

# **MODULE 1**

Who cares, why bother, what's in it for me?

**Session I**

**Coming Together (Responsibility)**

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WHAT IS TRAUMA?

**Meeting A**

Who cares, why bother, and what's in it for me?

**Materials**

Managing Traumatic Stress Through Art page xv

Goal – each member will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of psychological trauma.

Goal - each person will say at least one sentence about herself in the group.

**Meeting B**

Poetry therapy

**Materials**

Creative re-structuring in trauma treatment

Goal – members will complete exercise in group.

Goal - members will take away one idea about how to keep safe.

## Session I Handout

### Meeting A

Some of the bad (traumatic) things that happen to good women:

- Rape
- Incest
- Domestic violence
- Prostitution
- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Abandonment
- Emotional abuse
- Date rape
- Assault and battery
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Witness to unspeakable violence
- Molestation by trusted adults (teachers, counselors, clergy etc.)

What can you add to the list?

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Which of these things happened to you?

So what, who cares, get over it!

That's the attitude: the same one that was there in others who didn't protect you. Now it may be part of you. You can learn to care for and about yourself, and then others will care about you too. You won't get out sooner by coming to group, but you may learn something to help keep you from ever coming back.

I do not like violence.  
So much has been done to me.  
But having embraced my complete being  
I find anger  
and the capacity for violence  
within me.  
Control  
rather than eradication  
is about the best  
I feel I can do.

Alice Walker

## Introduction

None of us is protected from trauma, be it a one-time catastrophic event or a long-term hardship. From illness to violent crime, natural disasters to divorce, layoffs to accidents, abuse and domestic violence to war, such misfortunes can occur at any time in one's life. In addition to the traumas that happen directly to us and our bodies there are other kinds that invade our lives. They are no less disruptive, even though they are experienced secondhand. Witnessing trauma, be it by sight or sound, is another way that accidents, violence, illness, and disasters can affect us.

Many factors contribute to the impact of trauma: age, social and cultural influences, history of previous trauma, physical and psychological health, and quality of coping skills. However what is traumatic for one person may be only stressful for another. Support systems available at the time of the trauma and afterwards play a substantial role in how we cope. To deny pain in our lives is to walk a dangerous path that can lead to life-long dysfunction.

The aftereffects of trauma are both psychological and physiological. Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness contribute to changes in self-image and contaminate interpersonal relationships. Emotional flooding and numbing, chaotic and conflicted thought processes, and maladaptive behaviors are symptoms that can be related to being overwhelmed by trauma. Sleep disturbances, phobias, flashbacks, memory impairment, hypervigilance, physical pain, and addictions are other debilitating symptoms that can be related to post-traumatic stress.

No matter what the cause or origin of the trauma, adults are responsible for developing the necessary coping skills to move forward. With careful thought and daily practice, most people can recover a sense of safety and purpose in their lives; some will achieve even more effective and beneficial ways of functioning in the world than those they used before the trauma.

To overcome the impact of traumatic stress one needs to restore, or to develop, healthy ways to tolerate distress and pain, to have compassion and respect for oneself, to interact with others without compromising personal values and beliefs, and to make changes that allow for purpose and meaning in life. Creativity, a natural human function, plays an important role in the development of these abilities. This workbook offers an opportunity to everyone, regardless of previous experience or artistic talent, to manage symptoms of traumatic stress in a creative, life-affirming way.

## CREATIVE RE-STRUCTURING IN TRAUMA TREATMENT

Anita Rankin

One task of trauma treatment is to give voice to the pain, not necessarily to eliminate the suffering, but to find a form in which profound sadness, terror, and rage can be expressed. Expressive therapy certainly provides various tools for this task. Although expression of emotion is important, I am not fond of the term 'expressive therapy', because sometimes people believe the expression is all this form of therapy can accomplish. The truth is that the various 'expressive' therapies have much broader application and potential for positive impact.

