



Basic Tools & Methods (L1)

History, briefly.

- Convergence of people & events - Wells, Lowenfeld, War, Analytical Play Therapy, Kalff
- 1911 H. G Wells published *Floor Games* chronically the play scenes he and his sons enjoyed making
- 1928 Margaret Lowenfeld recognizes trauma *in children* reminiscent of adult prisoners of war – Starts clinic for children’s mental health. Recalls Floor Games. Creates collection of small toys and a metal box with sand
- *The children themselves spontaneously put toys in sand and thus she credits the children with creating new technique she calls “World Technique”*
- 1920s/ early 1930s Analytical Play Therapy developing: Hermine Hug-Hellmun, Melanie Klein and Anna Freud
- Klein believes that play is not means to form alliance but is substitute for verbalization
- *1938 Lowenfeld writes to British medical journal about “two clearly formulated methods of play therapy...” referencing her approach and Klein’s*
- This letter is first to name work Play Therapy and those she trained as Play Therapists
- Jung is using blocks and sand in his own process – recognizes healing process
- 1956s Dora Kalff, Swiss Jungian Analyst studies with Lowenfeld at Jung’s suggestion
- Adapts the World Technique and calls her approach Sandplay
- *Dora Kalff – The sandtray is “safe and protected space”*
- Lowenfeld and Kalff are not given much credit in play therapy histories, which is odd given their significant contributions.

- Evolution of sandplay & sandtray – Jungian, Gestalt, Cognitive-Behavioral, Humanistic
- Understanding from Eastern religion & philosophy, art therapy, myths and fairytales, interpersonal neurobiology, play in the nervous system, trauma stored & healed in senses, etc

Creating Your Sand Tray Space

This is distinct from a play therapy space with sand. While both can co-exist, it is important to recognize the differences in approaches and establish the spaces accordingly.

Sand

The most common sand tray sand is clean, non-toxic, low dust play sand purchased in 50-pound bags.

Jurassic Sand offers many quality sands in a variety of colors and textures. They are expensive but the quality, especially for adult work, is worth the investment. Sandtastik is another good quality brand.

Some play sands at home improvement stores can be used inexpensively. They will need to be sifted and rinsed to reduce dust and larger particles.

Sands can be coarse, fine, powdery. Different sands make different noises and hold temperature differently.

Natural sands that have been washed can be incredible. It is illegal to remove sand but often you can get permission. You will need 30-40 pounds of sand (about 3-4 gallon baggies). It will need to be washed thoroughly. Perfect excuse to take a beach vacation!

Play with the wet quality of the sand, as each sand is different when mixed with water. You may not like the way it dries or holds its shape.

Moon sand is a moldable sand that has a chalky feel, it is not used for sandplay or sandtray.

Kinesthetic sand is a wonderful sand for shaping and doing sensory work. It holds its shape and also collapses in a slow motion that is relaxing, hypnotic. Not used in sandplay or typically used in sandtray, though can be a substitute for wet sand.

The texture and color of the sand impact on how it is used and how the trays are experienced.

Stay with naturally colored sands. Bright colored, dyed sands do not work for sandtray. What they evoke is not neutral or in connection with the natural world. They do not convey the coming together of land and water – integration elements.

Trays

Sandtrays come in a variety of sizes and shapes.

There is much debate and discussion with regard to the proper size of the sandbox. Current practice of those who have followed Dora Kalff is a rectangular box, size 28 1/2" x 19 1/2" x 3" or 57 x 72 x 7 cm, painted blue on the bottom and sides. Other sizes noted in literature: 23 X 28 x 4, 18 x 23 x 3.5.

The most essential element is that a client be able to see the full tray at a glance without having to move their head or eyes, to take in the entire world they have created at a glance. Then they might move their eyes across the landscape, focusing on various parts. The tray provides a safe container to hold their experience. If it's too large it loses the contained sense.

Jungians tend toward rigidity about size and shape.

Gisela DeDomenico used a variety of sizes.

Round trays are mandalas. Eastern and Native American cultures are more prone to using round rather than rectangle. Jungians do not accept round trays.

Younger/ smaller clients and those clients needing more containment may prefer a smaller tray. Families and groups benefit from larger trays. Smaller trays can be made from plant saucers, plastic take out containers, boot boxes, etc.

The bottom and insides of a tray are painted blue to convey water or sky. The deeper the blue the more it pulls the process deeper, like the depths of the sea. A nice medium cerulean blue is good. Can do bottom and sides different shades or even leave sides unpainted.

Some play therapy settings use large sand boxes that are more akin to playground settings. This is not for sandplay/ sandtray work!

The depth should be enough to bury items, and to facilitate containment of the sand – 3 to 4 inches are standard so the tray is filled about half way.

It is optimal to have two sand trays available, one with slightly damp sand and one that remains dry at all times. Wet trays need extra care/ substance to prevent wood rot

If there is a lot of water used, a clear plastic container such as a sweater box that can be placed over a blue cloth or purchase a blue plastic tray specifically designed for sand work.

Clare Thompson writes:

*A technique created by children is to be used with awe and wonder – certainly not with rigidity. But it is a characteristic of people who write on this subject to sound very rigid indeed. The size of the tray, for example, is specified to the half-inch or centimeter, and instructions for the world-maker are frequently spelled out so exactly that it is obviously impossible to adhere to them in actual practice. But who told the children that invented world-making what to do? (Sandplay Studies, p. 10)**

*Bradway, K., & Kalff, D. M. (1990). *Sandplay studies: Origins, theory and practice*. Boston: Sigo Press

Height & Comfort:

Children are comfortable with placement on the floor, on a low table, or standing with the tray at waist height. Since clients come in all sizes, a tray mounted on an adjustable mechanism is useful.

