

# Creativity and Play.....



.....Continued

*Creativity and Play is continued from the Autumn Quarterly 2002, where this topic was introduced and articles offering three very different perspectives in dance therapy and paediatrics, were published. The following are some responses, further thoughts, and other perspectives in practice.*

*We are pleased to be able to print a contribution from Penny Best, who managed an 'off the cuff' reply on her laptop, whilst travelling. She said many thoughts were generated for her by this topic, which she was unfortunately unable to develop at the time. Penny is the midst of a number of teaching and speaking engagements taking her various destinations in Europe. Those of us who attended Penny's workshops, 'Reflected Images and 'Dancing Dialogues' in Melbourne in 2001 will not be surprised at her encouragement to 'unpack' the meaning of play, as at that time we unpacked and deconstructed and uncovered so many possibilities of meanings. Even in this short response her flexibility of approach and skills as an educator in opening us up to a range of possibilities, shines through.*

## The Importance of Play Within Dance Movement Therapy

*Penny Best*

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I would like to write something, someday, in support of all your interesting articles about the importance of play within Dance Movement Therapy practice. Just now I am too busy, preparing for international workshops (and trying to maintain a playful attitude to all the work involved!), and so do not have time to develop a thesis. I would like to say,

however, that there are many different definitions of play; there are many different types and goals of play. I think it would be helpful to 'unpack' (one of my favourite words, as some of you know) the concept of 'play' as a way of furthering our understanding and our practice. For instance play can be used by children (and adults) in a variety of ways, such as, for rehearsal of relational encounters, for mastery of skills (verbal and nonverbal) and for managing difficult emotions and thoughts. Also for developing perception and cognition, for creating relationships, for understanding and learning rules of engagement, for imagining dreams, and conquering the impossible, and/or for expressing the unspeakable.

Those of you who are teachers or who have studied development or have children, will be aware there is symbolic play, skills play, parallel play, solo play, games, make believe play and etc. In DMT we often use props and encourage 'playfulness'. In doing so we might be encouraging expression, clarification, extension of body image, connections, relationships, conflict resolution, characterisation, physical coordination, aggression/assertion, release, skills mastery and etc.

There are other examples and I think it would be helpful to do a workshop, or two, specifically on play. One workshop I do regularly on the DMT training at Roehampton within the Development: Movement & Growth module is where everyone shares games from their childhood and their culture, and then we 'deconstruct' them looking at how each one might assist with a child's emotional, physical, cognitive, social, and moral development. I could perhaps write more on this another time.

It seems that often the word 'play' is used in conjunction with creativity. I connect the ability to play with the ability to be creative and grow. Through my clinical practice, working with both children and adults, I am informed by the idea that in order for someone to play' they need to be able to let go of set assumptions. This is the same within verbal psychotherapy; there is a need to play with ideas. Within DMT in order to imagine you are crossing the sea within a DMT session you need to 'let go' of the assumption that the floor is there under your feet. Letting go can be terrifying

in itself for people, and for therapists, as it means stepping into the unknown. I believe that in order to play, with ideas, with props, with each other, with stories, we need to take a risk and step outside of the expected. It is in this moment, for me, that there is the possibility of something new, a shift.

It may appear that I am making a distinction here between playing in an imaginative manner and playing a structured game with rules. However, in my experience working with adults, creating a structured game developing rules organically moment to moment, also involves shifting the expected way of being together socially. Something new is created in this playfulness. This is without going into in-depth expression of unconscious symbols and historical material. As I write, I find that there is a lot to say. Yet I must stop and prepare for a keynote speech /event in the Netherlands. I must create an opening ceremony for 200 delegates. I certainly must believe in the ability of everyone to play and my own ability to go with the flow!

**Ed note:** The idea of workshops on this topic as above, is appealing. The following reference is available through the DTAA (for the small cost of postage and packing) for anyone interested in the broad theoretical basis that Penny uses.

**Reference:**

Best, P. (2000). Theoretical diversity and clinical collaboration: Reflections by a dance/movement therapist in *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 27 (3) 197 – 211.

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