The field of trauma treatment has evolved significantly in the last few years. Abreactive processes to "re-live" and express overwhelming feelings are currently seen as providing only short-term relief, often causing destabilization in patients. Allowing abreactive emotional discharges may actually reinforce maladaptive expression. Current trauma treatment theory supports the use of expression PLUS cognitive re-structuring to achieve longer lasting therapeutic benefits. Cognitive/perceptual re-structuring is a process which combines past/present life experiences along with other information to create new, more life-enhancing ways of feeling, thinking, and acting. Expression PLUS re-structuring can readily be accomplished through creative art processes. Expressive therapy is used not only to express, but to understand, and perhaps even more importantly to re-structure and transform the response to trauma.

When people experience or witness sexual violence or other extreme traumatic events, the world turns upside down, inside out. Often a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and chaos results. Aftereffects of trauma can severely impact the lives of victims and those close to them. Worldview and self-image are forever altered. Interpersonal relationships are affected. People may experience a loss of meaning in their lives. Creative art processes can help people re-construct worldview and self-image, adaptively integrating the trauma experience and its aftereffects. Creativity in itself is a quest for meaning. In expressive therapy, we are most interested in helping clients to develop their personal creativity, their ability to see something in a new way. Essentially, the creative process is the same as the cognitive re-structuring process.

Creativity is not an attribute of a few gifted people, but is a capacity present in almost all human beings; it does not depend on inherited talent or a free-spirited environment. To be creative is to have the ability or power to create things, to be productive, to express and imagine. Creativity is a willingness to reconsider assumptions and make new connections between previously unconnected ideas. Creativity uses what already exists and changes it in unforeseeable ways. The creative process is a vehicle available to search for a new way of existing that is not always obvious. All these descriptors of creativity are relevant to positive trauma treatment outcomes.

Although a great deal of creativity research has been done in recent years, controversy and uncertainty remain as to what a creative process actually entails. Recognized aspects of creativity include expression of the unconscious, tension, non-verbal thought processes, metaphors, attempts to problem-solve or organize chaos, random variations, insight, and active searches. Effective expressive therapy uses processes that embrace all these aspects.

Structure is often an essential component in facilitating any creative process. In expressive therapy, structure is needed to reduce the potential for re-traumatization. If we simply promote free expression, clients may become overwhelmed and destabilized, never attempting a re-structuring process. In training I was once told that clients won't draw anything they are not able to handle. With experience in treating traumatized adults, I have found that information to be incorrect. I have seen clients re-traumatize themselves and other group members through artwork. Part of our job as expressive therapists is to monitor and stop the kind of artmaking that can be extremely destabilizing and to provide structures that will amplify the potential for therapeutic progress.

Even when we provide highly structured creative experiences, we can offer a selection of 'safe' images and words that give clients many choices and avenues of creative insight; unique combinations of images and words open into each other, creating new meanings. The clear surface of a clean sheet of paper offers clients a space to enter the realm of possibility, a field to liberate themselves from maladaptive responses to trauma. Structure can provide an opportunity for clients' imagination to soften harsh reality and make it seem more workable.

Creative processes are important to those who have experienced trauma as they can offer a life-enhancing experience in themselves. Playing with colors, shapes, forms, images, and words can be a revitalizing activity. Hope and motivation can be accessed by engaging in a creative process, such as the exercise presented in this workshop. Verbal interventions alone cannot always accomplish this task with as much open acceptance and immediacy. Perhaps the key point to remember is that almost an infinite variety of creative techniques can be brought to bear on trauma - the only real limitation is the imagination of the therapist.

# PROTECTION

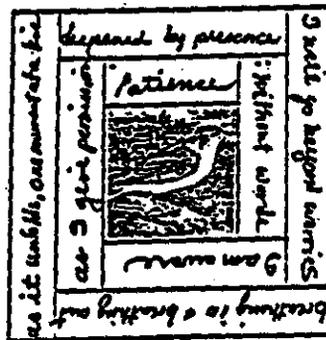
## MATERIALS:

- assorted photocopied images
- square form
- phrase list
- scissors and glue

1. Choose one image to represent something about yourself you need to protect. This could be a belief, a strength, a feeling, a personal quality, an activity, a relationship, an area of vulnerability that needs protecting.
2. Cut this image out and glue it into the center of the provided square form. Make a brief note about what this image means to you.
3. Circle one word from column 1 that might be helpful to improve your sense of protection. Write this word in the box with one dot. See example below:

