St. Stephen's College

The Art of Compassion: Exploring and Integrating Counter-Emotions

by

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Abstract

Through arts-based research, interviews and facilitated discussions, this research explored how six volunteer participants were able to detect and integrate their counter-emotions; those emotions that represent a conflict between how we internally feel and experience an emotion, with our actual presentation of ourselves to others because of social conditioning. Participants explored the eight basic emotions (joy, trust, fear surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, anticipation) and through the creation of art, self-reflection, and discussion became present to their experience of having a counter-emotion. By exploring and unlearning previous negative beliefs about themselves, when experiencing a counter-emotion, they found a more compassionate view of self-emoting. Through this process, five central components surfaced for uncovering and integrating counter-emotions: lack of self-compassion; lack of congruency or a divided-self; a search for our true-self; a more compassionate self; and an emotional-spiritual experience. Learning self-compassion was another benefit of this artistic exploration of counter-emotions. Through self-acceptance and emotional honesty participants came closer to a truer self; more accepting of their counter-emotion and of others.

Key Words: arts-based research; basic emotions; divided-self; self-compassion; counter-emotions; true-self/false-self.

Dedication

I dedicate this to my family for their support: Marianne, Gabrielle and Christian.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all who have been involved in this research and those who helped and supported me in finalizing this project. They include:

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Glossary of Terms

Affect: Our thoughts, mood, and attitudes that influence how we interact, react or chose not to interact/react with others.

Affect consciousness: Our ability to be consciously aware of our mood, feelings and attitudes that influence how we interact with others.

Basic Emotions: Plutchik's (2003) basic emotions are: joy, trust, fear surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, anticipation.

Counter-emotion: The conflict between how we internally feel and experience an emotion, with our actual presentation of ourselves to others because of social conditioning.

Emotion: An important natural human way to experience life. It is made of both our appraisal of our social self when emoting and how we feel when experiencing a particular emotion.

Feelings: How our body is made aware of our experiences, physically and mentally.

Feeling Emotions: The ability to become aware of what happens in our body and mind when we emote.

Stress-emotion: An emotional experience that is considered stressful.

Three affect regulating systems: Inter-influencing systems that are made of: a drive system; soothing system; and threat/safety system (Gilbert, 2009).

Introduction

During my art therapy practicum, people who asked for my help found it beneficial to artistically explore and integrate stressful emotions. From these experiences, I discovered a process for using art that seemed helpful for exploring stressful emotions, and wanted to understand the facets of the process. For example, my observations are expressed through art in the following two figures. Figure 1 shows the problem of a stressful emotion in black/red, and a calming emotion in blue-green pulling the heart/person in opposite directions. The heart/person is in the middle, blackened and

Figure 1. Heart in conflict

stressed. The heart/person tries to protect itself from the stress emotion and longs for a more calming emotion that the person is unable to achieve, due to the fear brought on by the stressful emotion. The fear is that the person will be seen in a negative view by others or have an unpleasant feeling when experiencing the emotion. The longing for a calming emotion could also be understood as a preferred self-soothing experience or a strategy to avoid experiencing an unpleasant emotion. The heart/person acts happy to avoid feeling the stressful emotion and/or prevent others from knowing they are not

really happy. Both the calming and stress emotions could be viewed as having difficulty dealing with the reality of the situation.

Figure 2 is the result of finding a creative solution by integrating the stress emotion positively into one's life. For example in my work, individuals often reported a better life-flow expressed by the rainbow-like image. Despite the stress emotion still

Figure 2. Heart flow

being present in their lives, they did not feel they had to protect themselves from the emotion or hide it from others, feeling more authentic. Instead, they learned to tolerate the distress, making it possible to be truer to themselves when experiencing life challenging emotions. This permitted more realistic self-appraisal and enabled them to face reality. Accepting self when experiencing the once stressful emotion made it easier to work through the challenge. I also view the heart in the centre as 'normal' and 'healthy'; experiencing less stress. Life flows as a result of finding a better way to experience stress emotions, thus making it easier to face life challenges and socially integrate.

The practicum experience made me wonder if I could observe this phenomenon in other individuals in a research setting. For example, what makes it possible for someone

to be stressed by an emotional experience? Could this conflict between the stressful emotion and the calming emotion be better understood, and could the process of creating art produce consistently beneficial results Thus, I looked for an approach that could incorporate qualitative interviews, creating art, and include a spiritual aspect of experiencing emotions. Reading Eisner (1981) led me to understand that, "the difference between scientific and artistic approaches is not located in the phenomenon of study but in the mode in which that study occurs" (p. 5). My aim was to put together all these different modes.

In this study, I explore the self-experiencing emotions in two aspects. The first is the narratives around self-concepts (Polkinghorne, 1991) that are influenced by our self-appraisal (Lazarus, 1999) or the external presentation of ourselves. The second is the body narratives (Brown, 2007), that are influenced by our somatic awareness of our body experiences (Damasio, 1999) or our inner experiences. The problem of stress emotions can be seen as the difference between the discourse (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984) that dictates what are the right and wrong ways of expressing emotions, and personal experience that might be different from these discourses. The stress is due to our conflict between our inner experience and how we externalize this inner experience. This research focused on personal discourse around emotions, how we story our experiences around emotions based on assuring a positive self-appraisal, and how this might be different from our somatic experience, fearing that our expression of the emotion might not be socially acceptable. How we story our experience of emoting, or the external presentation, can be different from what our body experiences, our inner experience. The narrative view of our self-concept is that we have multiple stories to describe our life

experiences. These stories are not always congruent. To defend self from the unpleasant feeling or unfavourable appraisal, we might deny or avoid certain emotions. Becoming more aware of the conflict between how our body experiences stress and our narratives around stressful emotion, offers an opportunity to question our assumptions around stressful emotions. To be able to understand our stress emotion, we have to acknowledge our difficulty in experiencing it both on a physiological level, due to the stress associated with it, and also our appraisal of ourselves having an emotion that is counter to our beliefs of what is right or wrong. Thus the term counter-emotion is used to indicate those emotions that represent a conflict between how we internally feel and experience an emotion, with our actual presentation of ourselves to others because of social conditioning.

The term, counter-emotion, has its roots in Sears Eldredge's (1996) technique of the counter mask, which was intended to help actors understand the conflicts and contradictions of the character being played; identifying what is in opposition with who the character is during the play. In life we have certain roles; these counter-emotions are the emotional "counter masks" of our lives that we deem to be in opposition to our life roles or how we conceptualized ourselves. They are in opposition to what we were taught was the "proper way" to behave and our embodied appraisal (Prinz, 2004) which could result in a stressful response. The feeling of having no control over these emotions can also make them more stressful. Since they go against who we are taught to be, they are often hidden or avoided which can have negative effects on our lives. This response to the experience seems to create a false sense of self, as the experience is in conflict with who we want to be; our ideal self. Rogers (1961) encourages not just an acceptance of

self, but that we can still have pleasure in being one's self. Experiencing counter-

emotions is far from pleasant, but they do occur and are part of who we are. We are not

always ready to acknowledge and accept experiencing emotions that are contrary to our

self-concept, but they are undeniably part of being human.

Research Question

To study the counter-emotion phenomenon, I needed a way to observe

participants' discourses around emotions (right and wrong), their personal experience

with emotions (body narratives) and their narrative after they resolved their conflict

between self-concept narratives and body narrative. Thus, this research explored:

How six volunteer participants through arts-based research, interviews and

facilitated discussions were able to detect and integrate their counter-emotions;

those emotions that represent a conflict between how we internally feel and

experience an emotion, with our actual presentation of ourselves to others because

of social conditioning.

Further and through theory and practical experience, I explored whether, if any, central

components surfaced for uncovering and integrating counter-emotions.

Understanding My Counter-Emotion

To situate myself as researcher in this study, I started with an auto-ethnographic

look at my personal experiences and made artistic reflections on my own counter-

emotions. As this study desires to obtain new insight into counter-emotions,

acknowledging my own experiences with such emotions is an important part of this

research process. Further, explaining my own experiences with counter-emotion enabled:

making my epistemological and axiological assumptions explicit (Usher, 1996);

transparency, honesty; and self-reflection to ensure reliability and validity (Golafshani,

2003; Kossak, 2013). The art process that helped me come to terms with my own

counter-emotions influenced and enabled the participants to trust the process during the

research. In turn, my reflection on the participants' explorations led me to a deeper

understanding of my own counter-emotions. My own experiences with counter-emotions

follow and are organized around four themes: autobiographical origins; theological and

psycho-spiritual relevance; the problem of a false dichotomy between positive and

negative emotions; and professional interest and experience. Each is addressed in turn.

Autobiographic origins. Reflecting on the origin of my thesis topic, I

remembered an event that marked me when I was in elementary school. I witnessed with

my mother, a boy about my age and his mother fighting in a store. The fight started with

the mother saying "no" to the boy about buying a toy. He was not happy with her answer

and kept trying to get the toy. I found him childish, since he seemed to be making his

mother's life miserable because he did not get his way. The emotional reactions from

both the mother and the child seemed extreme, as they began to hit each other in front of

a quickly building audience. The boy ended up crying loudly as the mother grabbed his

ear and exited the store.

At that time we were living in Dalhousie, New Brunswick, and I was the youngest

of three in a French[1] Acadian family. I clearly recall being puzzled by the behavior in the

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[1] Since French is my first language, sentence structures will be influenced accordingly throughout the thesis.

store since my relationship with my mother was very loving and I could not imagine physically fighting with her. I was also accustomed to being told "no" as we had very little money. Since the boy and his mother were "English" I generalized that English people must all be violent since they had brutally deported my ancestors in 1755. At the same time, this reinforced that "we", Acadians, are peaceful and victims of this violence. This event and many others reinforced my false beliefs.

Another important event occurred while I was still in elementary school, as I played hide and seek with my friends. One friend wanted to make noise so his younger brother could find us. I took the game seriously so I told him to be quiet. When his brother started to cry, he made a loud noise and I became instantly furious. I jumped on my friend and started to slap his face. I was strong and tall for my age and was told many times to be careful not to hurt others. Because this behavior was so much out of character, I felt guilty and quickly apologized. Raised in a very loving Catholic family, my behavior was unacceptable and I was ashamed I had acted as a "bad boy". Since I did not want to be seen as "bad" again, I began at times to repress anger. Through that experience and a few others, it seemed I became stuck in a dualistic way of viewing myself; that is, in either exclusively positive or exclusively negative terms — when dealing with my emotions. If I were to be good, I could not be angry. This limiting belief led me to view anger as a dangerous emotion, and I became fearful of the threat of negative experiences with anger.

This led me to rethink my ideas about the incident in the store. How could I judge the English boy and his mother when I had a similar reaction? I decided that I must be as "bad" as they were because I let anger take over. I had little self-compassion, and was

stuck in dualistic thinking; when reflecting on this moment, this experience could have developed my divided-self. Through my teenage years and as a young adult, I believed my fear of getting angry and hurting others was not always helpful. The fear of anger while presenting as a "nice" guy, fed my false-self, since I could not always be nice nor deny my anger. I found that at times, due to my fear of being aggressive, that nice guy would choose to be passive. I would choose not to express my needs and would prioritize the needs of others over mine.

As much as I had a "normal" life, it was when working in theatre, practicing karate, and learning about counter-masks (Eldredge, 1996) that I questioned my views on anger. For example, in most theatrical plays someone plays an angry character, and in karate you need to know how to deal with your ability to defend yourself or to attack someone while containing your anger. Further, learning about counter-masks made me realize that I wanted to believe anger was not part of my identity, but I knew differently. I needed to integrate the anger and to express it in an acceptable way, and what I knew about anger was experienced differently when I felt the anger. I needed to learn how to deal with (tolerate) the distressing feeling of anger, so it could match my logic or even change my view on anger. The better I became at karate, the more I could see how anger interfered with my ability to stay conscious of the attacks or defend myself.

