

Creative Supervision

The Use of Expressive Arts Methods in Supervision and Self-Supervision

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Sailing into the World of Magic – The Use of Therapeutic Cards

Therapeutic cards are not necessarily the prepared cards that I mention in this section. Although I have found the variety of cards and activities that can be played with them fascinating, one can easily make one's own set of pictures or images and still have the same projective and introspective result.

It is important to say that historically there have been many projective techniques such as Rorschach inkblots, TAT (Thematic Apperception Test), CAT (Children Apperception Test) and HAT (Human Apperception Test). All the cards represent different situations where adults and children are encouraged to tell stories for diagnostic purposes. Violet Oaklander (1970) uses TAT and CAT as probing and storytelling cards rather than diagnostic tools.

The cards that I work with have been developed by a psychologist and an artist, taking into consideration various options and elements that are important in the therapeutic encounter. One can easily make one's own set of cards from postcards, journals, etc. However, there is a benefit to the use of 'commercial' cards, in that these cards look official and 'neutral', thus are respected as all printed material to be objective, reliable, and valid. With some clients it has a significant effect, others may suspect it is some kind of test.

SAGA – Therapeutic storytelling cards (adapted from Ayalon (1997))

SAGA cards depict characters, scenes, and objects from a land and time that never was and always is. Each card is a springboard for a story. They

are intended to awaken the delight of surprise and to rekindle memories of childhood dreams. SAGA cards offer the opportunity to exercise the imagination, have fun, even play – without needing to win or score points. With this in mind the storyteller in all of us is encouraged to take a SAGA card and begin to spin a yarn...

Can you remember sitting next to a loving adult listening to a story told especially for you? Sometimes the tale made no sense at all: it just made you laugh or shiver, sometimes it encouraged you to make up your own ending or change the beginning. Sometimes it made you wonder. We all remember the tried-and-true fairy tales, the ones we never doubted and never will doubt. Those stories left us breathless and ready for more, and filled our memory with a range of special images: Rumpelstiltskin, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Hansel and Gretel... These stories are generation connectors, grandpas and uncles know them and they can be told over and over again. Their retelling rolls off our tongues without effort, and our hearts are still warmed by them.

The SAGA cards directly and indirectly refer to classical fairy stories and heroic tales and myths. Each card suggests some scene in some story or tale. So, whether a SAGA card prompts us to retell the story of Sir Lancelot or one about the maiden and Babayaga, or whether it leads us along a new path in search of the Holy Grail, we have entered the special world of universal myths. These are the stories that, if we choose, provide us with the opportunity to venture into the interior landscape of our self. The universal myths can never be untold. They are there for us, with all their insightful beauty...just down the road and around the corner...in the land of fantasy.

Let me start by sharing with you one option of warming up your supervisees to the fun of playing without competing.

Allow your creativity to flow and skip about in time, space, context and meaning. Tell the story in an active tense, keep the events moving along. Be yourself, and the temptation to impress people with your wit and literary skills will vanish. Especially in group play, you may want to agree upon certain courtesies, such as time limits, not reinterpreting another's card, or interrupting each other. In some circumstances it may also be a good idea for a player to have the choice of *not* playing a card, to pass without comment or padding.

In pairs or small groups each player, in turn, draws three (or five) cards at random and inspects them. If a card is not liked, it can be put upside down next to the player and another card taken at random. Now the three (or five) cards are set down in a row – not necessarily in the order drawn. The player then develops a story based on the cards, the beginning suggested by the first card, and the ending by the third (or fifth). When the story is completed other players may ask questions to clarify their understanding of the story. The ‘teller’ is encouraged to reflect on the process and see if the way the story deals with the issues raised in the ‘saga’ corresponds to known ways of meeting challenges or problems. At the end the player may return to any rejected card and ask what was in it that made her reject it? Was that issue addressed later on by her story anyway?

Your personal Saga

The procedure described here is an example for a longer process where the supervisee uses his imagination first as a playful element, second as an exercise for the right hemisphere and third as an opportunity to be introspective about what is going on in the therapy, or supervision, or both.