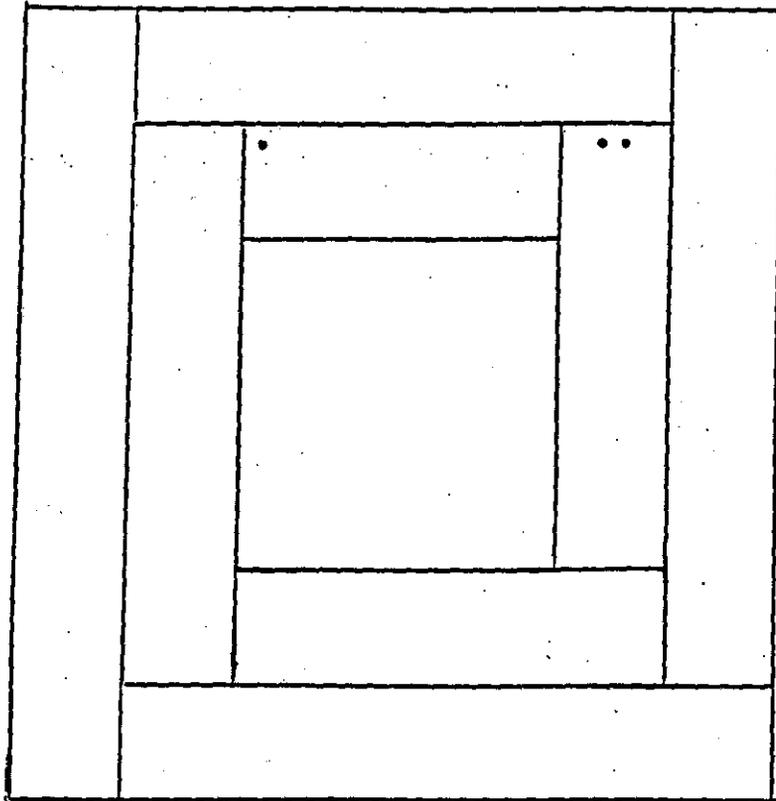


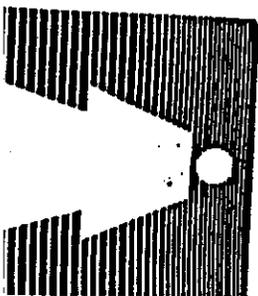
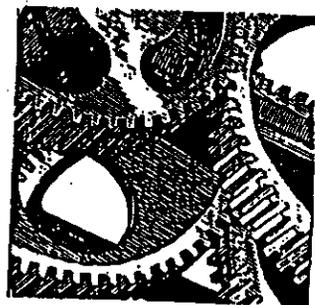
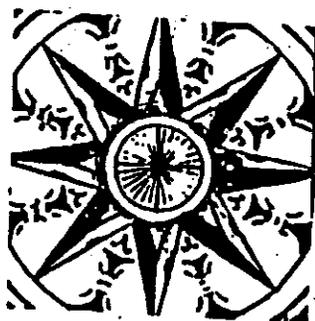
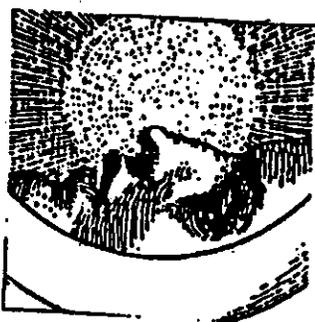
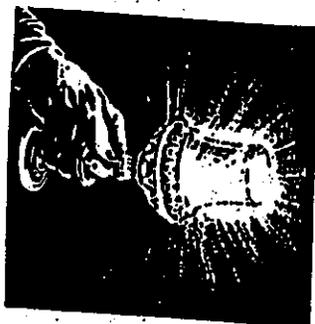
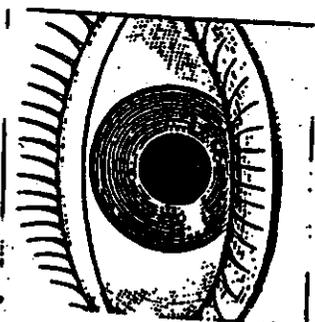
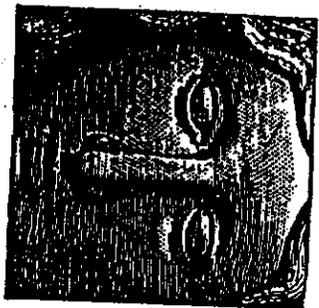
4. Circle one phrase from each of the other columns that has significance to you and relates to what it is that you need to protect. Write each of these phrases in the rectangular boxes continuing to move outward around the image until all the boxes have writing in them. See diagram below:

