

Reflections on Creativity in the Context of Structural Integration

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Abstract

Creativity is explored in relation to Structural Integration. Concepts from creativity theorists are presented and their implications for SI examined. These include the dynamic tension of opposing polarities, flow, and discernment of movement as aspects of the creative process. The awareness of inner lived space or felt sensation is also examined as a contributor to creativity when experienced in the context of a generative system such as Structural Integration. These concepts can help the SI practitioner understand his or her own creative process as well as the client's process of transformation, not just structural transformation, but also transformation occurring in emotional, cognitive or symbolic realms.

Introduction

In order to facilitate our clients' creative processes, structural and otherwise, we must first encourage our own creativity. How can we do this for our clients and ourselves? We will explore answers to that question by looking at principles of creativity as they apply to our work, beginning with the creative impact of how we handle the conflicting polarities we encounter. We will look at 'flow' as an experience of creativity, and explore how increasing and attending to discernment of movement can lead to creative results. We will also look at creativity through the lens of inner lived and felt space to see how awareness of this space, in the context of Structural Integration as a generative system, can lead to the expression of creativity and imagination. (Structural Integration is a 'generative system' in that there is a structured framework from which novelty is generated. A few other examples of generative systems, or forms used to create, would be architecture, poetry, or jazz music.)

Creativity as Change

People typically come to Structural Integration because they are experiencing pain somewhere in their bodies. These aching difficulties commonly include shoulder pain, low back pain, neck pain, or tender limitations somewhere that encumber their physical movement or interfere with an activity they used to be able to do but no longer can. They may have tried many avenues or healing modalities to relieve the discomfort with little or no reprieve. Often implied or inherent in their search for relief is the underlying feeling that they are not getting the peace and pleasure they wish from their lives; something is going in the wrong direction, and they are looking and hoping for a significant change.

Change or transformation is intrinsic in the concept of creativity, often defined as the process of bringing something new into existence. Newness is a central premise that defines what it means to create, whether we are speaking of a product advancement, an innovative theme or idea, or a more direct creative experience, such as discovering a different way to relate to gravity. Creativity might involve a new way of looking at a situation, whether mediating solutions to global problems or getting one individual life unstuck. It is adding something fresh to a context through a course of action, behavior, or skill of the imagination. Creativity could be defined as the manifestation of any thing or idea in a form that did not exist before.

In the context of Structural Integration, we recognize creativity as an underlying principle in the transformations that take place within our clients as new structural relationships and a new relationship with gravity take form. This inherent and profound potency of creative transformation in Structural Integration is what attracts many of us to SI to begin with and what keeps us interest-

ed and excited as practitioners. The encounter with creativity in SI takes place not only structurally, however, but through multiple parallel processes—physical, psychological, and movement processes, etc.—as well as in the evolution of the person’s relationships, including that of client and practitioner.

Indeed, when we touch someone’s structure we’re tapping into all the channels of human experience that comprise the person’s wholeness: the felt sense, movement, sensory perception, conscious thought and interpretation of meaning, emotional experience, imagination or imagery, social connection, personal and even generational history. We artificially separate these aspects in order to talk about and understand them, but in reality there is a dynamic unity with each affecting the others. The creative process affecting the person’s structure is thus impacting these other channels of his or her being as well.

In facilitating creative processes taking place within the client, we also have an opportunity to draw on our own creativity. Within the framework of the generative system designed by Dr. Ida Rolf (which includes the structural logic of the recipe) is the potential and necessity to approach each client uniquely and flexibly, due to each individual’s personal history. In this respect, every interaction is new and an opportunity for creativity, as a new process and approach are generated in each session in response to the unique parameters that present.

Each of the following sections explores facets of creativity beyond its basic definition as the creation of something new. Insights from a number of theories of creativity are applied to Structural Integration. Each provides a perspective that can shed light on the experiences of creative transformation witnessed in our clients and desired in our work. While not exhaustive, taken together they provide a conceptual space for living and practicing what it means to be creative as a Structural Integrator.