Some adults can, and even prefer to, work on the floor (deepens regression aspect), it is ideal to have the tray at waist height when seated – looking slightly down and across the tray. 19-25 inches high.

Trays can be placed on tables or carts with wheels. Your setting and client base will determine the best set up. Client process is most easily facilitated when the facilitator has created a space in which they feel comfortable.

It's good to have tissues available next to the sandtray.

Miscellaneous Tips

Small baskets for collecting miniatures for building. Some people gather and then build, others gather and place then settle down to be with the processing of the tray.

Items for pouring, sifting, scooping, & marking sand such as: cups, spoons, large soft makeup or paint brushes, large toothed comb, pitcher with small amount of water.

A place to put miniatures while building is helpful.

PlayDoh or other soft clay in white or neutral color is helpful to have on hand for getting items to stay where a client is wanting them placed – like a bird perched in a tree.

Covers for trays – optional.

Items for cleaning

Sand gets everywhere!

A vacuum or dust buster

Consider a rug or sheet to protect better carpet and floor

Sifters/ small wire sieve to scoop out & shake off small items quickly

Brushes & dustpan for brushing miniatures, shelves, and area around tray

Water pitcher/ pan for rinsing items

Some therapists spray with disinfectant or occasionally bake sand to sterilize

Make sure all items are out of trays and sand is smoothed after each session

Sand tray is maintenance intensive.

Care is required to keep things clean, organized & inviting.

Miniature Collection Basics & Beyond

People

Figures that express emotions and stages of life

Attention to diversity

Occupational – police, construction workers, firemen

Army – 16 or so, best to have 2 different colors for opposing sides

Knights/Royalty

Figures that express emotions and stages of life

Animals

Dinosaurs 2-4

Zoo, Farm, Wild, Woodland, Water

Birds, eggs & nests

Snakes, Reptiles, Insects, Spiders

Animal families are important, Mother-Child unity

Buildings

Houses -2

(School)

Lighthouse

Castle

Fort, tent, teepee, huts, city

Churches, temples

Vegetation

Trees – 2+, seasons, types Magical, dead, evergreen

Weeping willow

Flowers

Cactus, palms,

Landscaping /Miscellaneous Elements

Wishing Well, windmill

Bridges

Treasure Chest/ treasure

Cannon

Flags

Volcano/ fire/ wind/ water/ ice/ rainbow

Cave

Fences, Signs, Barriers

12” minimum

Barricades

Traffic Signs – Stop, Danger, Caution

Gates, walls, doors windows

Natural Items

Twigs

Rocks – 5-7, polished and plain

Seashells – 6-8

Crystals

Wood pieces, raw or shaped

Feathers

Bones

Cartoon & Movie Characters

Variety of best loved, well known

Key Characters for symbolic meaning

Superheroes, fairytale characters (archetypes)

Fantasy/Monster

Wizard

Fairy Godmother

Dragons - 2
Monsters – 4-6
Space Aliens
2 headed monster is very good figure to have

Spiritual/ Mystical

Angels
Figures & Symbols from variety of traditions
Small Mirrors
Candles

Death & Darkness

Graves, Grim Reaper
Demons
Ghosts
Coffins
Skeletons

Vehicles

*some should be rescue vehicles
Cars
Airplane, helicopter
Boats! life rafts, a sinking ship

Household Items

Furniture
Presents
Tools
Food, cakes, alcohol
Garbage can
Mailbox
Fire Extinguisher
Electronics, music
Ladders

Gather, Display, Maintain

- Literature suggests at least 300 miniatures be available – a diverse vocabulary
- Open shelf display most useful, baskets on shelves for grouped items
- Displayed in categories or themes. Give consideration to theme flow

- Consider some displays by color. An all-white or black shelf for example
- Consider displaying by material – all wood, all glass, all pewter, all stone
- Include variety of materials, deepens spiritual aspect if use real items from nature – reconnection to natural world, not plastic
- Variety of weights, colors, textures enriches experience
- Variations of scale helps convey perspectives & intensity
- Broken items are significant. Not neglected but intentional.
- Try to achieve balance - Pay attention to your preferences and dislikes
- Explore other people's collections as reference.
- Have some things that do not appeal to you (colleagues for reference)
- Have things that disgust, disturb, delight you

Make or Recycle

Sandtray items can be made from a variety of crafting & discarded items. Ultimate recycle and reuse. Avocado bags make great nets ☺

Once you start, you see that everything belongs and then the caution is to not create a collection that overwhelms.

Miscellaneous & unlimited

Cotton, fabric, ribbon, beads, foreign coins, keys, ornaments

Tape & Putty for holding things in place (nest in tree),

Ways to fly/ float figures

Clay & art supplies for clients to make their own symbols.

Places to Purchase

Thrift shops, hobby stores, party supply stores, museum/ airport gift shops, hardware stores, bakery supply stores, jewelry making stores, religious supply stores, pet shops, import stores, oriental groceries, garage sales.

A few last words on miniature collection

Consider the population, developmental stage, issues, geographical particulars & the environment in which you work. These issues change how you create and maintain a collection.

Expect that breakage will occur – don't buy precious things you will worry about getting broken. You can fix many things with good glue.

For helping figures to stand, you can affix things to wooden circle bases or other methods of epoxy.

The collection reflects the gatherer – let it speak to you, ask how it invites you to use it. If your collection doesn't speak to you, then you will be impaired in facilitation, limiting client process.

Symbols carry energy. You will notice interesting things with use patterns.

A collection should not be stagnant. Practice with your sand trays and figures. Your own psyche will inform you of what is needed to facilitate a range of healing experiences.

Enjoy and tend your display as you would a garden – it needs nurtured, replenished, & weeded occasionally.