Logically, I knew the alternative way to express myself was to be assertive. By being assertive, in theory I could consider my needs and those of others, and manage my fear of anger or the anger of others. I would make myself believe that I had learned new ways to properly express the emotion. For example, being married and having children, I 'had' to be assertive by expressing my anger in a firm but loving way. I also learned

through karate to face other people's anger while remaining in a place that allowed me to defend and attack. Despite knowing all of this, there was part of me that still feared the anger.

It was only in wanting to know more about emotions and counter-emotions during my art therapy practicum, and after exploring various emotions through art, that I was able to have a deeper understanding of my fear of the anger.

I was, for some unknown reason, attracted to my representation of fear of anger (Figure 3). As much as the emotion represented fear, looking at it closely, I could also see the anger and wondered more specifically about my fear of this emotion.

Figure 3. Fear of Anger

As the fear of anger was my counter-emotion, I wanted to know my alternative emotion to that fear. I chose happiness (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Happiness

Despite being able to know the safe feeling of being happy, for some reason during the exploration, I was not able to feel happy since I was still threatened by the image of the fear. I decided to bring together the artistic elements of both the calming emotion of the sun representing happiness, and the stressful emotion of the fear, to create a third image of the mountain (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Mountain

Despite being in a peaceful place, I needed to respect the threats that are represented in the mountain. The symbolic representation of the mountain was and remains a reminder that I can face my fears and feel safe since I can handle the threats of

the anger. The mountain image is calming and permits me to reconnect with happiness.
These emotions are no longer separated, but united and residing in the same frame. This
gave me a symbolic solution that could help me feel my emotions and still be the person I
wanted to be seen as; assertive yet loving. Art, therefore, proved to be a powerful way to
explore my counter-emotions. I learned to: acknowledge and accept anger as an
important and necessary part of my life; face my difficulty when experiencing anger; and
learn new ways to properly express the emotion.

Figure 6. Colourful Man

Figure 7. Fear of My Anger

Figure 8. True-Self

Theological and psycho-spiritual relevance. Reflecting on how I moved away from my dualistic view of myself, I came to a spiritual realization of the influence of the trinity through the process of art. I found: salvation by crucifying the nice, pleasant, colorful man (Figure 6) part of my false-self, or the Son; knowing the love of the Father, I could face the fear of my anger (Figure 7), the other part of my false-self; and, through the intervention of a third Spirit, the art, I was able to integrate them and move toward my true-self (Figure 8). This resolved the conflict within my divided-self. The process of connecting with the Spirit while doing art enabled me to reconcile my counter-emotions and realize that all three Trinitarian aspects were different yet all three were part of me, making me whole and closer to my true-self (Benner, 2012). I could be a truer self who was unafraid of anger, who did not have to rely on the colorful man to avoid conflicts; an assertive true-self. The feeling and understanding of anger united within me, enabling me to be more honest and accepting of my emotions in order to be more emotionally resilient (Viscott, 1996).

The problem of a false-dichotomy. As the previous reflections suggest, I was liberated by coming to understand that emotions in themselves are neither positive nor negative, but the feelings and thoughts about our experience of emoting can be. Even as they function as an indispensable part of our lives, giving us wonderful experiences that can be very pleasant, there are times when we do not like how certain emotions feel or what they are doing to us and to our relationships. I would like to make an important distinction between emotions and feelings; as we can feel many things, and emotions can certainly be felt, but not always. For example, emotions can make us react to life events without necessarily feeling them. For some, the negative feelings (Damasio, 1994, 1999, & 2010) or reactions when experiencing certain emotions can be overwhelming, stressful, physically arduous and difficult to overcome. Emotions can make us feel that our heart is racing or even make us believe that it is going to stop beating. At times, emotional reactions can negate our socially accepted norms, despite our appraisal or because of our appraisal (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994), without our ability to stop or control them, reinforcing our beliefs that emotions can be negative. Due to the negative feelings when experiencing an emotion, emotions can be misconstrued as negative or threatening to our wellbeing, and can be flagged as something destructive (Goleman, 2003) that needs to be avoided.

I discovered however, such avoidance carries dangers of its own. Believing emotions to be a threat can activate defence mechanisms (Gilbert, 2010; Porges, 2011) that can have problematic effects. As Greenberg (2004) notes, making sense of our emotions is a continual process crucial to our survival, which is highly influenced by our prior life experiences with emoting. In this continuous adaptation, we instinctively

attempt to maximize the pleasant experiences when emoting and minimize the emotions that have been known to result in unpleasant experiences. As I found my experience with anger to be unpleasant, I found myself avoiding the anger, since I did not like how it made me feel or how it made me appear.

Unfortunately, this avoidance of emotions can impair our ability to face the realities of our lives (Fosha, Siegel, & Solomon, 2009), and this maladaptive response is often viewed as the leading cause of psychopathology (Werner & Gross, 2010). Labeling emotions positive or negative can heighten the avoidance of the labeled negative emotion and make individuals believe they should be experiencing only the positive emotions. The false dichotomy between positive and negative emotions can become problematic, as we cannot live our lives with only positive emotions and have to learn to endure and deal with the emotions that are considered negative. Because I did not want to experience the unpleasant stressful emotion of anger and would rather experience the more pleasant calming emotion of happiness, the unpleasant emotion of anger was counter to how I identified myself, and was avoided.

If an emotion is a threat that needs to be avoided since it is unpleasant and stressful, safely exploring this emotion during counselling can be a challenge. However, it is a challenge worth pursuing. Whelton (2004) found mounting evidence of the benefits of facilitating the acceptance of all of the client's emotional experiences, including unpleasant ones, in therapy. Important to note, however, is that Whelton's work on the importance of emotional processing across various therapeutic modalities did not include a spiritually informed art therapy process. Art therapy, as an approach, deserves closer attention, as it offers clients: a perfect medium to safely explore emotions; a creative way

to explore the tensions between the desired calming emotion and the undesired stressful emotion; and through reflection how to integrate these emotional polarities into new art and life.

Figure 9. Threat

Figure 10. Soothing
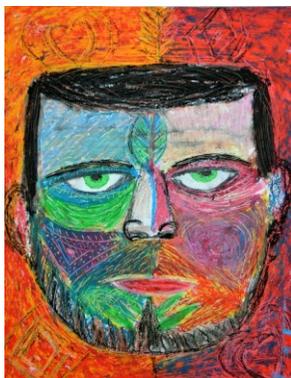
Figure 11. Drive

Figures 9, 10 and 11 represent my: fear of anger – Threat (Figure 9); the calming

colorful mask – soothing (Figure 10); and a more true-self with the integration of anger

into the calming emotion – Drive (Figure 11). These three images also represent the

three affect regulating systems (Gilbert, 2009) which include the drive system, soothing

system and threat/safety system. Each system represents different ways to deal with our

emotions, and have been associated with different regions and chemistry of the brain. An

imbalance in in any of these three systems can create distress. When I was stuck between

the polarity of the threat and soothing, I was so busy trying to self-sooth by being the

colourful me that I had very little to no ambition. Since the threat of my anger was

bigger at the time of creating art, I brought in my colorful me to calm down, but it also

prevented me from really dealing with the situation at hand. Unable to move forward, I

felt stuck in my mechanism of defence against the threat by being colourful and probably

did not address the issues that were encouraging my anger.

Yet, I had reason to fear anger and needed to understand the paradox of feeling

anger (in my body) while wanting to be colourful (my preferred appraisal) due to the

need to self-sooth. I had to face my anger and tolerate the risk of the stress that I might

be seen as an angry person. The artistic integration of my stressful emotion (threat) and a

calming emotion (self-sooth) created for me a more centered symbolic representation of

my "true" self that permitted me to be more focused and have more drive. As I faced and

understood my anger, I did not have to activate my mechanism of defence to be colorful.

I came to feel that my emotions were not a threat. I am mostly unhindered by the

difficulty of the fear of anger and motivated to be myself, since I can safely express my

anger in an assertive, loving way without fear. If the fear of anger (or other difficult

emotion) tries to sneak up on me, I am more aware of what is happening and know what to do. A mindful listening emerged that enabled me to access, understand and experience the counter-emotion and deal with it, while lessening the stress, in order to create an inner peace. Becoming aware of my true feelings permitted me to use them, and effectively respond to life events.

This artistic self-reflective process could be a precondition for me to be more person-centered and attentive; able to listen, understand and share with others (Motschnig & Nykl, 2014). As LeDoux (1996) indicates, experiencing emotions is mainly an unconscious process. How we become mindful of our unconscious reactions can be challenging, as we do not want to admit that we might be pushing others away or that we are being false. Being more accepting of ourselves in relationship to others requires learning to handle the physiological feeling that the emotion brings, and becoming more conscious of the appraisal we have of ourselves emoting.

Professional interest. The inspiration for this project also stemmed from a long journey, which included: multidisciplinary experiences as a social worker; drama in education (Norris, 2009) and theatre; and trauma and violence narrative therapy training. These experiences, as previously mentioned came to fruition during my art therapy practicum at Strathcona County Family and Community Services in 2010. During the practicum a number of individuals were seeking help due to stress caused by unpleasant feelings when certain emotions were experienced. The clients explained that they struggled with certain emotions since they felt they had no control over them, as if their emotions were controlling them. Also, despite knowing that to express emotions in a certain way was not socially acceptable, they could not stop themselves from reacting in

a manner they considered unhelpful or unhealthy. Assuming that these emotional reactions reflected a lack of emotional control, they considered their behavior to be shameful, or they justified their emotional reactions by blaming others. Ultimately, stressful and unpleasant experiences with emotions had unfortunate consequences in their lives.

Art therapy, as it turned out, proved helpful to these clients in dealing with their problems. A brief overview of the process helps contextualize this success. After identifying the emotion they found problematic, clients were asked if they would be open to exploring the troublesome emotion through art. A safe space (Hyland Moon, 2002) had to be created to explore the stressful emotion, and the clients agreed to use art (McNiff, 1998) to explore the identified overwhelming emotion. I assured clients that in the therapeutic space they could express their emotions and that they would not be judged which gave them unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1989). They were encouraged to connect with their felt sense (Gendlin, 2007) of the stressful emotion. Understanding the role of knowledge in practice (Gendlin, 1974), I tried to better understand their view of the troublesome emotion. When reconnecting with the feeling they had when experiencing the emotion (Hinz, 2006), they were asked to express artistically the emotion with art materials of their choice (Rappaport, 2009).

The intent was for clients to have a pleasant experience to unleash the energy of the emotion onto the white page using primarily a paintbrush and paint, transferring the unwanted emotional energy to the paper. By having a symbolic representation of the emotion on paper, they created a distance between themselves and the stressful emotion. Having externalized (White, 2007) the emotion, they were better able to: observe the

undesired emotion; be present to it; and realize how they felt about it. This permitted them to differentiate between the view they had of the emotion and the feelings they had when experiencing the emotion.

With the artwork in a safe container holding the emotion, the artwork became the mediating object that permitted the clients to explore the life in the picture that represented the feeling toward the counter-emotion (Schaverien, 1999). They were asked to write words that described their thoughts and feelings when looking at their artwork (Pearson & Wilson, 2009). Clients were subsequently asked what it felt like when that emotion was not around, attempting to explore an alternative story of self outside the problem story of the stressful emotion (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; White & Epston, 1990). After having reflected on the counter to the unhelpful emotion, they explored with art what emotion would be more pleasant and calming to them. They were then asked to write words that described how they felt about this calming emotion.