Creativity as Transformational Dynamic Tension

Most of us have felt at some point as if we were painfully torn between two conflicting forces, perhaps regarding a decision on a course of action related to a relationship, a job, or how to invest our time. This is often experienced as being in the middle of two equally possible options at odds with each other and pulling us in

two opposing directions. When this happens we are fully engaged in a dynamic polarity. The resolution of the polarity is both creative and transformational.

Often the polarity carries one pole that is about security and maintaining the status quo while the other is about movement and change. Do I keep this job that offers good benefits and a secure retirement even though I am not growing or advancing? Or do I leave it and strike out for unknown horizons, new work places, new colleagues and new opportunities, risking that, in fact, there may be nothing better out there?

In health, life is not a fixed state but an interplay of motion and stability. Embracing the expression of a dynamic balance between motion and stability—fundamental opposites—can be seen as the essential principle of the creative life. Drehler¹ describes how the creative synthesis of the two opposing forces of action (yang) and rest (yin) links us to a universal pattern of growth, renewal, and harmony.

David Henry Feldman² attributes creativity to “the transformational imperative” or the universal tendency to develop new things or ideas. The transformational imperative involves the conscious and unconscious minds working together to produce novelty in the context of a polarity tension. The most basic polarities could be described as order versus chaos, rest versus action, or stability versus motion or change, with our Western rationalism favoring the order/stability end of the spectrum.

The Aristotelian tradition, which has seen its fullest expression in Western rationalism, has to do with the part of mind that tries to keep things the same, that gives us something to hang on to, that provides for continuity of experience and a stable sense of reality. The other side of mind aims to continuously change and transform, to show that constructing a stable reality is a device for not going insane, a way to keep the forces of transformation from holding sway. Indeed, conscious versus unconscious thought may have been an evolutionary adaptation for keeping these two functions—transformation and categorization—from destroying each other. This interplay becomes productive and central in the process of making something both new and useful.³

This is a description of the ‘wholeness of being’ functioning through a fundamental polarity of order and chaos to bring about creativity. The coexistence of these two tendencies in body and

mind is living creative process. In Feldman's transformational imperative, creativity is two quite distinct simultaneously active functions in reciprocal exchange: "on the one hand, an effort to abstract and categorize and organize, to put things in their place; on the other hand, to stir up and change and expand..."⁴

The negotiation of the dynamic tension between these forces of organization and chaos, stability and motion, rest and action, brings about a new level of fluidity in the whole being as the person relates in thought and action to the interplay of these tensions. What is particularly interesting is that Feldman is saying that we simply must create. In fact, he tells us, at least part of the mind, the chaos-stirring-up part, does almost nothing but transform³. It always moves. It does not remain motionless or stable. It, and therefore we, must constantly transform and renew ourselves.

It becomes problematic when, instead of a relative balance and play between the two, one end of the polarity holds too much sway and influence. As SI practitioners, we may see some clients who are bogged down in rigidity and fixation, and others who are dispersing too much into chaos and instability. From a structural standpoint, physical compensations in tissue help bring stability, but they can also prevent optimal movement or flow of energy. In releasing compensations and promoting organization of more chaotic structures to more stably support flow, Structural Integration invites a dynamic tension between these two forces that allows the person to creatively enter into a new structural relationship with gravity, a new way of being in the world where he or she isn't getting too dispersed in chaos or too bogged down in order.

The creative influence of this dynamic tension doesn't stop with the person's structure, however. Creative transformation begins to express itself across our whole being when structural changes allow us to hold both ends of the polarities, and they begin to inform each other. Creative changes corresponding to other channels of experience may include evolving perspectives, perceptions, cognitions, and emotions, as well as changes to the inner felt spaces of one's lived experience. The result is a modification to how one experiences one's self and the self's relation to the world. If Structural Integration is having an impact on the client's structure, one can pretty much assume that these other channels or avenues of expression are being affected

at some level as well, even if the impact isn't fully comprehended or immediately observed. It is no wonder that, more often than not, clients undergoing SI begin to develop new insights, engage with old memories, or finally make changes in their lives that they have been wanting to.