Each day, over a specified period (month, six weeks, etc.), set time aside to write a segment of a story in a journal or bound notebook. Draw a SAGA card at random and write at least a page-long segment of the story, starting the first day with ‘Once upon a time...’. During the writing reread only the previous day’s entry. Do not attempt to generate a coherent, well-plotted story. Let the mood of the day dictate the direction of the story and remember that you are in a magic world where everything is possible. Drape yourself in the mantle of witch, monarch, or *deus ex machina*.

Indulge in lapses of memory, relish your obsession with details you would otherwise deem unimportant, rename characters, change their roles, status, color, gender, or species. Kill the hero and resuscitate him in a new role. When the specified period of time is over, end the story.

Set aside an evening and read the whole thing through. Resist the temptation to annotate, edit, correct, censor. Decide whether you want to read the story – or portions of it – to your supervisor or to your group. In any event look at it from the point of view of an observer who looks in on

the story as if it were an account of where you were during this period of time with the different clients or encounters. Let that observing part of you mark all the images, sentences, words, etc. that it finds attractive in the story and use them as guides to the process. If you wish you can share this part or parts.

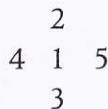
Defining the problem and finding solutions

Sometimes we need a special technique in order to get out of a mess, or when we feel there is a need for a process that is helpful with supervisees who are either very reserved or who talk too much. In the former case it helps you to interview and in the latter it helps you to focus. One must remember, however, that the process that is described here needs to be used carefully, especially when the supervisee is a spiritual type or already tends to perceive the supervisor as a 'mindreader.' It is a powerful tool but needs a delicate approach.

Now because we are in the 'fantastic' world of cards and want to make use of its unexpected, surprise element, we are structuring the procedure to ensure that our supervisees feel secure. That is the reason for the following structure.

Stages of setting the cards and 'reading' them:

1. Divide the cards into five piles, face down.
2. Think about a problem case and keep it in your mind.
3. Take five cards from any pile (or one from each pile as you wish) and hold them face down.
4. Place the cards face down according to the diagram – the top card in the middle then the next one above it, the third below them, the fourth on the left and the fifth on the right.



5. Turn over card no.1 and ask yourself: In what way does the card represent my client's problem?

6. Turn over card nos. 2 and 3 and ask yourself: In what way are they connected to the origins (history) or causes of the problem or contribute to its understanding?
7. Card no. 4 is the hopes or fears you have for that client.
8. Card no. 5 is the issue(s) that the therapy is dealing with or that you feel need to be addressed but are maybe still in the background.
9. Please share what you have observed in the cards and discuss it with a partner. Use the cards to tell about the case and to clarify or affirm what you already know.
10. If by any chance you do not know how any one of the cards is connected to the PROBLEM, turn over the other four cards, leaving only the card you found puzzling. Free associate, tell the story of this card (not necessarily in relation to the problem) and of what you think happens with this card. Let your partner write this down, then read it back out loud to you. Ask the questions of this card once more and see if it clarifies anything. Then continue with any other card that you are stuck with, using the same process.
11. Share with your supervisor any new things that have been revealed or things that looks fascinating, or puzzling. If acceptable let the supervisor share his perception of the cards and what they may represent.
12. Now look at your cards and choose the one which says to you: 'Stop it all, there is no hope, you are useless. She (your client) is hopeless, etc.' Then choose the card which says: 'Yes, this is difficult; but you can do it; don't despair.'
13. Turn over all the other cards and stay with these two. Let them 'talk' to each other and listen to their dialog. (Let your supervisor help you in this process, by holding the card facing you, or by helping you interviewing them.) If you find any difficulty in the process then return to the full deck of cards. Divide it in the middle. Take the middle card. Look at this card. In what way can this card help you to find a solution or in what way does it clarify the difficulties or problems of the case you have chosen to bring up?

14. Repeat the process three times and point out the cards which have been most helpful or that have shed light on difficult issues.
15. If none is helpful, then your supervisor, or counterpart, may give you support and help you understand what could be the case.
16. Evaluate the process and see what are the elements you feel are helpful to a broader understanding of this case, or are useful strategic clues for future encounters with your client.

PERSONA therapeutic faces cards

The word 'persona' means:

- a mask used by an actor
- a character or personage acted, one who plays or performs any part
- a character, relation or capacity in which one acts
- a being having rights and, in later use, a human being in general.