As clients were asked in therapy to try to reconnect with their ability to feel calm, they often acknowledged difficulty connecting with it. They explained they felt stuck; the experience seemed out of reach for them and too difficult to achieve. They did not like the experience of the stressful emotion, and seemed unable to obtain what they were longing for; to connect with the more pleasant self-soothing feelings of being calm and happy. They recognized during that time they had very little ambition, which made it difficult for them to talk or plan in therapy about dealing with their life's challenges. They indicated that there was a tug of war between the unpleasant aspect of the stressful emotion and the pleasant aspect of the calming emotion, and they felt as if they were the rope. Refusing to accept the tension between the emotions, they seemed to want only to

move away from the unpleasantness of the stressful emotion and to move toward the pleasant effect of the calming emotion, denying their stressful emotion. They became frustrated, since they were not able to experience the desired pleasant emotions, and they could not accept the part of themselves that was unpleasant (Rogers, 1961). This reminded me of my own experience with the affect regulating systems; when the threat of my anger was activated, I could only think about being the colourful me in an attempt to self-sooth, since I did not want to experience my anger.

To encourage the clients to face their counter-emotions in therapy sessions, I used the metaphor (Moon, 2007) of the tug of war. I encouraged clients to wonder what would happen if they could let go of the rope, permitting them to imagine mixing the colours and energy from each of the stressful emotions and the calming emotion, and see them being mixed together. The clients, through this process, found a creative and safe way to imagine what would happen if they could integrate the counter-emotion into their lives (Fosha, Siegel, & Solomon, 2009; Siegel & Solomon, 2003). As Milner (1950) would say, trying to fuse them artistically in the same frame. I asked them to imagine bringing the colour and energy of the calming emotion together with the colour and energy of the counter-emotion. The intent was to create an artistic amalgamation of the emotions, in order to manifest a better equilibrium (McNiff, 1981) between the opposite emotional forces.

After completing the task, clients were often surprised with the results, since they artistically created a new image that evoked the sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Siegel, 2007) instead of feeling stuck. They reported that: the new image was more congruent with their self; permitted them to move away from the struggle of feeling and

being safe-unsafe; and enabled them to regain personal drive (Gilbert, 2009). Clients were then asked to write words about this new artwork. They wrote about abilities and skills they had forgotten that allowed them to both incorporate the stressful emotion and to understand how they could reconnect with their calming emotion. They could visualize how to become a person who accepted all parts of self, even the unpleasant parts. Instead of seeing the emotions as opposites, counter to each other, they better understood how to move from one emotion to the other as a progression, instead of a limitation or something to avoid. The art seemed to take away the unpleasant feeling of the stressful counter-emotion and add to the calming emotion. This process would at times bring a forgotten past event to mind that would help them to explain the challenge they had with their counter-emotion, moving them away from dualistic thinking into a more dynamic principle of three (Rohr, 2013, p.157), or, if you are a believer, toward the Trinity.

I believe the Trinitarian concept moves us away from the dualistic trap between the pleasant calming emotion and the stressful, unpleasant counter-emotion. When reflecting on their work using a Trinitarian view, clients reported that they felt much better and knew how to accept the unpleasant aspect of the stressful emotion for what it was, and still find ways to connect with the pleasant feeling of being calm. Finding a new way of conceptualizing the struggle and having a creative solution to the impasse often resulted in a personal realization of their ability to handle the stress of experiencing an unpleasant counter-emotion.

Figure 12. Life journey

On a journey on the river of life (Figure 12), at times it is calm and pleasant to be on the river, but at times a storm can make the trip unpleasant and stressful. We never know what we will encounter on our life's journey, but when we have confidence in ourselves and in our abilities to cope, we are ready to face even the storms, increasing our tolerance to distressing events or emotions. We can also better determine when to put the boat on the riverbank and seek shelter, and not feel like we must face all the storms of life head-on.

Clients reported feeling calm enough to better face their challenges of emoting as though the process helped to lessen the stress associated with the counter-emotion. Finding the visual metaphors created in the process was a good and helpful reminder not to be stressed by life's storms, since we can handle the storm or know that the storm will eventually pass. As much as the emotions can continue to be unpleasant, knowing that we can handle them makes it less stressful.

Because I observed this counter-emotion phenomenon on a number of occasions during my practicum with a variety of individuals with diverse emotional conflicts, I felt

encouraged as an Art therapist (Gilroy, 2006) to look at evidence-based practice

grounded in research (Franklin, 2010; Kersten & van der Vennet, 2010; Puig, Lee,

Goodwin, & Sherrard, 2006). Despite clients indicating that the art process had been

helpful to them, what could the data tell me about this process? The consistency in

clients' positive reactions to using art sparked my interest in researching this

phenomenon of exploring and integrating the counter-emotion. My observation informed

my selection of methods to gather data, including: interviews with individuals, asking

them to feel their emotions, and having them describe how each emotion influenced their

body, mind, heart and spirit while producing art.

In summary, my experiences and reflections have shaped this research and

informed the design and methods used to explore how the participants through art

facilitate the detection and integration of their counter-emotions. Prior to proceeding, it

is useful to say something about the organization of the chapters that follow.

Chapter I offers a literature review which assists in understanding our experiences

of emoting. My objective is to situate counter-emotions in past and present professional

conversations, and propose why I found it important to study them. Further, I explain

how using art as a way of exploring and integrating counter-emotions can add to the

discussion of the process of regulating emotions.

Chapter II explores the nature and process of arts-based research (ABR)[2], and the

benefits and challenges of this ontological research. I describe how to be attentive to our

subjective experiences, exposing our hidden masks, observing both phenomenological

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[2] Arts-Based Research, ABR is used throughout the remainder of the text unless it occurs in a title or subtitle within chapters or begins a sentence.

and hermeneutical aspect of experiences, the importance of unlearning, and how ABR can be used to understand the phenomenon of our counter-emotions.

In Chapter III, I detail the research method, including: the axiological level; ethics; the recruitment and selection of participants, and procedures used for data collection and presentation.

Chapter IV presents the raw data from the participants, and offers an analysis of the content of that data to determine the components of counter-emotions. The analysis reveals five components of the counter-emotions: lack of self-compassion, lack of congruency or a divided-self, a search for our true-Self, and a more compassionate self, leading to a healthier spiritual-emotional experience.

In the final chapter, I discuss the findings, and explore their implications for: my own psycho-spiritual well being, and how the process of exploring/integrating counter-emotions impacts my own practice. I conclude with a summary of recommendations for further research.

Let us now turn to the literature to help understand our experiences of emoting.

Chapter I: Literature Review - Understanding our Experience of Emoting

The purpose of a literature review chapter, according to Irene Clark (2007), is to enter the professional conversation by demonstrating my comprehension and critical analysis of the subject matter, and to show the value of researching a particular phenomenon like counter-emotions. In the previous chapter, I explained my personal and professional observation and exploration of counter-emotions. Taking the time to be aware of others and myself experiencing counter-emotions gave me the interest to explore this concept in greater depth. In the present chapter, my objective is to situate counter-emotions within past and present professional conversations on emotions.

As noted above, the therapeutic process explored in this project encourages interaction with counter-emotions: first, how we perceive and think about them; second, how we react to them or express them; and finally, how we can be transformed by better understanding how to accept and integrate them in our lives. The literature that informed each of these steps can be understood in terms of Aristotle's three basic activities of persons: theoria, praxis and poiesis. Theoria originally signified contemplation as a means to achieve truth. Praxis is a process of engaging that involves both reflection and action. Poiesis is seen as a transformation from one state to another by creating, or as Levine (1997) wrote in his preface, "if you can stay with the difficulty, a gift will emerge" (p. ix).

The theoria of emotions is explained first, using Prinz's (2005; 2004) embodied appraisal theory of emotions. This is followed by the practical aspect of emoting, or the praxis, using Siegel's (2009) notion of emotions as an integration relational process. The

third part of this chapter focuses on the difficulty of being our true-self when experiencing counter-emotions. Finally, poiesis concerns the idea of how emotions can influence our perception of self, and how understanding and integration of our emotions can transform us. To understand this transformation, I examine Rogers (1961) notion of congruency, Winnicott's (1953) and Marion Milner's (1957) false-self/true-self and transitional objects/space, and end with Benner's (2012) three stages of the soul-centering self.

Prior to embarking on the literature review, it is important to know that in this study I use Plutchik's (2003) basic emotions which are: joy, trust, fear surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, anticipation. Plutchik based his list on the human adaptive functions that could activate our defense mechanisms of fight, flight or freeze. These basic emotions were used, in this study, to listen to how participants spoke about these emotions without experiencing them, then how they spoke about them when asked to artistically experience and express them. It was vital to this research to note any differences between how they spoke about their counter-emotions/stress emotion in different stages of the interview.

Theoria of Emotions: Prinz and His Precursors

Historically, part of the debate on the implication of bodily responses in experiencing and expressing emotions has been between what comes first when experiencing an emotion: the thoughts; the feelings of our physiological changes; or our behaviours. William James (1884) believes that our physical arousal is really us feeling our emotions, but Walter Cannon (1927) questions this, pointing out that we are not always able to distinguish what our body arousals really signify. If "conscious states of

mind are felt" (Damasio, 2012, p. 168), I am inclined to believe that feeling is what leads us to be conscious of our emotions. However, the process of what is felt is complex and must be understood well before it can come to mind and to be understood. There are times when we react emotionally without properly feeling an arousal in our body, or we do not always make the proper appraisal of a situation, and as a consequence, we react emotionally in an inappropriate way.

Prinz's (2004) embodied appraisal theory of emotions is based on James' (1884) and Lange's (1922) somatic theory of emotion. Prinz combines Damasio's (2010) somatic theory of feeling emotions with part of Lazarus' (2006, 2007) appraisal theory of emotion to ultimately explain why it is important to understand how we can at times feel our emotions before expressing them, and at times express them without realizing it. His theory explains how our somatic understanding of emotion (our feelings toward our emotions) can be in conflict with the cognitive understanding of how we see ourselves feeling and expressing our counter-emotions in a social context. To understand this, I discuss the embodied (somatic) part and the appraisal part of the theory.

Somatic theory of emotion. Somatic theory of emotion is what William James and Carl Lange were studying independently when they came to similar conclusions; that we first feel changes in our body. These changes are how we become aware of our emotions and this awareness of our body's feelings are what we call emotions. William James tried to answer the question: Do feelings cause emotional responses or does response cause feelings? This led James to develop the feedback theory, using the explanation that the feedback from our response to a stimulus determines our feelings. Seeing emotions as feelings, he concluded that being aware of our body's changes can

help us better understand our emotions. Walter Cannon's (1927), and Schachter and Singer's (1962) two-factor theory of emotions (physical arousal) and cognitive label, questioned James' theory, saying that people could not make bodily interpretation correctly to explain their emotional state. Prinz challenges the adrenaline objection theories due to assumptions made around the interpretation of behaviour based on the lack of understanding around subjective experiences.

Prinz (2004) differentiates Willam James' somatic theory of emotion with Damasio's. Prinz (2005) argues that the difference between these two theories is due to emotions that can be felt at times, and that sometimes they are not felt but expressed. Emotions have the ability to bypass our body's sensations and bring us to act out our emotions without necessarily feeling them. This is explained by Damasios' "as-if body loop" which means the perception of a stimulant can bypass our feeling body to give the impression that our body changed, causing a perception of an emotional feeling. Prinz concludes that Damasio's theory is different from William James' theory, in that Damasio has both somatic theory of emotional feelings and a somatic theory of emotion.