The client is not, however, the only one working with this creative, transformative edge that emerges from opposing polarities. We as SI practitioners are also working with this same dynamic tension. Every time we have a session we must hold any number of polarities in the interaction with our client, all the while inviting and responding to the creative process of his or her body-being. In addition to stability/mobility, some of these polarities might include direct/indirect, analysis/intuition, asking/listening, suggestion/response, weight/space, mind/body, structure/function, fascial/fluidic, energetic/physical, support/freedom, active/passive, or stillness/flow. Our work is a constant dance of creative interplay with these opposing propositions.

When we can hold two ends of a polarity, living with the tension of their inherent conflict rather than seeking to avoid it, we can use both; the tension of holding them both allows something new and unexpected to emerge. In SI, for instance, what emerges from the polarities of client/practitioner or giver/receiver is the client's transformed relationship to themselves and the world, not to mention the impact on the practitioner who witnesses this change happening in his or her client. Every time we as practitioners behold this transformation there is an expansion or addition to our own perception, a new appreciation of the human being's capacity to evolve and move to higher levels of organization.

This practice of simultaneously holding both ends of a polarity, of tolerating the presence of ambiguity without insisting on "either/or," is *how* we provide creative support for the client's process. If we learn to sense where we are with respect to the polarities, if we are able to hold both perspectives at once, then we can access a potent state of creative awareness in our work. What would it be like to hold *both* direct and indirect, yin and yang, chaos and order, stability and motion, responding to any one of them as they arise in the session? We create space for a creative resolution to emerge through the experience of holding both. In doing this we gain the ability to recognize this

same tension in our clients; we see what they're struggling with. It's not always easy to be in that place of dichotomy, holding onto one's established stance in life while still being open to receiving new information and creatively courting change.

Our clients may express their struggle with opposing polarities in a variety of ways. One client experienced the key polarity of stability and movement through increased body awareness in his jaw and face: "I played with that tension a bit; maybe it wants to go inward, into complete inward clenching, a black hole effect of my body pressing in on itself. The feeling that goes with this is ... I only want to be confronted with what I can completely control, with what is manageable, with what is safe. I don't want for there to be any risk, any chance of something not working out exactly right." This same person expressed the other end of this polarity as follows: "I would like to transition to a more life-affirming position. I would like to be willing to accept risk, possible mistakes, failures ... as part of life without getting shut down when they happen." Experiencing awareness of both ends of this spectrum enabled this client to begin to explore creative alternatives.

One of the most significant of these polarities in Structural Integration is the old way versus the new way of being embodied in the world, letting go of the compensations and accepting and embodying the emerging order, or in other words, leaving the comfortable to embark into the unknown. Structural integration is about that very creative undertaking; how fast do we facilitate the dispersal of the compensations, and how do we simultaneously support and encourage the emerging new organization?

Creativity as Discerning Movement

Life is teeming with activity. All living creatures are in a state of constant motion or change. A fascinating complexity of motion is continually occurring within the imagination, thoughts, emotions, and physiological functions of a living being. From molecular rotations to the grandest of cosmic arcs, life is a symphonic flow of movement.

An acceptance of the motions of life is a necessary ingredient in the creative process. It seems to be our destiny as humans to relate to and create structures, such as languages, cities, art forms, sciences, etc. But as life itself is a reality of constant motion and change, we are chal-

lenged to keep our structures and our minds relatively permeable and fluid. Creativity occurs naturally when we allow that flow to happen. We become more open and resilient, in harmony with the true nature of our consciousness. This is the nature of health, our relationship to motion that is constant, yet reliable enough for us to reach out one moment, sometimes quite far, and return to grounding and stability the next.

Structural Integrators recognize that physical movement within a person's structure relates to non-physical motions expressed through the emotional, cognitive, and other channels of the person's body-being. For our purposes here we therefore define movement in a unified way as 'activity, change, or transformation happening in both physical and non-physical domains.' David Bohm expresses this concept of movement as follows:

We thus emphasize that thought and the perceptions that guide action, along with the feelings and urges that constitute the motivation for such action, are inseparable aspects of one whole movement...⁵

and

...it is important to emphasize that movement means not just the motion of an object through space, but also much more subtle orders of change, development, and evolution of every kind.⁶

Images of movement enter into Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'flow' as the experience of creativity. Flow is an "automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness"⁷ that is ideally at the heart of the creative surge. In flow, actions and awareness are merged. Distractions are excluded from consciousness. Worry and self-consciousness are absent, or at least minimized. A sense of time becomes relative and the activity becomes autotelic, that is, it becomes worth doing, is pleasurable, and has value for its own sake.⁷ Have you ever had the experience of being so completely in the moment of an activity that you felt like you and the action were one and the same? Or have you ever had a peak experience that felt exhilarating and unpremeditated?