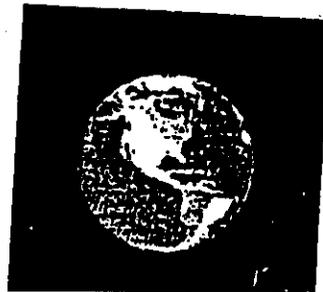
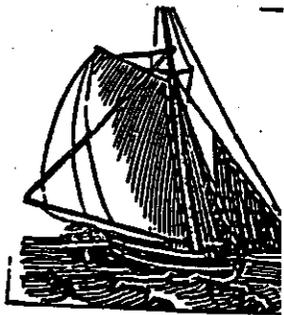
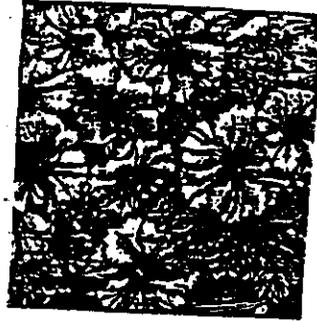
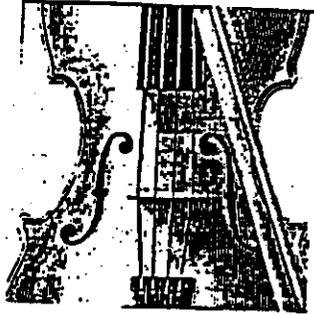
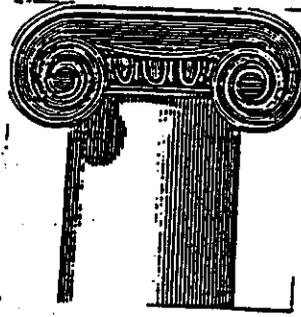
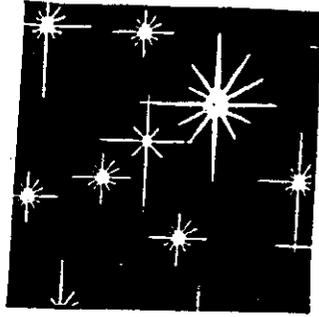
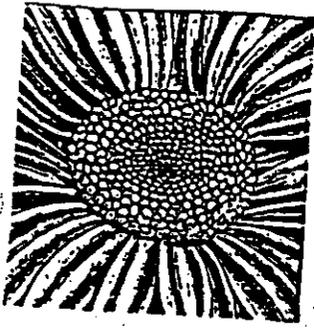