Our brain is able to notice changes in our body without necessarily feeling them. We have the ability to feel change, and we can also have the impression that we felt an emotion when it was only a perception. When emotions are evoked but unfelt, they are evoked without our ability to become consciously aware of what is happening before we react. This is what makes it possible for us to quickly react to a situation without thinking about it. Since our body does react without necessarily feeling the presence of the emotions in the body until after the reaction, this can be misunderstood as a lack of control over our emotions. We can also react due to having the impression that we are

feeling a particular emotion, but that is not necessarily true. Theoria is based on our ability to contemplate, but are we really able to come to the truth if we react to an impression of feeling in danger when we are not really in danger? To understand this phenomenon, I explain the function of the amygdala system and how someone might react to perceived danger without the presence of real danger.

Amygdala system. The amygdala system is attributed to the ability to have implicit emotional memories that determines the possible emotional significance of a threat, so that our body needs to be ready to deal with the threat and react accordingly. Joseph LeDoux (1996) explains the differences between emotional memories that are implicit coming from the amygdala system, and the memories of emotions that are explicit coming from the hippocampal system. Bowlby (1969) and Cozolino (2002) also explain that the amygdala is not a conscious processor of experience, but that it is implied. Certain stimuli can activate the amygdala, creating an emotional arousal of the body, without having us necessarily knowing why cognitively. Past events (possibly traumatic) leave our body ready to detect possible signs of danger, whether this danger is really dangerous or not. As a stimulus can activate an emotional arousal through the amygdala, we can deal with perceived danger by fighting, fleeing or freezing (Cozolino, 2002). The amygdala is associated with having a role to play in attachment behaviors and mediating the autonomic activity of our nervous system. The hippocampal system, LeDoux (2002) explains, is responsible for recalling explicit memory of emotional situations (p. 202). The gateway to the subjective experience is in our working memory; thus our emotional reaction has to be represented in our working memory for us to

become fully aware (p. 296). Damasio also recognizes that emotions are represented in the working memory, and that this can influence our feelings and behaviours.

Ecker, Ticic and Hulley (2012) explain how it is important to have clients experience the (unpleasant) symptom in the safe context of therapy, in order to create a lasting change. They question emotional regulation techniques as they find they lack long-term benefits, leaving us only to cope with difficult emotions, instead of learning the therapeutic memory reconsolidation process that has been found to have better long-lasting results. Memory reconsolidation (Ecker & Hulley, 2002; Ecker & Toomey, 2007, 2008, 2009) involves unlocking the synapses that trigger the implicit memory from reacting to a particular situation by placing them into the long-term working memory. This is a way for individuals to learn from their experience with strong emotions, instead of learning only to deal with the distress of feeling them. I believe that learning to tolerate the counter-emotion and finding ways to reconnect the impulse to past implicit memory into the working memory are both beneficial.

LeDoux explains that to have a conscious experience of an emotional feeling, three different ingredients are needed to turn an emotional reaction into a conscious emotional experience. The three ingredients are: direct amygdala influence on the cortex; amygdala-triggered arousal; and bodily feedback. LeDoux's research attempted to reproduce the three ingredients, and I was unable to verify those ingredients in this thesis. For example, the orbital cortex is used when asking the participants to look at their artwork representing their expression of their emotion, but it could not be verified if the amygdala was affecting the cortex or not. The amygdala influences attention, perception and memory when facing danger (LeDoux, 1996, p. 285). Yet, the elusive implicit

memory might not be the only thing that is said to influence our reaction to our feelings about our counter-emotion. Lazarus' appraisal theory offers a vital part of understanding how we create our counter-emotions.

Lazarus appraisal theory. Lazarus and Lazarus' (1994) appraisal theory is based on two stages. The first stage is the individuals appraising their social situation, and stage two is their ability to cope (or not) with the stress of the situation. In a normal everyday situation, if I meet someone who wants to have a conversation, I use my appraisal skills to monitor changes in our verbal and non-verbal interaction to adjust my speech, tone of voice and facial expression to carry or end the conversation. My body and facial expression also change, as I experience various emotional reactions during the conversation. This, according to Schore (2003), is an adaptive function of my nervous system that is biopsychosocial, as it permits me to appraise both my ability to feel changes in my body and the external environment. Awareness of these internal and external changes can help me make an appraisal of my options for reacting or not in conversation.

According to Damasio's theory, when we react to a situation without our body sensing the emotion, it can be socially challenging if we react in a way that is appraised as negative. For some reason my reaction of anger to my friend when I was in elementary school occurred because I did not make an appropriate evaluation of the situation before my reaction. Thus, I felt guilt and shame once I was able to acknowledge my reaction. Some people could justify their anger by blaming others for their behaviour; I chose to take responsibility for my reaction. The adaptive ability of my body to protect me could be seen as maladaptive, as my reaction was appraised to be

socially unacceptable by myself and others. I was not in any danger and did not need to react in that way. I learned a lot from this event, and overreacting with anger did not happen again. But this incident also seemed to have a long-term effect on the stress I felt when anger lurked.

Prinz (2004) explains that emotions are both a way to perceive bodily changes, and also how we perceive self-emotion in different social contexts, whether we are able or not to feel our emotion before our body reacts. Our memory markers (Damasio, 1994) influence our decision-making. For example, a negative experience of an emotion can reinforce an inner response, just as a positive experience can. Having a negative view of an emotion can make it difficult to face situations that might encourage a negative reaction, preventing us from experiencing life to the fullest. In other words, emotional embodied appraisal is our ability to identify distinctive patterns in the changes that our body is experiencing, and how we make the appraisal of our reactions toward feeling these. How we become aware of them as we are reacting, or only after our reactions, could determine how stressful the experience of emoting a counter-emotion becomes. How we perceive our reaction depends on our ability to appraise the social situation in which the emotional reaction or repression occurs. To do this we must take time to reflect on how we feel and think about the experience of our emotions. Do we feel that we can be emotionally honest and accept ourselves when reacting in a particular way, or does this emotional reaction (or non-reaction) go against what we consider appropriate? Can we handle the stress that a negative social appraisal might mean, and can we handle the stress that the internal emotion reaction has on us? Both internal and external fear could encourage us to go into a fight, flight or freeze reaction.

Praxis: Emotions as Integration

Siegel (2007, 2009), explains how "emotional experience is seen as a dynamic shift in integration" (p. 151). He refers to how we can be aware (or not) and integrate our subjective experiences of feeling, feeling what we feel when living our life. Integration according to Siegel permits us flexibility, adaptivity, coherence, feeling energized and stabile (p. 157). Often we can be present to our feelings of emoting and integrate them, but there are times we are not or do not want to be present. At times we are only thinking about our experiences, but are not in touch with our sensations, or we are denying our feelings. The feelings we have cause us to be overwhelmed or disoriented due to a traumatic recollection which triggers memories associated with unpleasant past events. This can be debilitating and prevent us from fully experiencing life events in a positive way. Distress due to the flow of information becomes overwhelming or chaotic (too much), and to cope with this distress we limit our view and see things in a rigid way (Siegel, 1999; Siegel & Solomon, 2003). These ways of coping can also be experienced in a combination of both chaos or chaos and rigidity, making it difficult to face a life event or to be in relationship with others. Emotional reactions are only a clue to the lack of ability to be honest in integrating our feelings in a social context. This ability is also used to recognize when it is safe for us to be honest, or when it is best to keep our social mask.

Siegle (2009) explains that emotional development is about learning to be emotionally well. All emotional experiences are a sign that humans need to feel socially integrated, or alternatively, feel they cannot safely do so. The example of my emotional reaction as a young child can explain this. The game being played was a social event that

was intended to be fun. My reaction was not in the spirit of fun. My appraisal of the situation and my friend's appraisal were different; he chose to try to stop the game by letting his brother know where we were hiding, making me learn to be more sensitive to the needs of others. This was one experience that helped me be more aware of what it is to be part of a group, and what adaptation I had to make to be part of the group. It was not all about what I wanted, and my selfish reaction of playing by the rules brought me shame, since I was unable to feel fully connected to my friends. Luckily, it was only an isolated incident, as my friends were able to let the experience go and continued to play with me despite my inappropriate reaction. I was able to adjust my emotional overreaction and rather than push my friends away, they came closer (Horney, 1945). Yet, I had to question my emotional reaction and reflect on my inability to make an appropriate appraisal of this social situation. I had to learn to take responsibility for my reaction, which eventually permitted me to be more honest with my emotions and more mindful of how I played and felt connected with others.   I did, however, overcompensate for a time in my life, and avoided anger instead of learning and finding a way to integrate the anger. How can I be congruent in expressing my anger in a way that others can understand my frustrations about things being done outside the rules, and at the same time, be able to lessen the distress for someone else not being able to play by the rules? The answer to this question brings the discussion to poiesis or the transformation of self.

Poiesis: Transformation of the Self

I begin the discussion of the transformation of the self, by first re-examining Rogers' (1961) notion of congruency, then Winnicott's (1953) and Marion Milner's

(1957) notions of transitional object/space and true-self/false-self, and finishing with

Benner's (2012) three stages of the soul-centering self.

Rogers: Congruency. As previously mentioned, my emotional reaction was not

congruent with who I wanted to be seen as; a loving boy who loved to play with others.

Rogers (1989) explains that everyone has a tendency to want to self-actualize and

become a better human being. The purpose of a therapeutic process is to help individuals

find a way to be more congruent in their efforts toward becoming more fully human.

Congruency occurs when our self-image is similar to our ideal-self, and this allows self-

actualization. Rogers (1989) explains that congruency is being self without façade,

"openly being the feelings and attitude which at the moment are flowing in him" (p. 61).

Incongruence is "playing a role, saying something that he does not feel" (p. 61). I have to

admit that my experience made me overcompensate, and I played the role of the nice guy,

particularly when I did want my anger known.

Reflecting on my childhood experience, I did feel the anger rising before I

reacted. Further, I did not feel congruent after reacting, as this did not represent a nice

Catholic boy, but the person who slapped his friend. My reflection on this event led me

to accept that my reaction was not appropriate. I was a young child, but still, I was

reacting in a socially unacceptable way. I had to face my problem, accept that the anger

got the best of me, and that I could not always be loving. Although my friends

understood my feelings and might have felt an empathic understanding and unconditional

positive regard for me, I still needed to accept my reaction, forgive myself and experience

self-compassion to learn from this experience. I had to learn to face the fear of reacting

in an angry way, and know that I would be fine. I had to learn to accept myself, for when self-acceptance occurs, it "increase[s] our acceptance of others" (Rogers, 1989, p. 87).

I see the embodied appraisal theory bringing a new depth to Rogers' congruent notion, since my reaction was ultimately due to my real feelings, but it was not congruent with who I wanted to be; a loving person. Congruence is based on how our inner experience, how we feel, matches the way we appraise this in our outward life. We make the appraisal of how our reactions or lack of reaction will be interpreted as the best outward presentation of ourselves. As I explained in the previous chapter, whenever I became angry I had trouble permitting myself to show its outward appearance, since I was afraid it would endanger my wish to be seen as a good person. I believed I could not let my inner experience of anger be known. Thus, there were times when I was not congruent with how I felt and what I led others to believe. This caused me stress and ultimately pushed others away. To properly deal with this conflict, I had to accept my false-self of the good person, and accept the reality that I was not always "good".

Winnicott and Milner. As important as Rogers' congruency is, I believe that we also have to understand what it means when we are not congruent with our self or in relationship with others. Unconditional positive regard of others can be helpful, but not if we cannot have unconditional positive regard toward ourselves or observe our incongruence. Winnicott and Marion Milner bring another dimension to understanding incongruence with their concepts of false-self and true-self.