In the imagery of movement, flow can be envisioned as a continual stream, the movement of which is smooth, uninterrupted and usually accompanied by a sense of direction. Commonly we think of a flow of words or feelings, gestures, or sensations. Laban describes flow as "how a

thing is moving through time and space” and describes it affecting the person’s power of “feeling.”⁸ The spaciousness of flow is characterized by the absence of sharp, rigid angles or shapes, by imperceptible transitions, and by a lack of abrupt starts and stops. There is also a sense of a substance that moves and carries us to changes of place, much like sitting in a river and being moved by the substance of the water. In experiencing flow as moving over, under, around, or through something, it is as though we become the flow itself.

It is useful here to make a distinction between the creative process and the creative surge. The former involves the often uncomfortable tension of opposing polarities. This process prepares us to experience the flow of the creative surge, but often does not itself feel very flowing. The creative surge, on the other hand, could be experienced as a sensation of inspiration, expansion, and a sensory stimulation in the body-being like an ‘inner smile,’ when the polarity is resolved and the transformation becomes manifest. In SI it can also feel like the flow of a deep expression coming through the client’s body into locations it previously was unable to access.

As practitioners it is this flow that we seek in ourselves and in our clients in the context of the session. The imagery of creative flow is consistent with the physical transmission of movement that can be established through Structural Integration. Conversely, where we see torsions and compressions there is a lack of flow or a lack of the appropriate space in which flow can occur. The concept of flow seen through the lens of Structural Integration evokes the ease and immediacy associated with movement from the core, as well as the integration of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ implied by the balancing of intrinsic and extrinsic structures (more potential creative polarities).

Because movement is change or transformation, our ability to recognize movement sustains creative momentum. Keen perceptions of movement that carry us through and beyond stifling preconceptions are required in order to proceed in search of the creative experience, both our own and our client’s. Bohm states that “creativity is always founded on the sensitive perception of what is new and different from what is inferred from previous knowledge.”⁹ Distinguishing similarities and differences within those motions is essential, as Bohm points out, to guide the measures of our efforts within the domains

we choose. Our involvement with and lived experience of creativity is a conscious process. When we can experience and discern flow, according to Csikszentmihlyi⁷, we know we are being creative.

Part of Structural Integration’s transformational potency is in its capacity to empower clients to discern movement and connection within their own bodies. The lack of perception of movement structurally or in any of the channels represents an existing dissociation, rigidity, or fixation, in other words, the ‘problem’ that is addressed in the creative process. It is not enough for changes in movement transmission to happen; one of the explicit or implicit ideas that structural integrators seek to embody and facilitate in the clients is awareness. We want our clients to become conscious of their bodies, conscious of how they are living, moving, and working so that they can relate to their environment in a new way and feel more confidently involved in their own creative process. One of our tasks is education, waking the client up and increasing his or her capacity to consciously experience his or her body, its movement or lack of movement, and its transformation.

The capacity to discern movement is also a key element of creativity for the practitioner. In addition to recognizing movement transmission or the lack thereof, over time Structural Integrators hone their ability to recognize inherent motion and motility, movement patterns that are stuck and seeking completion, movement impulses seeking expression in response to the Structural Integration, and other expressions of authentic movement or gestures. Even compensations can be seen as potential movement expressions waiting to come forth with valuable information. The fulfillment of these movements is both transformative and pleasurable.

Practitioners can increase their creativity by increasing their visual and touch perception abilities and by broadening the perceptual field to include additional aspects of awareness. What is the client telling us verbally or in other ways? What are the complaints? What do we notice hindering this person, structurally and otherwise? What’s moving, and what isn’t? *How* does the client’s body want to move? Where do we perceive stability, chaos, or motion? What do we notice arising?