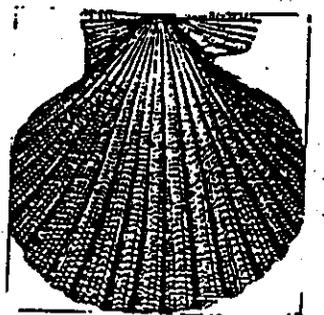
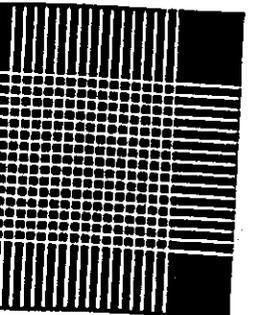
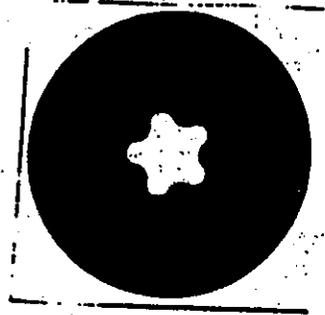
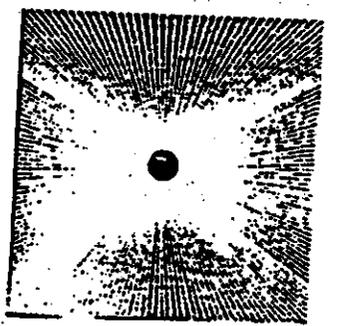
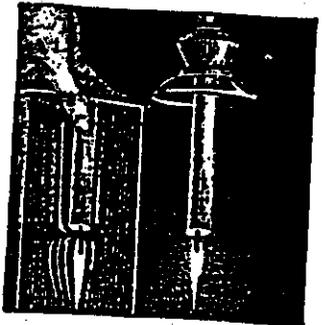
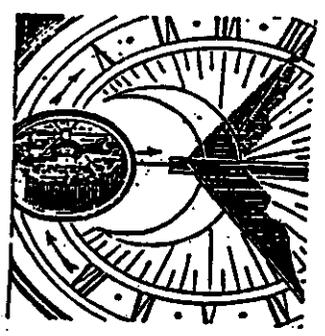
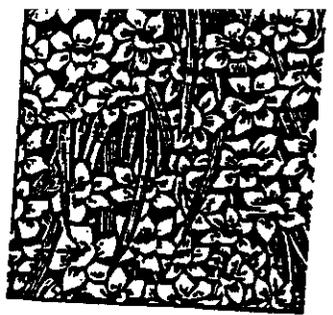
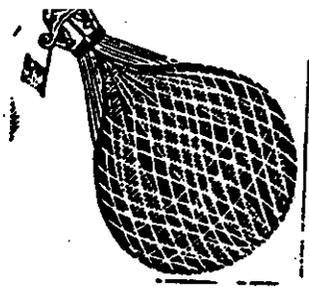
5. You have completed your visual poem. You may want to write the poem in a more typical written form. The order of the phrases can be varied. One possibility is to read/write the poem starting with the shortest, most interior phrases, continuing around the square toward the outermost edge, until you have read/written all the phrases. Another way is to start with the longest exterior phrase and read/write the poem going inward until you reach the last rectangular box with one word. You may wish to use the one-word column selection for the title of your poem.

6. Write about the meaning of the visual poem.









CIRCLE ONE PHRASE FROM EACH COLUMN THAT HAS SIGNIFICANCE FOR YOU.

1	2	3	4
KNOWLEDGE	AFTER BETRAYAL	I SEE ENERGY	AS I ARRANGE A CHANGE
COMPASSION	FROM DESPAIR	I CAN SMILE	AS I LOOK FOR CHOICES
RECOVERY	TOWARD OPPORTUNITY	I BALANCE PAIN	AS I CALL FOR HELP
STILLNESS	AGAINST GRAVITY	I TOUCH COMFORT	AS I SPEAK WITH THE SUN
HEARTSTRINGS	OUT OF SILENCE	I CAN HOPE	AS I SLOW DOWN
RESILIENCE	BEYOND BELIEF	I FEEL SPRING	AS I WATCH OVER MYSELF
INSPIRATION	INSIDE TRUTH	I AM BECOMING	AS I SEARCH FOR BEAUTY
HUMANITY	AGAINST VIOLENCE	I CAN DANCE	AS I TOUCH THE SKY
PATIENCE	WITHOUT WORDS	I CRY OUT	AS I WEEP FOR DREAMS
NEGOTIATION	BENEATH STONES	I HUG TREES	AS I GIVE PERMISSION
INTEGRITY	WITH KINDNESS	I AM A WARRIOR	AS I CRYSTALIZE FORM
APPRECIATION	ACROSS INDECISION	I RECEIVE STRENGTH	AS I APPLAUD MYSELF
WILLINGNESS	THROUGH TEARS	I AM AWARE	AS I YEARN FOR CONSOLATION
TENDERNESS	ABOVE NONSENSE	I BRING SOLACE	AS I DISCOVER TRUTH
INTENTION	WITH PREPARATION	I BLINK TWICE	AS I BECOME MORE AWARE
ADVENTURE	BETWEEN REALITIES	I AM ALIVE	AS I GRIEVE MY LOSSES
DIGNITY	BEFORE ACTION	I QUESTION CONTROL	AS I HOLD RAINDROPS
CONNECTION	AMIDST BLOOMS	I LOOK INTO LIFE	AS I PLAY IN THIS WORLD

CIRCLE ONE PHRASE FROM EACH COLUMN THAT HAS SIGNIFICANCE FOR YOU.

