

ART THERAPY RESOURCES



ART THERAPY CASE STUDY BACKGROUND: ADOPTION

Beverly was raised in an orphanage from birth to age 3. She was then adopted to a couple and had been living with her adopted family for the past 15 years. Beverly was happy to be with her adopted family of two parents and two other adopted children. Beverly didn't feel as connected to her adopted parents as her other adopted siblings appeared to be. Beverly felt disconnected as she felt her siblings already 'proved' adoption should not affect her relationship with her adopted parents. Beverly felt she had to pretend she was as close to her parents as her siblings. Beverly felt she had to pretend she understood shared jokes about common family behaviours. Secretly, Beverly felt unlike everyone in her family.

This exercise is designed to help your client explore the external self and their core self and identify whether any difference exists. The external self is a reflection of norms and expectations. The internal core self represents our inner thoughts about ourselves. These are usually hidden away for fear of rejection or ridicule.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Ask your client to think of an object that displays a distinct internal and external layer. Examples include a turtle or an avocado.
- Your client can either draw an identifiable object or simply use shapes. In art, shapes can be used to further enhance the client's perception of their inner and outer layers.
- Ask your client to create those separate layers, and ask them to reflect on their perceived differences in their inner and outer layers. The inner layer defines the core self that they believe represents their true selves. The external layer reflects the self that is defined by social norms and expectations.
- These layers can be complex as we often represent a variety of sides to different parts of our family, friends, or other social interactions.
- Ask your client to create this external and core self image in the context of their current issues regarding adoption and their adopted family.



EXAMPLE EXERCISE:

NOTE: more details can be found at www.arttherapyresources.com.au/adoption