Winnicott (1980) acknowledged that play between two individuals can foster a transitional place that can make the experience between these individuals meaningful. He called this space the third area of experience, the bridge between our inner and outer

life. For example, children use toys to better understand their experiences through play. He explained his object relations theory to be this space where activities enhance the quality of our lives in a relational process that is obtained when playing or processing is permitted. The objective of therapy for Winnicott (1980) was "bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play" (p. 38). Negative views of our emotions can make it harder for us to play. Therapy and creating art can make it safe to risk playing again.

Winnicott's (1980) origin of our "true-self" surfaced from his reflections from observing the mother-child interaction. He believed the mother acknowledged her child through her reactions to the child's expressions and also gave the child strength. He indicated the mother-child interaction with a good enough mother starts with "symbol formation" (Winnicott, 1980, p. 145) or giving the child the impression it can control the world; that it is omnipotent through its expressions and how others respond to its expressions. This space allows what Winnicott (1971) called an initiation to an "affectionate type of object-relationship" (p. 1). A good enough mother gives a child "sensori-motor aliveness" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 148), meaning that the mother helps the child mentally organize its feelings through good interaction. True-self creates, in the infant, a sense of spontaneity and this feeling of omnipotence. A good enough mother resides in the ability of the mother to adapt to the child's living and emotional needs. Alternatively, Winnicott's false-self is developed through a not good enough mother's inability to adapt properly to the infant's needs or "repeatedly fails to meet the infant's gesture" (p. 144). I also believe that a false-self can also develop later in life and is not limited to an experience in infancy.

I wonder about Winnicott's dichotomy between a good enough and not good enough mother, as it could be used to blame women. This has a limiting view of how much direct or indirect influence the father (or family) can have on the child, the mother, or the mother-child interaction. If a father or family has a particular rigid rule around a certain parenting practice, such as letting the baby cry or not letting the baby cry without first assessing the need of the child, the mother's interaction with the child might not be good enough for the father. Tactics could be used to stress the mother, so that the father's rigid way of interacting with the baby is followed, despite the mother feeling this is not best for the child. This places the mother in a difficult stressful situation, making it even harder for her to be good enough.

Winnicott was not the only one exploring this space between the "I" and the "other". Marion Milner (1950), who worked with Winnicott, also wrote about the transitional phenomenon, encouraging us to find the paradox between I and not-I, self and no-self; breaking down the barrier between self and other, but at the same time maintaining it. For Milner, art was a means to obtain this paradoxical space, and for her it was a spiritual process. She has written a number of books using this self-reflective process of searching for this space, at times using the fictitious name of Joanna Field. Marion Milner (2010) found the transitional space while in search of God's love and through creating art which allowed her to better know self (I) and the other (not-I). This creative surrendering is a self-compassionate relational process that teaches us to: stop judging our inner tensions; and trust ourselves again. (Milner, 2005). Milner was curious about the notion of the transformative power of God's love, seeing it more encompassing than the psychological notion of transitional space. Creative surrendering through art

makes us take time to find our inner tensions, or paradox, between our inner and outer world, to explore how we experience things. Milner credited this process as greatly helping her with her struggles, and with the people who sought help from her. This process brings people to trust again by finding their own creative solution to their inner tensions (Milner, 2005). Milner's use of free association drawing and scribbles permitted her to access her unconscious by focusing on a mood or a particular feeling. She was influenced by Zen Buddhism traditional methods of achieving changes through mindfulness, and the relationship between mysticism and madness that also questioned her ways of constructing reality.

Milner, being more interested in people than in psychoanalysis, embarked on a journey toward expression that is analyst free, allowing individuals to discover what is most important in their life experiences, not giving up, but continually trying to make meaning of their experiences (Rippin, 2006). She encouraged an imaginative process to surrender to our ability to be present to all our experiences. Her art was her attempt to understand and express how her own body-mind experiences. At times Milner's art expressed her feelings better than words. Moving away from the pressure of performing a classic way of doing psychotherapy, she developed her own way of questioning herself and the psychotherapy jargon, since she felt it was not always helpful (Raab, 2003).

Reflective practice has been explored by many other individuals seeing implicit (tacit) knowledge to be an important part of a practitioner's theory of practice of how we are actively constructing reality (Kinsella, 2007). Becoming aware through reflective practice makes it possible for us to be more conscious of our particular way of constructing reality and this permits us to change and act differently. Milner (1986) did

not learn from a logical or rational position but through her senses, experiencing life through her whole body. This "wide focused view" (Milner, 1986, p. 15) gave her the ability to differently perceive life.

Milner's own reflective artistic practice began with wanting to learn how children learn, and teaching herself to paint. She was interested in Maria Montessori's belief that children can learn through concentrated playing. Milner was interested in her own psyche, her inner experience; she practiced letting go of self, finding emptiness and an inherent urge towards transcendence; living beyond the normal or physical level, searching for a spiritual experience (Raab, 2001). Learning to "truly trust 'the unconscious', trust the emptiness, the blanket, trust what seems to be not there" (Milner, 2005, p. 4). She called this search an answering activity. Through questioning self in the spacious loving hands of God, all our actions, reactions, seen or unseen, can be questioned. As God is merciful, we can accept in this loving space a better way to understand the conflicts between our inner and outer world. It is in the fusion of the inner and outer world that the symbol formation is created.

Marion Milner's ideal of this inner and outer life also encouraged a dualistic way of reflection. Donna Orange (2011a, 2011b) questions the dualities that are created in our psychological jargon between implicit-explicit, body-mind, primary-secondary process, inner-outer, unconscious-conscious, emotion-cognition, and challenges us to find a more holistic view of people experiencing life. She reminds us of how traumas are not only difficult to bring to words but that these experiences also challenge our perceptions, as trauma is "only shock and alienation" (p. 199). She acknowledged that metaphors can facilitate the communication of the unspeakable. Art, as an unspoken metaphor, permits

us to open our mind and transform our perceptions of what feeling a counter-emotion

means, so we can speak of the unspoken and reconnect with others. Experiencing a safe

feeling when experiencing a counter-emotion with others, free of judgments, can lessen

the shock of the traumatic event so we can heal the past hurt.

Monsen, Eilertsen, Melgård, and Ödegård (1996) supported by Lech, Andersson,

and Holmqvist (2008) explored the importance of affective consciousness, or our ability

to be consciously aware of our mood, feeling and attitudes. Monsen, et al., highlighted

the importance of the ability to understand affects signals: how we feel, our moods; and

our attitudes toward different situations. Bringing awareness to our affect experiences

can provide us with important information. How much we can allow our emotions to

affect us and understand at what level to express ourselves in interpersonal relationships,

plays an important role in "the organization of self-experience" (p. 239). Monsen et al.

(1996) found four dimensions to the integration of affect. The first two dimensions

concern the ability to experience affect; "awareness" and "tolerance"; and the second

two concern our ability to express affect; "nonverbal" and "conceptual expression" (p.

241). In other words, our inner and outer world regarding our affect (emotions) has many

layers. The inner life could be understood as the ability to be conscious of our feelings

and knowing how to tolerate them (or not), and how we choose to express them to our

outside life non-verbally, verbally or even artistically.

The more conscious I was of my experience with counter-emotion and used art to

reflect, the better I was able to recognize when the anger was present, tolerate it and

express anger without pushing others away. Yet, I still needed to understand more about

my counter-emotion. As I became more aware of my feelings when angry and the

feelings toward my anger, I was also becoming more aware of the conflict these feelings created and how it challenged my view of my identity. I built my reality on the fear of the anger instead of looking at what the anger was trying to let me know. Thus, I would please others by being the colourful me, instead of being open to the situation, present to others and face my fear of being seen as an angry person. I was avoiding conflicts and still needed to find a simple way to explain what was happening to me, so I could in turn explain it to others.

The literature about the lack of compassion toward oneself (or others) teaches that this seems to stop us from self-actualizing or being able to fully integrate socially. Blaming others for our emotional reactions can make it difficult to be emotionally honest, and/or minimizing our reactions can prevent us from taking responsibility (Jenkins, 2009) for our behaviour. These responses can enable violent behaviour and/or prevent social integration. Self-compassion (Braehler et al., 2013; Germer, 2009; Gilbert, 2009, 2010; Hanson & Mendius, 2009; Welford, 2013) toward our counter-emotion permits a radical acceptance (Weiser Cornell, 2005), emotional honesty (Brill, 2000) and self-awareness (Fogel, 2009) of our false-selves that can allow us to move closer to a truer self and encourage our self-actualization, or our transformation (poiesis). When we have self-compassion and are congruent while experiencing a counter-emotion, we are able to better appraise and respond in relationship. The stress associated with counter-emotions decreases and our ability to socially integrate becomes easier.

This is a complex process that validates the importance of exploring the counter-emotions. As Milner (2005) suggests when we take time to notice what is happening when experiencing a counter-emotion we can learn to doubt again. Doubting our rigid

theoria or conclusions we have about counter-emotions can help us remember the past negative experiences that tainted our perceptions, and create a change in our perception. Being more compassionate toward ourselves with these past experiences can lead us to act differently (praxis).

Soul-Centering Self: A spiritual experience of compassion. I found David G. Benner's three stages of the soul-centering self: 1) the reflective-self, 2) the false-self and 3) the divided-self, as the best way to explain counter-emotion and the process to explore it.

Benner named the reflective self as an ability to acknowledge that I am my experiences; the experiences I have lived are what make me what I am at present. I like James Hillman's (1975) view of the soul as not a physical entity, but a reflective space between ourselves and our life events. Art is a great medium to create a space to reflect about our experiences. For life events to have meaning, time must be given to absorb the significance of our internal experience when facing an external event. Creating art about our emotions provides the time to reflect on what emotions mean to us, how we feel about them, how they affect us, and what they might look like aesthetically so we can understand them from a distance. For example, wondering about what facial expression would best describe us expressing an emotion. Contemplating our emotions through art also makes us take time to ponder our life experiences with a particular emotion, including: how we generalize how a particular emotion affects us; considering what is happening to us when we are experiencing an emotional arousal; expressing our emotions; and how that is affecting our relationship with others. As discussed earlier, this also permits us to question how we perceive our reality.

There are other ways to take time to reflect. Praying is one way. Reciting *Notre Père* is a time for reflecting on my behaviour; forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. What have I done today that in God's eyes I could improve, forgive myself and others? The notion of a God who can see all, is comforting for me, as I cannot hide my behaviour. I have to face what I have done and consider if it was the best example of being a Christian, a father, a husband, a man and a counsellor.

The false-self tries to make me think I am always good, although I know that is untrue. A reflective self permits me to face trying to pull the wool over my own eyes. Believing in a higher Being means I cannot hide anything from God. Answering to God is acknowledging I cannot get away with behaviour that is unloving or untrue. The false-self tries to protect me from seeing that I am not always good and at peace, rather playing a role so I do not have to be myself, nor feel and express how I really feel or think. There are times when it is best not to express how I really feel or think to others, but it is important to acknowledge this to myself, so I realize that I am at times showing others a façade. False-self is thinking I am the façade, that I am acting appropriately, despite feeling something is not right, that I am being congruent. Believing in a God who is present to me at all times can help guide me, so I can discover the times I am not true or out of character. Part of my spiritual journey is to reflect and admit that I am feeling and expressing an emotion that is contrary to being a loving father, a loving husband, a good counsellor or a good Christian. I need to notice when I am compensating by avoiding my real emotions and choosing to play a role of someone who is not angry when I really am. Knowing how to acknowledge the anger and still be truthful without jeopardizing relationships is essential. Being able to reflect on the experience of expressing an

emotion that is not normally me or being aware that I am denying the reality of my emotion, permits me to admit that I am at times false. Admitting this lessens the effect the false-self has on me. If I continue to deny it, I do not learn from it and have more chances of repeating the same unhelpful behaviour.

