

ART THERAPY RESOURCES



ART THERAPY CASE STUDY BACKGROUND: ABANDONMENT

Cynthia had recently discussed her despair at her relationship breakdowns. She explained how her parents had split when she was 6 and then her mother had 2 more marriages that also ended in divorce. Cynthia had not seen her father since she was 10 years old. Cynthia was married the first time when she turned 19. That marriage ended and she married again at age 25. Cynthia is now separated from her second husband after 3 years. Cynthia mentioned she feels anxious all of the time and feels another 'bombshell' is going to present itself in her life at any time. Cynthia can remember being blindsided each time her mother's relationships would end. She also had no idea her first husband was so unhappy. She had felt the disconnect with her second husband and had also felt wary of marrying him initially but he wore her down and insisted their relationship was unbreakable. Cynthia says she no longer trusts her own judgment.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- This exercise involves creating a symbolic image that evokes the concept of self-compassion. A self-compassion image could be represented by a human figure. It could be a person you already know or possibly an archetype person such as a wise sage, grandparent, curious child or even a famous character such as Yoda. Alternatively, you may wish to choose an object such as a rock, bowl of water, animal, or a scene such as a quiet cabin on top of a mountain. Some people find it easier to choose a living being such as a person or animal as they can ascribe an internal voice that can communicate internal self-compassion statements to themselves.
- Close your eyes and slow your breath (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds. Repeat 5 times.
- Contemplate the word self-compassion. What images come to mind when you think of the word self-compassion. Let your mind wander through as many images as it brings to mind. After some time, reflect back over each initial image and see if one resonates more with you over the others. Think more about this image and pay attention to developing its attributes. For example, if it's a person, do they have soft hands, a warm smile? If it's an animal, do they have soft fur. If it's an object, what do the details look like? Is it smooth, large, small, or blurry? The attributes in your image should symbolize compassion.
- Once you have an image in your mind begin to draw, paint, collage or create a 3D item that represents your image. Allow yourself to be loose on how you create your image. Avoid getting caught up in the accuracies of the details. Your image may develop over time so in this first session, you can simply focus on creating the basic idea of your image.
- After you create your image, reflect on how it makes you feel. Your image should evoke feelings of caring, kindness, compassion, and support.



NOTE: more details can be found at www.arttherapyresources.com.au/case-study-abandonment