When something arises and speaks to awareness, whether through visual assessment, touch, words, or other more intuitive channels,

that is the discernment of movement. Outward changes or movements are more easily recognizable. Subtle inner movement or changes to a person's inner being aren't so easily identified. How can we perceive the changes to our clients' thoughts, perceptions, and emotions, to their inner felt spaces, to their experience of themselves in relation to the world? The more sensitive we are to movement manifesting across various channels (our channels of perception and the various expressive channels of the client's whole being), the more creatively intuitive we can be in facilitating the client's process of transformation and the more our analytical and assessment skills can integrate with and nourish our intuition.

This discernment of movement can also include the practitioner's consciousness of his or her own body. The more we can apply this to ourselves, the more effective we can be in our practice of facilitating awareness in our clients. Do we feel ourselves compressing or expanding, narrowing or widening as we look at our client? How does the movement of the client's body transmit through our hands into our bodies, and from ours back into theirs? What thoughts, emotions, or images pop into our head? What's happening within the assessment/intuition polarity?

Structural Integrators also need the ability to see where movement is not happening. People come to us because of a lack of flow, not because everything is working great. A big part of Structural Integration is finding the obstructions that are preventing health or flow. When we are able to experience and discern lack of flow, we brush up against the transformational imperative in the form of potential for change. It becomes the beginning point of creative transformation, the raw material of creativity. The ability to discern lack of movement is one way of experiencing and holding polarities as we work at the edge between flow and lack of flow, between the problem and the health. Structural Integrators recognize and express this potential verbally in describing clients' lesions or inhibitions to them as "the potential for more movement." Discerning this potential is like planting a seed that will eventually bear fruit in movement and creative transformation.

Creativity as Lived Space

Movement and creativity happen in and through spaces, from the cosmic dimensions of outer space to the most intimate internal regions

defined by vessels, structures, and systems of the body; from immeasurable unknown areas of the unconscious to the conceptual and perceptual zones of consciousness. Polarities hold space within two ends of a spectrum. Creative conceptual space also exists within the boundaries defined by generative systems. Internal and external spaces interact with each other in the creative process.

A number of theories of creativity incorporate the concept of 'lived space.' 'Lived space' refers to an individual's inner felt sense: the sensations and space experienced within the body. Lived space can be a direct felt experience of many aspects of life, including the external spaces of our environment, our experience of our own bodies, and our felt experience of any channel of expression such as concepts, emotions, or images. The interplay of our internal and external spaces, our awareness and sensitivity to the contours, pathways, and elemental structures of all of these spaces, and our ability to be open in interacting with them *is* creativity.

Max Van Manen suggests that our felt experience of the spaces around us is so integrated into who we are that "In general, we may say that we become the space we are in."¹⁰ In "the huge spaces of a modern bank building," Van Manen suggests, we may experience ourselves as quite small and insignificant. In a cathedral we may experience a "sense of the transcendental," while in a large foreign city we may feel lost, vulnerable, and over-stimulated. An open prairie, on the other hand, may elicit a sense of freedom coupled with consciousness of exposure. This experience of our lived spaces, described by Van Manen as "felt space," is usually pre-verbal and non-reflective; in other words, we experience the felt sense of the space directly and non-analytically.

Jeffrey Maitland¹¹ elaborates on this pre-reflective aspect of our experience of space, describing it as *the doing and being* of an action and *the consciousness of doing and being the action* without the subject as *doer* and object as *being done*. In "oriented space," as he refers to it, we are not other than our bodies. Our bodies are integral and necessary experiential dimensions of our beingness. Lived space is when the space and our being are one. One walks into a room without thinking *about* the room (i.e., "I'm in my room" or "I love this room"). Instead one is just there and feels oneself being there.

The internal experience of our external environments is one aspect of our lived space. Another is the internal experience of our internal bodies. Have you ever had the awareness of the blood moving through your veins? ...the craniosacral fluid cycling through your spinal canal? ...the micro-movements of your joints? ...neural signals of emotional activity? ...the physical volumes and shapes within which these movements are happening?

We touch the less tangible internal spaces as our thoughts, emotions, memories and even imagination take form as sensations within the body. In the wholeness of our experience as body-beings, physical and less tangible felt or lived spaces relate to each other, and these relate in turn to external spaces, communicating and integrating with each other as a manifesting unity of inner sensation. This inner felt sense of lived space constantly evolves, responding to the ever-changing inner and outer landscapes of our lives.