The divided-self concerns the realization that we are not always our true-self. Laing (1969) by trying to understand his patients, through proper interpretation from the "existential position" (p. 34) of his patients, found that it is to know his patients from their own particular way of being in the world. The divided-self is understood as the conflict between the desire to reveal oneself, but at the same time conceal our authentic self to others. Individuals can be safe or unsafe to be themselves by normalizing the psychosis experience, using the term divided-self to describe a radical fear of authentic self-disclosure. If I cannot be myself, I will be who I think others want me to be, even if that is not who I am. As Laing believed, social interaction is a validating process, psychosis occurs when a person fears being and expressing the authentic self, due to the fear of not being accepted and/or not being able to accept oneself.

I limit the conversation around the divided-self in the context of counter-emotions to the division between being true or false which can also apply to our emotional responses. Do I reveal my authentic self or do I need to hide my authentic self to be accepted by myself and others? Can I reveal my true feeling or do I need to hide them, since I do not trust myself in expressing emotions in a way that will be validated?   The definition of an appropriate emotional response or an acceptable no-response depends on many personal and social factors. Is it safe or unsafe to express our emotions and be our true-self? Is it unsafe due to the feeling the emotion brings us, or the possible appraisal

we have of ourselves emoting? Divided-self occurs when we are insecure in experiencing a counter-emotion, fearful to be our counter-emotion. Saying that one thing is inappropriate, while admitting that we are behaving in this way, is an important step to understanding our personal division.

We can be divided in many ways, yet can we really be fully united? Finding our true-self is a lifelong journey, but recognizing and admitting that we are not always our true-self is a way of learning from our challenges. When we are divided, those are times we are not congruent, we try to avoid or repress our real feelings. Feelings and thoughts are only that, feelings and thoughts; they do not have to rule our lives.

Our reaction to our counter-emotion is part of our false-self, as it denies or represses our real emotions. Longing for a more pleasant feeling is also part of our false-self. Figure 1 in the Introduction, is an example of a divided-self, longing for the calming emotion but protecting itself from the stressful emotion, being stuck and stressed. As much as it is sometimes needed, we must recognize times when we have trouble dealing with certain emotions, and take off our masks of our false-self to reveal what is truly us. Our inner conflicts can be part of the division of our self. Recognizing our inner conflict allows us to become more real during our experiences, giving us a more whole or a soulful experience. As our ability to observe (theoria) might be tainted by past experience, we could choose to respond or react (praxis) in a way that will not permit us to socially integrate. It is only in creating this reflective space that we can face our suffering to obtain a gift (poiesis). I found the best way for me to do this is by using art to form symbols and/or metaphors, as this facilitates the realization of a divided-self.

Christianity explains things through symbols, as does art therapy. In the Holy Trinity what is important is the complementary relationship among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; a relationship of love. It is not an intellectual knowledge but an experiential ontological knowledge, trinity as an example of being love; that all three are one, yet distinct and different. Jesus manifests the perfection of God. As humans we know that we are far from perfect, but that imperfection is acceptable in the loving eyes of God, the Father.

To face our difficulties we must learn to seek the tension between what we feel and what we think, not only coming from the intellectual perspective since we can always justify our position, hide our real feeling or what we really think, but also from a place that is safe to admit our downfalls due to our false-self. This admitting is present in our creative surrendering which encourages awareness to improve while still loving and being compassionate toward ourselves, and allows us to learn and do better the next time when trying to socially integrate. Further, this process allows us to love and accept others, and always take a step back and question self.

> John 16 7 Yet I tell you the sombre truth: It is much better for you that I go. If I fail to go, the Paraclete (Spirit) will never come to you, whereas if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin, about justice, about condemnation. (Bible, The New American, 1970, p. 130)

My psychological reflection of this passage makes me think about the 'I' being my false-self, the importance of letting go of my false identity in my being untrue to the reality of my self, and leaving my ideal self or who I think I should be from my experience, so that I can receive that Spirit. Receiving the Spirit also enables me to see

my life (what I did, how I reacted) in a new light; admitting and forgiving my false-self or others for not being or doing the right thing, but learning from it, still loving self and others. By admitting and understanding my sins, and acknowledging that I am not always able to confront my true-self, enables me to walk anew and learn to avoid the pitfalls. This allows me to question my perceptions about sin, justice and condemnation.

My Catholic faith teaches me to ponder the meaning of the life and death of Jesus, but from a psychological perspective. This biblical passage also makes me reflect on the importance of letting go of our personal "I", so we can be open to receive the Spirit. I see this as learning to face the death of my false-self in the "I", and understanding my divided-self. What I think or who I think I am, is crucified and dies. Unless I let go of the ideal self, my "I", and become aware of my real true-self, I will then and only then, be able to receive the Spirit, become more aware of the Spirit, and see things differently. Learning to let go of our ideal-self that is often false, "much better for you that I go," is a process of becoming someone who admits one's imperfections, until I have to crucify my false-self again. This lifelong psycho-spiritual process or evolution of self only comes to an end, as far as I know, with my physical death. Life will bring me experiences that will make me question myself, and I have to take time to reflect on whether I am being true to self and to God, in order to find my true-self recognizing God's love within me. When my image of self (my behaviour or my feelings) and my ideal self (what I think) are different, it is harder to self-actualize, as my subjective experience in life is made both with my ability to feel my body reactions, and with my ability to make the social appraisal of my social situation. Being present to my counter-emotions is a step toward

acknowledging my imperfections, accepting my true-self that is far from perfect, and coming to an understanding of what this might mean.

As our subjective experiences of emotions are made both of our cognitive understanding and of our body feelings of them, I find it important to become aware of both and when they could be in conflict. Gendlin (2006) questioned a blind trust of our feelings, but encouraged instead our ability to trust the process of feeling. "Focusing" (Gendlin, 2007; Rappaport, 2009) involves learning to put our feelings and thoughts aside to better distance self from them. Michael White's (2007) narrative therapy deconstructs our beliefs and how our stories of our experiences can be helpful or not. It is only in facing our faults in a loving way that we can re-story self in a more compassionate way.

Self-Compassion. Gilbert (2005) explained the importance of self-compassion in therapy since a threatened mind can trigger the threat focused affect regulation system; fight, flight or immobilize (p. 22). As much as people understand that they cannot react in a certain way, when they are unable to stop self from reacting due to implicit memory, this can trigger unconscious reactions.

Compassion is understood as being moved or touched by the suffering of others. Self-compassion is then understood as our ability to take time to acknowledge our pain so that we are moved or touched by our own sufferings. Despite our suffering, we still have the ability to experience feelings of caring and kindness toward ourselves. We need to take the time to understand what has happened and be non-judgmental toward what we might find as inadequacies or failures, and recognize that our own experience is part of being a human. Kristin Neff (2009) explains that there are three parts to self-compassion: "self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness" (p.864). Mindfulness is our ability

to be present to our painful feelings and thoughts instead of ignoring them or exaggerating them. Kindness and compassion to self is a way of preventing us from listening to our own critical inner voice or critical voices of others. This permits us to find a more compassionate inner voice that can keep us from reacting to life events, and makes it possible to respond to them.

Praxis, Theoria and Poiesis – Summary

To summarize, I use the metaphor of riding a bike to help clarify how the art process allows individuals to learn how to get back on the bike of emoting counter-emotions after experiencing a fall (or many) when struggling with overwhelming emotions. A holistic view of emoting requires understanding how people observe their experience of a counter-emotion, how they feel about it, and how they feel when experiencing it. For example, I could teach my child how to ride a bike by only telling him what to do, but he might not be able to ride a bike with only cognitive knowledge or only by observing me ride a bike (theoria). Experiential knowledge of riding a bike (praxis) is another step toward learning to ride. Learning to enjoy riding a bike and becoming a cyclist (poiesis) is the final step to successful learning. In learning to ride a bike through practical experience, there is a high probability that at some point my child might fall. This negative experience could even make my child decide to hate riding a bicycle. Getting back on the bike is important so that he does not learn to hate the experience, but learns to tolerate the unfortunate but normal hazards of riding a bike. How I help my child get back on the bike or deal with the emotional experience is an important part of parenting and counselling. With every incident there is an opportunity

to learn and to make adjustments, or make someone want to stop riding or feeling. The more my child avoids riding the bike, the harder it might be for him to get back on the bike. The avoidance due to being anxious about riding the bike can cause my child to be afraid when an opportunity to ride a bike presents itself. We have all heard this story, but how does it apply to regulating and integrating emotions?

We all experience emotions and we learn to handle the distress that comes with emoting by getting back on the bike. Some family or work cultures are not very open to someone expressing certain emotions, and are at times very particular around the implicit rules of how emotions are to be expressed. Despite recognizing that we all have the capacity to experience emotions, how we feel about them can be distressing. Learning to tolerate our feelings about our emotions is an important part of being in relationship with others. Individuals who take courses on regulating emotions might learn how to talk about what to do, but unless they ride the bike and get back on after a fall they never go on a real trip.

Cognitive restructuring (Beck, 1976) and dialectical behaviour therapy (Koerner, 2012) are methods which help individuals recognize how thoughts and feelings are different. Both offer a variety of ways to explore and question these differences. If you do not find a way to integrate the counter-emotion, highlighting the differences between thoughts and feelings could reinforce the belief that one emotion should be repressed, or that you should feel guilty since you were not able to regulate your emotions in a socially acceptable way.

I could also make it look like I know how to ride a bike by buying the best and most expensive bicycle ever made, just to give the impression that I am an amazing

cyclist. But if I cannot enjoy riding a bike, why would I want to invest my time and energy to look like a bike rider? Observing (knowledge), practicing (doing) and becoming (to be), are the three components that art therapy offers in exploring emotions and emotional regulation. As society is generally influenced by the attraction of knowing and doing, it forgets the most important part; that of becoming. Most people know what overwhelming emotions feel like and what they should do to calm down, yet, how do they really learn to be themselves when experiencing a counter-emotion?

An artistic embodied appraisal process encourages awareness of our bodily changes (somatic feelings) in dealing with various basic emotions by learning to be more self-compassionate of our appraisals (mind) when expressing a counter-emotion in order to facilitate our integration with others and to learn to be truly ourselves when emoting. This process can also reconnect a counter-emotion to past forgotten memories. I cannot claim that the process of making the implicit memory becoming conscious is due to being formed in the working memory, but I can wonder about this being a possibility. Art allows us to face our perception of our counter-emotion, permitting us to learn how to handle the distressing experience when acknowledging a part of us that we do not like, and enables the self-compassion needed to learn from our experiences. Creating art is a potential transitional space between our dualistic way of seeing self when our inner life is in conflict with our outer life view of self. As we want to protect what we think is our true-self from the possible hurt of expressing a counter-emotion, our false-self can take over, or by it triggering a past hurt we create a false-self to protect us. This defence mechanism is helpful at first, by lessening the stress, but can become problematic when we believe it to be our true-self. Art permits us to find transitional objects that bridge our

inner world with our outer world, finding our truer self, which is liberating. This permits our inner experience to be congruent with our outer expression. Learning to be compassionate toward ourselves expressing an emotion that is difficult also encourages us to be compassionate toward others who express difficult emotions. I believe researching counter-emotion is important, as it permits us to reclaim part of us that we might like to deny or repress, and facilitates our social integration. Learning to accept and admit our challenges in being compassionate to our false-self, we in turn learn to be compassionate to others when their false-selves emerge.

In the next chapter I discuss how art is also a different way of knowing. Because I am using multiple concepts, I need to clarify my ontological stance, since this could ultimately influence the interpretation of the results. It is important to understand how the process of creating art permits us to be present to our thoughts and feelings, and also question them.