5

TEMPTED BY MY IMAGINATION  
REMINDED OF POSSIBILITIES  
NEEDED BY OTHER BEINGS  
SURROUNDED BY LUMINOSITY  
REPAIRED BY SMALL MERCIES  
PROTECTED BY CARING  
DAZZLED BY ENCOURAGEMENT  
ALIGNED WITH WISDOM  
TREATED WITH RESPECT  
JUMBLED BY FEELINGS  
REDEFINED BY CREATIVITY  
REASSURED BY MY OWN HAND  
DEEPEMED BY PRESENCE  
LINKED TO SURVIVAL  
EDGED WITH HUNGER  
IMPRINTED WITH COLOR  
REMOVED FROM MAYHEM  
WRAPPED IN THOUGHT

6

I BROADEN MY UNDERSTANDING  
I WILL KEEP MY SPIRIT INTACT  
I WILL KEEP ON WALKING  
I CARRY DAWN IN MY ARMS  
I WILL SAVE MY LIFE  
I WILL GO BEYOND WORRIES  
I RECEIVE GIFTS OF WONDER  
I WILL FIND WHEELS OR WINGS  
I WILL MEMORIZE FLOWERS  
I WILL BELIEVE IN MYSELF  
I WILL SEEK A SACRED PLACE  
I WILL MAKE GENTLE SOUNDS  
I DESERVE TO BE REAL  
I WILL HOLD ON TIGHT  
I WILL DISCOVER NEW DOORWAYS  
I WILL TAKE A SECOND LOOK  
I WILL MAKE A FIRST TRY  
I WILL ABIDE BY FAITH

CIRCLE ONE PHRASE FROM EACH COLUMN THAT HAS SIGNIFICANCE FOR YOU.

7

EXPECTING SIMPLICITY AND COMPLEXITY  
ACKNOWLEDGING THE SWEET & THE BITTER  
EXPLORING PLAYGROUNDS & BATTLEFIELDS  
CONSIDERING SCARCITY AND ABUNDANCE  
EMBRACING SIMILARITY AND DIVERSITY  
CONTINUING WITH DOUBT & CERTAINTY  
ABSORBING LIGHT AND SHADOW  
BREATHING IN AND BREATHING OUT  
REMEMBERING TRIUMPHS AND TRIBULATIONS  
ACCEPTING FRAGMENTATION & WHOLENESS  
EXPERIENCING ALONENESS & CORRESPONDENCE  
NAVIGATING THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE  
ALLOWING YES, NO, AND MAYBE  
WEAVING TOGETHER SORROW AND JOY  
HONORING THE DIFFICULT AND THE EASY  
VOICING RIGHTS AND WRONGS  
ENVISIONING RESPONSIBILITY WITH FREEDOM  
SHIFTING BETWEEN CONTRACTION & EXPANSION

8

THE WORLD BEGINS TO RADIATE LIGHT  
NO LONGER SEEN AND NOT HEARD  
MY DISTRESS BECOMES MORE BEARABLE  
MORE THAN ZERO, LESS THAN INFINITY  
PLACES OF SANCTUARY CAN BE FOUND  
FOREVER CHANGING, FOREVER THE SAME  
MY ANGER BEGINS TO SERVE A PURPOSE  
THE WORLD OFFERS A MEASURE OF REASON  
SOMEBODY IS CALLING MY TRUE NAME  
IN A MOMENT OF TOTAL STRENGTH  
I RECOGNIZE THINGS OF ESSENTIAL WORTH  
SOMETIMES IN FURY, SOMETIMES IN DESPAIR  
GARLIC HEALS, HOT CHOCOLATE SOOTHES  
AS IT UNFOLDS, ONE MOMENT AT A TIME  
I AM LEARNING TO LIVE WITH WHO I AM  
SOMETHING MORE POWERFUL THAN FEAR  
WAITING IN DARKNESS, WAITING FOR LIGHT  
ECHOES FROM THE UNIVERSE, I STAND IN AWE