Lived Space and Generative Systems

As mentioned above, Structural Integration is a generative system, a framework for activity from which novelty, or creativity, emerges. When expressed through a generative system, creativity implies a relationship to the containing boundaries or limitations of the system in question, to the conceptual space bounded by the system's theories and ideas. The structure of generative systems is important when it comes to the spaces they define, through which movement and creativity stream, in our case those spaces afforded within the SI framework. Examining another generative system may shed light on how the felt experience of lived space relates to creativity in Structural Integration.

Haiku can be considered a generative system of poetry in that it has symbols and rules and can generate novel ideas and experiences. The rules constrain each haiku to three lines, consisting of five syllables in the first and third, and seven in the second. There is dynamic tension, minimalism of form juxtaposed against a wide expanse of meaning. In addition, "good haiku usually have two elements in tension that create in the reader a new insight."¹²

When one steps through the paradoxical haiku doorway of compressed poetry, one is hopefully treated to a multidimensional experience of felt space that influences one's inner landscape, and one's view and experience of the

outside world. The following three haikus¹³ illustrate the interplay of external space and internal felt space in creative expression emerging from a single theme, death. Each uses the external world as a way to connect with the internal experience, employing poetic expression to influence the perspective of another, the reader. The first was generated while sitting next to a flowing creek on a warm autumn afternoon, the second was generated at the bedside of a dying friend, and the third while watching a squirrel take apart a tree of ripe apples. Notice the differences in the perceptions of death that they evoke, as well as in the imagined or felt lived space experienced in reading them.

*leaves float through the creek
like words thanking the waters*

*for their lives in trees
like a key turning
when the last breath leaves the lips
opening the door*

*fat squirrel laughing
trimming apples from the tree
sets apple worms free*

In each poem death is experienced via lived space, but very different experiences of lived space. The reflection and subsequent poetry arise from the interface of the external and internal spaces that comprise the author's unique experience of death. This relates in turn to a shared human experience of death. Creativity emerges from the author's awareness of unique lived space and expresses through the generative system (the haiku form of poetry) something about death that we all share and that everyone has experienced in one way or another. Although the examples describe a common reality or experience, each generates slightly different feelings in combinations of words never put together before, and each will generate in the reader a sense of his or her own unique experiences with death.

The Haiku of Structural Integration

What then is the corresponding poetry or creative expression generated by the experience of lived space in Structural Integration? First, it is in the very presence of the practitioner, in the occurrence of the meeting and agreement between practitioner and client. The poetry is set in motion when the person decides to make the

appointment, to embark on the adventure of change. In the relationship itself, both the client's and the practitioner's inner felt senses respond to the encounter with the other, catalyzed by the imagination of alternative structural possibilities that the practitioner brings to the encounter and that the client consciously or unconsciously hopes for.

This poetry is also present in the actual work of Structural Integration, as we affect the client's knowledge and experience of internal space, and the relationship he or she has to gravity and to the external world. Typically this begins with expanding the perception of the space within his or her body-being. As this new openness is experienced, a new awareness of what embodiment can be and a new level of order and attunement with gravity is created.

Often the poetry does not end here, however. The sensations of the body, through a dialogue with thoughts and feelings, generate symbolic images and meanings through the imagination. Interactions of symbolic images, emotions, and thought likewise generate postures, gestures, and sensations. Opening up a person's structure to a better relationship with gravity can, and often does, open up new relationships to the peripheral and perceived world. It transforms less tangible lived space as well, through altered feelings, impactful images, and shifts in meaning. The person may, as a result, come to see the world and others differently.

Most practitioners have seen or have had clients report such experiences. Examples are wide-ranging, from a client for whom decompressing the area of an old joint injury led to a symbolic dream involving forgiveness of an unsupportive family member, to clients who experience changes in their internal space in terms of varied imagery and freedom. (One likened it first to clearing weeds, then rocks, then boulders out of garden ground in order to prepare it for planting.)

