform, soften, and deepen. There is a sacredness in the reciprocity and trust which now gather their place at the altar of unfolding.

## **Packing Up**

As the merger of relationship between the client and therapist expands and deepens within the context of an hour, there must be time to choose the “take with” nuggets of insight and knowledge gained. Much like camping in the park, we sort through, pack up, and continue our journey back to the familiar. Reflecting, we ponder the sacred meaning of this particular hour. The client and I ask ourselves, “What did we learn?” We take a look back and gather threads of awareness and pieces of clarity as we seek to create meaning of this experience. Moments are given to encapsulate the importance of the discovery by way of closing statements, new visions, and take-home assignments. As the hour quickly ends, the door opens and we say our goodbyes. The sacred journey ends and begins with hope and uncertainty as we look forward to unfolding, yet again, what is to become of our meeting together.

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