



The power of clay

Anne Holland

Many years ago now, over long months of struggle with myself, when I was a student of Psychophonetics, I began to experience the benefits of expressing myself in drawings with crayons and creating forms in clay. To express myself creatively was empowering. As my confidence grew, these creative tools became completely integrated into my understanding of Psychophonetics and later, as a practitioner, I extended the use of these tools into my work with clients.

Clients benefit from being exposed to drawing and clay as a therapeutic and healing tool as they can be used at home as well. In most cases, I initially use drawing in the action phase as this enables clients to express themselves very deeply. It is particularly useful for clients who tend to talk too much, stay 'in their heads' and avoid feeling. It is also useful for people who find it difficult to express their feelings or talk about themselves at all.

Initially drawing with crayons is used with clients to familiarise them with the possibility of using

the arts as a tool and a resource, not only within a session but also in their lives. Once a conversation, common picture, wish and an example from life has been clarified and they are ready to enter the action phase, I ask clients to sense the example situation in focus, to draw what they sense, look at it and give the drawing a name. At times clients will do a series of drawings, at other times just one. Once clients are exposed to this method they are usually keen to do drawings at home and in most cases are comfortable with this type of exercise.

When using clay in the action phase, the client firstly senses into their body and then they use their hands, to mould and shape the resistant medium of the clay. As their creativity and imagination are awakened, the expression of their deep inner forces is poured into the clay. It is from this place that they can express feelings that have, until now, been unexpressed.

The qualities of clay have a profound impact on clients who find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings verbally. The use of clay in a Psychophonetics counselling session is particularly useful for clients who are locked into a strong, repetitive pattern of behavior where their anger and/or fear is unable to be expressed. The clay provides a safe way of releasing for these clients.

The combination of the properties of clay and the activation of the creative imagination, along with the initial introduction to drawing, provide a deeply transformative experience that can lead to a high level of inner resourcing and expression of the will.

When clients create something new in the clay it can become a resource they can draw on in life. Some clients move into resourcing instinctively through clay whilst other clients can be guided to

do so. Once clients see the forces that are impeding their lives, as expressed in the clay, they often move organically into creating something that is new and positive. Many clients then move beyond releasing into reshaping the clay into a new shape which represents their more conscious Self. Clients who are on the threshold of a major turning point often benefit from this process.

The tactile property of clay enables clients to enter deeply into a locked up emotions and feelings held in the body, and bringing these blocked emotions and feelings out into the clay. The clay and the instinctive, intuitive act of creativity required to shape the clay appears to activate their higher will, thus releasing the client from their persistent reaction enough to be able to see it and then to consciously do something about it.

Creativity is activated by the act of shaping a piece of clay with both hands. In the process of being totally absorbed in the interaction with the clay, the heart is opened and the controlling mind is by-passed.

Through considerable experimentation I have discovered that many clients benefit from this process of introducing drawing and then working with clay. Clients who are blocked are more likely to express their hurt feelings and anger and indeed transform them by using a combination of drawing and clay within a Psychophonetics counselling session. I have observed that while working the clay, pummeling and shaping it, the action frequently leads clients to identify and then talk about their hurts and fears.

Clay has its own unique properties which enable a client to connect to their anger or hurt feelings or repressed speaking. Initially when clients are asked to express their unexpressed feelings into

the clay they become totally absorbed in releasing these feelings in a way that they may not have done if asked to do this same activity on to a cushion. For example, some clients when asked to use a cushion to express their anger seemed to hold back. However, clay seems to invite a complete release. It has a resistance in it that invites a deeper response from the hands shaping it. When clients mould it, shape it, flatten and even punch it there is a complete absorption that allows a full expression of emotions and feelings that opens up a space for healing.

Clay work is very intense and the client needs to be ready and the counsellor needs to judge the best timing for including clay work, as the process may take some time for the new dynamic to establish itself in the conscious self.

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Saturday April 10, 10am-5pm: *Anne and Kate will be will facilitating a **Body/Clay/Drawing workshop** at the Michael centre, in Warranwood.*

April 27 to June 8 - *Anne will be facilitating the **'Soul Drawing'** 7 weeks short course, as part of 'The art of living creatively'.*