The client's experience of space within his or her body is changing, and so is the experience of the body's relationship to the space around them. This new experience of space and of spaciousness becomes part of his or her creative transformation and begins to express into the world through how the person moves and relates. A client expressed his experience of change as follows: "to be more open, to have more inner space, physically and spiritually... to reach out with my senses to take in the world."

As practitioners, we must be able to simultaneously relate to both the internal and the external spaces within ourselves and our clients. A healthy, semi-permeable connection between the felt experience of a person's inner being and his or her environment invites creativity to flow through the spaces defined by our generative system of Structural Integration. It may be useful to ask the following questions. *How do we relate to the less tangible or conceptual spaces? What do we feel in our bodies in response to thoughts, images, or emotions that come up while we are working? What comes up for us when we look at or touch our clients? Do our conceptual spaces manifest as rigid and fixed principles, or do we relate to them as mutable and transformable areas of experience having fluid and semi-permeable perimeters?*

How we relate to all of these spaces and negotiate the answers to these questions significantly informs our ability to facilitate the 'making of room' within our clients where spontaneous creativity is more likely to happen. The more aware we are of these inner felt spaces and the more they can interact with our environment and with our clients, the greater the likelihood that our own creativity will manifest in our work, creating in turn more room for our clients' creativity to manifest.

Creativity as Positive Transformation, Illumination and Tolerance for Discomfort

The previous definitions of creativity relate to something new being brought into form. The word "new," however, does not necessarily imply better. Not wishing to include devious innovations that concern negativity or destructiveness (such as devices of war or torture) in our definition of creativity, we expand it to include the enhancement of the esthetic beauty and health of the largest context imaginable. Creativity would thus imply that someone's life has been somehow improved or positively affected by an experience or form of expression. There might be an inexplicable appreciation for the mystery of something done well. The novelty created might result in a perception of goodness that pervades consciousness, a sense that life has been enhanced at all levels.

To accomplish such creative wonders we must contend with whatever forces block the flow of life. Typically, we refer to these as "problems" for which we seek solutions. Is creativity the solution, or the way we go about finding solutions to problems and distress? Is it both, or

something else entirely? Creativity can be described as lived process and a moment of emergent novelty that we experience through our body-being. But it does not stop there. It is the obstacle, the perceiver, and the inner and outer spaces they occupy. Creativity is the divine emergence of meaning and understanding that transforms both self and other toward beauty and wholeness. The culmination of the creative process comes upon us in a moment of wonder, and in that moment is a revelation of how to proceed. The moment of wonder is like a multi-dimensional puzzle piece that shows us the glory of the greater view. To be available to the creative surge, one must do the work, tend to the details, and sit in the uncertainty of not knowing when or how the resolution will arrive. One cannot know when clients will make the transforming breakthroughs or if they will link their realizations to grand insights. One must only continue along the creative path to see.

The state of being that emerges when we have made ourselves available to creativity through this lived process might be reflected in a number of different felt experiences. There could be a feeling that the whole being enjoys a sense of power, ease, and flow. It might be a transcendent embodiment where the physical is in complete congruence with inspiration. It could be an innocent synergistic feeling upon realizing that what was imagined has become tangible. It could even be imagery such as a literal picture of a light bulb turning on in one's head when making an important decision about what to do next.

Yet paradoxically, in the creative process there is often a feeling of discomfort, dissonance, confusion, or pressure that precedes the emergence of the novelty. To bring something new into existence in a context of the limits of a generative system necessitates an ability to be flexible, and to tolerate the uncertainty and discomfort that accompany transformation. Grappling with limitation, narrowness, stagnation, and fixation requires patience as well as sensitive perceptual, dialogic, and imaginative skills. To orient toward the creative is to orient toward the unknown within the generative systems of our interests.

The Creative Structural Integrator

In synthesizing views of creativity garnered from the various theories, an image of what creativity is like in a vital, evolving human being

comes into focus. What might creativity look like if manifested in the professional life of a Structural Integrator? Following is a non-exhaustive list of certain characteristics that might be recognized, many of them arising directly from one or more of the aspects of creativity previously discussed:

1. *Fluidity.* The practitioner is able to be resilient or flexible regarding specific issues that arise in working with clients.