The PERSONA cards consist of two decks of cards: 77 hand-painted color portraits depicting a wide range of people from young to old, from cultures north to south and east to west. Accompanying the portraits are 33 interaction cards that schematically indicate links and relationships. Portrait cards may be used alone or in combination with interaction cards.

When we look at these portraits, of people who could inhabit any corner of our world or of our imagination, we begin to wonder what kind of lives they live, what they feel and think, what their names are, how others see them and how they see themselves. At the same time the cards may reveal the many aspects of one person. If we select two portrait cards, we can begin to imagine a relationship with its myriad empathies and antipathies unfolding somewhere along the familiar spectrum of comedy to tragedy. An interaction card, whose significance is to be determined by the player, can help shape the fantasy and enhance the story.

Meeting the real or the phantom

PERSONA cards are very useful for clarifying the therapist's perception of the individual client, the couple, or the group. The instructions here will gradually explain how it is done with the supervisee in a consultation with a couple.

First spread all the 77 faces on the table.

1. Ask your supervisee to look at them carefully and pretend that he is the husband in this couple.
2. Ask him as the husband to choose the card representing his wife (A).
3. Then ask him to pick the card that represents him as the husband (B).
4. Now ask the supervisee to assume the role of the wife, and whilst looking at the pictures choose the picture representing her husband the way she perceives him (D), and then one to represent herself (C).
5. Ask the supervisee to pick a picture representing the man as the supervisee himself sees him, and then to pick a picture for the woman.
6. Observe together the pictures that were chosen (maximum six). Sometimes you will find out that the supervisee has picked the same picture as one of 'the couple'. Reflect on that choice. Is it the way any of them perceives himself or herself, or the way they perceive the other? Any comments on that?
7. Sometimes one member of 'the couple' chooses the same picture as his or her 'spouse'. Check with the supervisee – what does that mean?
8. Then put the supervisee's choices as in Figure 6.1.

As husband

His wife's
picture
-A-His 'own'
picture
-B-

As wife

Her 'own'
picture
-C-Her husband's
picture
-D-

B and C – The way he assumes they perceive themselves.

A and D – Their inner perceptions of each other as the supervisee sees it.

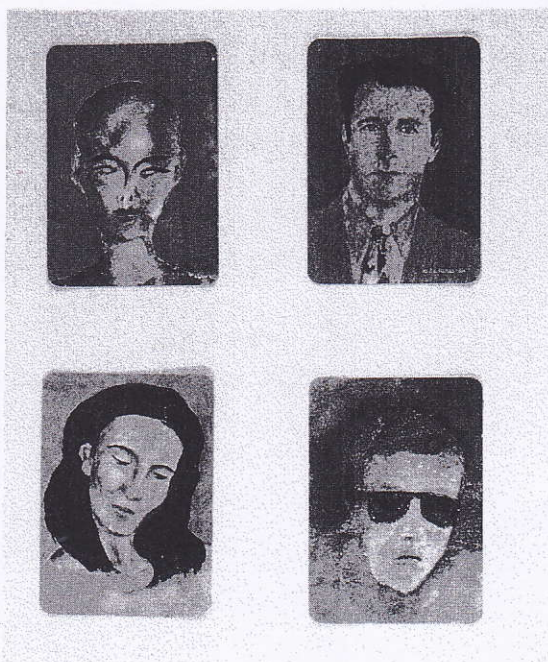


Figure 6.1 PERSONA cards – discovering the real and the phantom

9. Ask your supervisee to tell whom does he meet in his sessions with this couple – wishes or projections on him, in short ‘phantoms’. In some cases it’s her ‘phantom’ with his ‘reality’ and vice versa. I think this is a very important issue in understanding how things are going on in the sessions.
10. If the way in which the supervisee sees them is different from any of them, check with him on which occasions did he meet this couple?
11. Ask the supervisee to choose from the interaction cards the arrows that represent the relationship between pictures A and B, and C and D; that is, how the supervisee sees the two as perceiving their interaction.
12. What would represent an interaction that would satisfy the supervisee as a goal for this couple?
13. What should happen in order for it to be possible?
14. Make optional dialogs between the four (or more) pictures and see where it leads.
15. Is it possible to do the same process with the couple in a session? If so, are there any preparations?

Reflect on the whole process and see what are the insights and understandings you have gained from it.