Chapter II: Art Based Research - Knowledge and Feelings

Research methodology depends on the paradigms (conceptual framework) that guide the research activities; more specifically, our beliefs about the nature of being (ontology), how we talk about it (rhetoric), the values we impose (axiology), the theory of knowledge that informs the research (epistemology), its theoretical traditions, how that knowledge may be gained (methodology), and also how we choose to gather and analyze the data (methods). During the process of writing about the research, I had to reflect on these questions, how they influenced the way I conducted my research, and how it was related or not to what other research was saying about emotions. In this chapter, I present several pieces of art that I created to explore and better understand how I chose to frame this research on counter-emotions through the embodied appraisal theory of emotions. Further, I show how ABR provides all the elements to study the phenomenon of counter-emotions.

Knowledge and Feelings

Knowledge has its limits; despite knowing our emotions and how we feel about them, in certain situations we might still be unable to control or manage them. What we think or believe is a reasonable way to express a particular emotion, yet how we feel when we are emoting is sometimes different. For this research, I had to first understand what people thought about emotions, explore how they felt about them, how they expressed them, and verify if there was a difference between participants' thoughts and feelings about their emotions.

I remember as a young child jumping with fear upon seeing an image of a tarantula in an encyclopedia. I knew it was just an image, yet my body's defence mechanism must have kicked in, since I became fearful seeing the image. I remember having an elevated heart rate and hyperventilating in response to the image. My experience of the image, as if it was popping off the page, could be understood as a hyper-arousal response (Cannon, 1927). Despite knowing that I was safe, my body did not feel safe when looking at the long hairy legs and scary eyes; something about the image told me back off. My body did not seem to understand that it was only an image, and I remember having to slowly touch the image so my body could know and feel safe. By being present to the image and realizing it was not going to jump out of the book, I was able to calm myself and touch the image. Yet for some reason, even if this experience was only a moment in my life, I remember it and recall that I was embarrassed to tell others about my reaction.

Prinz's (2004) embodied appraisal theory of emotions helped to explain my reactions. I responded to the image with an emotional reaction of fear despite my cognitive understanding that I was safe. I knew the spider was only an image and I could not understand why I was feeling scared. It seemed my body had made the appraisal that I was unsafe, thus the fear. Since it was only an image, this resulted in confusion and the guilt of being afraid. My feelings (or body) told me one thing, and my mind told me another. I had to accept my initial reaction (radical acceptance), and learn to self-soothe in order to touch the image while reminding myself I was safe. To feel normal, I pushed myself to touch the image because I did not want to be judged as someone fearful of spiders.

To research this division between what I felt and what I thought, I needed to understand the ontological and epistemological questions in ABR. I believed we could gain insight about and integrate our counter-emotions if we were able to be present to: the difference in experience between what we say about the counter-emotion and how we express artistically the counter-emotions; how we feel and what the emotion means to us; and recognize that it is counter to what we believe about what is the correct way of emoting.

What Is Arts-Based Research?

Arts-based research permits the creation and the re-creation of art on a particular phenomenon that compels us to reflect on our experiences, articulate our visual expressions, or as Robbins (1987) would call this, an aesthetic reflection. This process can lead to creating new meaning and understanding by questioning our life truths or the conventions we have. The reflection of our experiences acquired through visual insight and personal realizations through art are all done within a research framework.

T**he process**. The purple island, Figure 13, is for me a representation of God's hands. They are a safe haven gently holding, weary travelers. In my mind, this is a safe place to rest and take time to contemplate life's adventures or misadventures. It represents being away from the challenges of the river of life, so I or others can take time to rest and to figure out things: what is happening to me; where am I heading; what do I want from life; and who am I on this journey. I have placed this image in my counselling room to remind me that people who come to see me are just tired travelers who need to

reflect on their life journey, and I am providing them this safe place for an opportunity to rest and reflect.

Figure 13. Purple Island

Before I create art, I immerse myself in an intense preoccupation with a question. Concentrating on the question, I release my creative energy and symbolic understanding with colours and through various artistic materials (paint, pastels, watercolors…) and express what I am thinking and feeling at that moment of the creation, letting myself be guided by the artistic impulse to create, and being open to experience without preconceptions. Trusting the process, knowing the art will give me or reveal the data that is to be studied, I face and accept whatever appears on the paper. My artistic impulse to the question creates data that I might be consciously aware of, and information that might bring me new insight. The focus on the question and the creative action are followed by a reflective action, opening my mind to see what was created in the art, the life in the picture, to be present to the art so I can reflect on how I feel, think and relate, or not, to the art. Narratives are created during this reflection, stories are remembered, and links between the art and my life are made with the primary question. As I am immersed in the

process, my body is also involved, and this gives me an opportunity to be aware of my body's feelings and/or reactions to creating art.

Once I reflect on a particular piece of art, and I have some understanding of it and can appreciate "the thingness of the thing" (Heidegger, Young, & Haynes, 2002), it can lead to the creation of another work of art. The more I create and construct art, the more knowledge I gain which allows me to transform my perceptions of life and beliefs. The art creating process helps to better conceptualize my problem, contextualize it, and ultimately have a better comprehension of the question I explore. This progression in new knowledge can ultimately change how I feel about the phenomenon being studied and about myself.

Later in this chapter I present and discuss a number of pieces of art. These pieces (Figures 14 to 23) were sequentially created to show a progression in my thinking, reflection and interpretation of what they mean in the overall context of who I am; researcher being only part of my identity. This art was done prior to this research, and subsequently re-explored as I wrote this thesis. As much as the process is subjective, trusting the process has always been productive and revealing to me. As subjectivity, experience is composed of both our body's feelings toward our experience and intellectualisation of that experience. Art permits the exploration of the feelings we have toward our question, and offers an opportunity to explore/reflect how we understand or interpret those experiences.

The Benefits and Challenges of Ontological Research

Similar to the previously mentioned image of the spider, an image of an emotion may be safe, and yet, our body might still have difficulty being present to the symbolic representation of our counter-emotion. The challenge in exploring counter-emotions is to make sure we understand both what participants think about them and feel when experiencing them. Most people do not like to experience or explore them, since they already have a negative perception of their counter-emotion. They assume that they will react in a socially unacceptable way, possibly be judged, and that experience will be unpleasant for self and/or others. A danger in counselling is that exploring a counter-emotion could reinforce the negative perception individuals have of themselves; that is, being incapable of regulating a particular emotion. That is why I chose to have participants explore all the basic emotions. This enabled them to choose a counter-emotion and a calming emotion, and be present to this conflict within self. Being present to this conflict can bring an alternative understanding to their reality.

Jagodzinski and Wallin (2013) question art's ability to create knowledge through epistemological methodology since art is first ontological in nature. Ontology deals with the nature of being, how we perceive reality or how the world is built, and how our feelings in our life experiences can be understood. Art is about seeing things from a different perspective. Art evokes emotions but it should also encourage thinking. Heidegger (1967a, 1967b) also had an ontological stance and believed that ontology and phenomenology were inseparable. He questioned not in what way being can be understood, but instead in what way our capacity to understand things is being. The more I am open to the experience of facing even unpleasant realities in my life, the better I can

deal with them. As I knew that my fear of anger was real and I wanted to be a colourful person to avoid the anger, I had to face the unpleasant feeling that the fear of anger gave me, so I could better understand what to do when the anger was present to me. It is only in being open and present to my experiences of emoting or researching that I can better know them and respond in an appropriate way.

Attentiveness to subjective experience. Damasio (1994) and Ryle (1949) questioned Descartes' limiting beliefs around being as our ability to acquire knowledge only through thinking, "Je pense donc je suis"; (Descartes, 1637). They contend that this belief denies part of our subjective experiences, which is also about our capacity to know through our body's feelings. This research explored both participants' ability to think about their emotions, and also how the emotions were felt in the body. The knowledge of the participants' body sensations when experiencing an emotion were as important to understanding their reactions. To only think and not feel, I believe can be as problematic, as only feeling without thinking can be. This thesis/study was about acknowledging the conflicts, which we have between our feelings, and the ideas that we have at times toward our emotions. Counter-emotions were clues to this conflict. For me, being ashamed of my fear reaction to the spider image assumed that I would be negatively judged. The fear of being judged might have also helped me touch the image, but if I still felt shame after this success, then I was judging myself. Most individuals have the capacity to be compassionate (or not), with someone being emotional, yet we can be harder on ourselves when having an emotion that is unpleasant. This difficulty of being hard on ourselves or others, when an emotion is experienced and/or expressed, is what we are trying to understand and learn to deal with in this research.

Feelings we have when experiencing emotions sometimes make us believe we need to protect ourselves, and this self-protection can make us react instead of responding or being present to a situation, believing or seeing things in ways that might not be helpful. The polyvagal theory (Porges, 2011) helps us understand how the bodies' feelings of being in danger can move us into fight, flight or freeze, bypassing our social brain or our ability to think before acting (reacting vs. responding). Van der Kolk (2014) explains how the emotional brain can react to a certain stimulus before our cognitive awareness of a situation. LeDoux (1996) called this taking the low road, enabling us to defend ourselves against threats. This survival mechanism can make us react to events that onlookers might not understand; about why a person reacts in a certain way, judging them as being unreasonable since they might not recognize the danger. The danger, as my incident with the spider reveals, might not be real but it was perceived by my body as real. My body sensations of the event made me believe that I could not tolerate seeing the image of a spider. This was difficult for me since I did not want others to think I was scared of an image, and I had to learn how to tolerate the distress that the image caused me. I also had to learn not to judge myself or feel guilty for having had that reaction. If I had difficulty with tolerating the sensation of seeing a spider or felt bad due to this experience, it could have led me to restrain or repress my fear emotions. Fear is an important emotion, and I was able to be myself (cautious) when encountering tarantulas in the jungles of Nicaragua.

The act of witnessing my artistic expression is ontological in nature, since I bring "sensory, emotional, and intellectual attention" (Kapitan, 2010, p. 164) to understand it in a holistic way. Having both understanding of what I am thinking about an image, and

how I am feeling about it, can also affect my spirit. I need to pay attention to the differences there might be between my subjective understanding of my feelings, and my objective intellectual understanding of emoting. I had learned that anger was bad, misunderstanding that the anger itself is not bad, but the way I express (or repress) my anger or feel about the anger can be bad. Therefore, I had to learn how to tolerate my body's feelings about my anger, so I could express my anger in a healthy way instead of repressing it. This process, I felt and believe, made my spirit lighter as I exposed both the angry mask and the colourful mask. Since I know how to handle them, I am free.

Exposing masks. Deleuze (1994) said that the "mask is the true subject of repetition" (p. 18). This study sought to expose the various emotional masks; more importantly, the ones we do not want to wear since we are trying to hide behind them. In revealing our masks, we can at the same time uncover ourselves (Landy, 1986). Art has similar properties and can reveal things, once we can be present to the phenomenon; memory can be accessed to why we might be reacting in a certain way. Reflection is an important part of using art for therapeutic purposes. The danger of doing art without reflection can make us repeat and repress (Deleuze, 1994) the same unhealthy habits, missing an opportunity to grow from our experiences. This is what is called "reflexivity" (Kapitan, 2010, p. 164), permitting the artist to reflect on self and distance self from the art to create new meaning or understanding. Expressive arts therapies are approaches that encourage self-discoveries and healing through creative art-based activities. Arts-based research seeks to notice what could have been missed and how personal awareness can resonate with other individuals as a canonical generalization. In this research, each

participant's unique experiences were compared to seek unifying themes around counter-emotions.