2. *Ability to maintain presence in the tension of polarities.* Rather than becoming fixated with one extreme or seeking safety in a narrow middle zone or at one end of a polarity, the practitioner's work constantly explores and balances the creative use of opposing principles.

3. *Copes with uncertainty.* In opening to the unconscious or in holding the tension of opposites, one never knows exactly what the new position or solution will be. The practitioner is able to delay gratification and to trust in the creative process, both in his or her own process as well as the client's.

4. *Strong sense of self.* The creative practitioner is resourced and supported, preferably by a healthy inner relationship to the self.

5. *Reflectiveness.* The practitioner is able to reflect on experience in order to arrive at meaning and respond to the inner images in the creative process, so that professional transformation and growth can occur.

6. *Imagination.* The creative practitioner is able to generate symbolic images and use them through dialogue and interaction, both internally and with the client, an important feature in one's ability to be empathetic.

7. *Ability to surrender.* The practitioner allows expressions of the unconscious to emerge for consideration in the professional interaction. He or she has acute perceptions of the motion and presence of ideas, images, feelings, and bodily movements. Another way of describing this trait is to relate it to a sense of centered quiet and receptivity, or even active listening.

8. *Empathy and compassion.* These relate to an openness to self and others, their experiences, and suffering. Accompanying these there must be an ability to discern subtle distinctions in the movement of emotion, thoughts, and the body during dialogue and interaction.

For example, a creative practitioner might distinguish between certain gestures, postures, or vocal tones expressed by a client to communicate very different meanings.

9. *Inner and outer permeability.* The practitioner's awareness of intrapsychic (internal) dynamics and interpersonal relationships allows him or her to distinguish between the two and to recognize how they relate. There is a coherent dialogue and interaction between the external world and the internal channels of perception, interpretation, and expression that allow the practitioner to relate to the client in a fluid and sensitive manner.

10. *Spontaneous yet grounded.* Being grounded means having the felt experience of a connection to stability and safety while being spontaneous means having the freedom to move in any direction in any moment. There is relative balance between motion and stability in his or her experience, leading to the ability to facilitate and recognize a similar balance in the client.

11. *Ability to self-calm when anxious.* The creative practitioner can still get anxious, discouraged, or confused in the course of his or her practice, but there is a mediating sense of a centered self that calms the reactivity and reorients toward intention.

12. *Sense of confidence yet vulnerability.* The practitioner combines a childlike openness with an inner adult awareness of his or her capabilities in the domain of Structural Integration.

Conclusion

The creative work of Structural Integration invites us to witness the unfolding of new ways of being in our clients. In order to facilitate their creative processes, we must first encourage our own creativity. We can do this through learning to tolerate the tension and hold the space created by the many opposing polarities that enter into our work, and through increasing and

attending to our discernment of movement in our clients and ourselves. We can further increase our creativity through awareness of our inner lived space:—the felt sensations within us that reflect and relate to our environment, to physical, emotional, cognitive, and other channels of our body-beings, and to the flow of experiences through our lives. In the context of the SI generative system, our awareness of this inner space as it relates to outer experience leads to the expression of creativity and imagination in our work. As we cultivate creativity in these and other ways, we become better able to help our clients tolerate polarity tensions and discern movement and felt space within themselves, increasing in turn their capacity to experience creative transformation.

As human beings we are creators, and life creates through us continually. Creativity is a movement of the most authentic force of human manifestation, and an inherent, realizable potential of our nature. The primal power of creativity is prodigious and inconceivable. In our creative moments it simultaneously comes through and asks us to listen, to follow, and to respond with the appropriate action. It invites us to surrender to a force immeasurably vast and incomprehensible to our conscious minds, a divine force that brings all things into being.

It takes practice to see limitations and obstacles as a kind of illusion, to view them not as impediments to transformation but rather as just one end of a polarity, as catalysts of creativity or questions to be answered by movement and expressions of change. Imagination inspires us to face uncertainty, as we hold the wholeness of the polarities and wait for the transcendent opening, trusting in a process that is inherently mysterious and universal. We then experience the emergence of the new, the transformation of the opposites into a nascent fullness. When this happens the self is changed. The body and our perceptions are changed as well. We are increased with energy, knowledge, and wonder.

Endnotes

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