Observing aspects of experience. Being present to our counter-emotion and calming emotion also permits us to be present to the phenomenological aspect of a conflict we have in regulating our emotions, and then bring us to interpret our overall experience of emoting. Stanghellini and Rosfort (2013) explore how emotions can be better understood by using Ricoeur's (1974, 1975; 1981) hermeneutical phenomenology, as it permits interpreting and describing the human experience of emoting. They claim that this methodology allows the exploration of the subjective experience of emoting, and how our emotional experiences situate us in the world. Descriptive phenomenology seeks to find the essence of the experience of a particular phenomenon, and hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation of a phenomenon in a particular context. How emotions are interpreted depends on the previous experience individuals had with them, and what they mean when experiencing them in a particular way. In highlighting the conflict between the calming emotion and the counter-emotion, a person has to face this reality and try to make meaning of this conflict, at first artistically (symbolically). I believe that ABR gives similar opportunities to observe both phenomenological and hermeneutical aspects of experience, but I also believe it offers more, as our experience with our emotions can change. What we first believe to be the right interpretation of an experience or the interpretation of the meaning and feeling of the phenomenon being studied can also change.

Disturbing assumptions. According to Barone and Eisner (2012), ABR has "the capacity to disrupt our comfortable assumptions" (p. 19). Arts-based research provides

the ability to question our assumptions about issues like research and emotion. For example, the ABR process helped me to question and to better understand my own assumptions about my anger. Jagodzinski and Wallin (2013) also proposed that we can create "a new type of reality" through art-based research (p. 10). By searching the meanings we make in our lives about emotions, they can be questioned, differently viewed and felt, and interpreted in a more helpful way.

How is this achieved? As Eisner (1981) explained, the major distinction between scientific and artistic approaches "is not located in the phenomenon of study but in the mode in which that study occurs" (p. 5). The mode or theoretical tradition of this inquiry was based on principles of expressive art therapies, including drama and art therapy. Art and masks were used to expose the hidden battle(s) between our logic and our feelings, in our subjective experiences of emoting. Kellogg (1970) studied how children's emotional states influence their perceptions, and how art permitted them to correct perceptual imbalances that led them toward mental stability. Expressive art therapy was first called emotional release therapy (Pearson & Wilson, 2009). However, this thesis was not focused on releasing emotions. Rather, it concerned how participants felt about their emotions and how those emotions indirectly affect their view of self, and the way they think and behave. Further, it was about: becoming familiar through artistic expression with their embodied knowledge (felt sense); becoming aware of what they felt when emoting; and how their assumptions about these feelings can be at times helpful and at times not. Feeling like our heart is jumping out of our throat can be scary, but what is making us fearful might not be dangerous. Exploring emotions through art is not a dangerous activity; usually no one gets hurt because of placing (lead free) paint on paper.

The intention was also to see if the process of art could help participants learn how to trust the process of feeling their emotions instead of blindly trusting their feelings (Gendlin, 2006). As our knowledge of emotions and what the emotions make us feel can be misleading, this research offers new knowledge to participants and the reader, giving an opportunity to unlearn unhelpful beliefs.

Unlearning. The first image I share concerns a reflection I did on a personal experience, that made me realize, what I believed to be true was not always helpful and had to be unlearned (Figure 14). Exploring the experience artistically changed some of my beliefs about myself and how I felt about this experience. It was through the
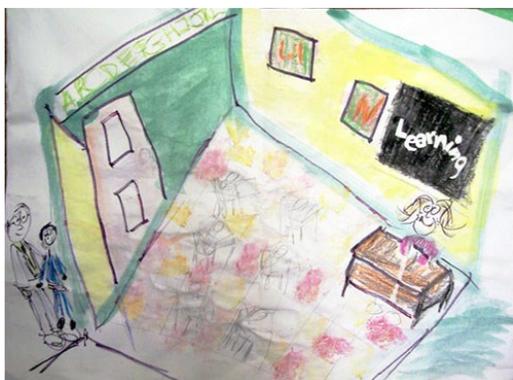
Figure 14. Un Learning

support and love from my father (in Figures 15 and 16) and mother (not in the images), that I questioned what one individual, my teacher (Figure 17), believed about me which was untrue. Despite knowing this, my body, mind, heart and spirit also had to unlearn a few things. I used masks to help me experience the events again from different perspectives. Taking time to explore my experience through art and being present to it again gave me a different awareness, and allowed me to forgive my teacher, my Dad and

myself. Honouring the struggle I had with this experience helped to make me who I am today; a counsellor who helps others.

Figure 15. The Principal, My Dad
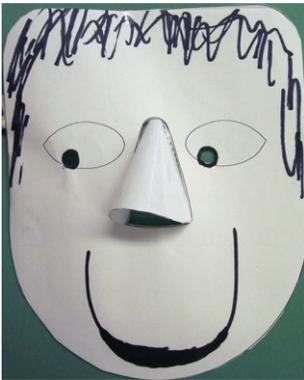
Figure 16. Me

Figure 17. Teacher

To further explain what I mean by unlearning, I use a story when, as a young social worker, I was asked to help a child who had difficulty doing his homework. His mother described him as sitting in front of his homework doing nothing, only staring at his homework, until it was time to go to bed. This habit, I understood, could last hours at a time. In exploring the problem, the rule was he could not go to play outside until he finished his homework, but he could not do his homework because he believed that he was unable to do it. He froze when he faced his homework. His mother, at an impasse, did not know how to help him. You can imagine how frustrating this situation was for him, his mother and the school. Exploring what made the experience of homework difficult for him, he told me it was due to his inability to do math. This was affirmed for him, since he was told he was not good at math. This internalized belief of not being good at math was part of the problem, and had to be unlearned.

When exploring outside the problem frame, he revealed that he loved hockey. He even knew his favourite players' statistics. When I asked him how hockey statistics were calculated, he could easily explain how it was done. When I told him he was good at math, as he was able to do that calculation, he laughed at me and repeated he was not good at math, period. He continued to reinforce this belief when he was unable to do his homework. I encouraged him to try his math homework with the knowledge he got from calculating players' statistics. At first, he seemed to be uncertain about my suggestion, maybe not fully trusting that he would be safe and could be successful. He was able to make the intellectual link, but he did not seem to believe it was safe. I had to let him know I had confidence in him, it was safe, and that I was not going to criticize him for his effort. Despite the hesitation, when he was able to calm himself and face the homework,

he correctly completed it in a few minutes. This new, positive experience with math permitted him to question the truth about not being good at math, and unlearn his false assumption about it.

Excited, he yelled to his mom, "I finished my homework and I am going to play outside!" Not waiting for an answer, yes or no, from his mom, he was soon outside. His mother came to check on what I had done in the few minutes I was with him. She assumed I had done the homework for him. I explained how I applied his love of hockey, and his ability to calculate players' statistics to his math homework which enabled him to calm himself enough to see the similarities and make the necessary calculations. For some unknown reasons, his superior math skill of calculating hockey players' statistics had not been recognized. Rather, he had been labeled as someone who could not do math, and the sad truth was that he believed it. This false belief prevented him from seeing and enhancing his real math skills. I believe we do the same thing when it comes to emotions and emotional regulation. Just because someone has trouble with an emotion, does not mean they cannot learn to eventually regulate their emotions, or unlearn the automatic emotional reactions.

Although I did not use art in this particular situation, I questioned the student's perception of self, and changed it by reinforcing skills he had gained from a different, happier context. I assisted and supported him to be present and experience his homework from the perspective of hockey. He was able to unlearn his belief of poor performance when he understood and successfully completed his math homework. He also learned how to use his knowledge of hockey to calm himself and apply it, so that math was no longer a threat.

Using Arts Based Research

Through aesthetic reflection and being present to our counter-emotions , we can disturb our assumptions, unlearn and uncover our unhelpful masks, and come to an acceptance of self-emoting. For me, ABR allowed me to expand my view of emotions, art, science, research, myself and others. Arts-based research is not trying to verify or assure one truth, but to find the similarities in participants experiencing a creative process that leads each one to find a unique gift in their artwork. Milner (1986), in *A Life of One's Own*, explained her struggles with a science that does not always take the time to know the uniqueness and complexities of a person.
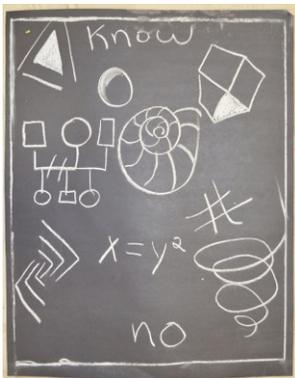
Figure 18. Know No!

Figure 18, Know No! was created to explore my interest in scientific/mathematical symbols and what this might mean to express one's self only in a scientific, symbolic way versus a more emotional (subjective) way. Once drawn, I had to take time to be present to the drawing, observe it and understand both how I felt about it and what it could mean to me. Being present can also be helpful when doing math, yet when doing math, we are present to something usually outside of self. Since the art is an

extension of us, it is a way to connect with part of self that is sometimes hidden from us until we take time to observe, and then the insight might reveal itself to us.

Remembering the smell of chalk makes me recall my personal experiences of going to school to learn science, how emotions were often left out of what is called the scientific experience; factual, black and white, cold and distant. My teachers, despite all having the capacity to be emotional, often gave me the impression that science is done without emotions. Know No! has very little emotional quality to it. How can you understand emotions if you deny, repress them or see them as a negative part of your life? How can you be real or objective, if your emotions and feelings are not taken into consideration? I believe that to become a good therapist you have to: recognize your emotions; accept them; be comfortable with them; and remain present when others are expressing them. Know No! is about denying the part of self that experiences emotions.

For me, it is not only connecting to the felt sense of the drawing that makes me remember, and at times re-remember what it is to reconnect self to my body feelings and my body memories (Cornell, 1996). I like how Know No! had a similar phonetic sound to no, no! This made me recall why I made the choice to become a social worker instead of mathematician. I remembered I could not understand why people were distressed with math or emotions; they were both easy for me, except for anger. Instead of studying math I wanted to study something that was more difficult and challenging; I wanted to better understand the complexity of people and their difficulty with being distressed when emoting or facing life events, as when doing math.

Why do I perceive scientific knowledge has no emotions, and that is a no, no for me? Knowing my emotions are an important way to be present to my reality, and also be

present to others. I believe that being human means being able to safely express our emotions without distress, and not being distressed when others emote. Lack of acceptance of our emotions or others emoting can be problematic. What we think about feeling our emotions and how we express them is sometimes the problem, not the emotions themselves. Not taking our emotions into consideration in decision-making seems foolish, and can create difficulties in our relationships. I believe that the stance of experts who think they should be neutral without emotions, and that there is one real truth, is problematic when researching emotions.

The last reflection on my chalkboard drawing is that art, like math, uses various symbols to transmit information. Science also uses symbols to facilitate the transmission of information, but does it with a lot less emotional quality. Robert Innis (2009) explains Susanne Langer's philosophy of art as a symbolic language of both feelings and the mind. In math language, $x + y = z$. My research, in ABR language, is counter-emotion (x) + calming emotion (y) = compassionate insight (z). Holistic communication in ABR includes incorporating various kinds of data, including the scientific. Narratives are related (qualitative data), but ABR data are more about the creative process; being present to our experience, the artwork, expressing, reflecting, and questioning our knowledge.

Taking these questions about emotions and science into consideration, I created Emotional Whirlwind (Figure 19). I went from one extreme of keeping my emotions at bay, to letting them all out. This artwork is much more colorful and intense than Know No! This image was done after Figure 18, as an oppositional expression to black and white thinking. Emotional Whirlwind has much more movement and variety of

emotions, coming more from an impulse, a felt sense, than a desire to be an aesthetically pleasant piece. It certainly lacks logic, coming more from the gut, letting my critics and logic be silent, knowing not to label or interpret by killing the image, what Bruce Moon would label "imaginicide" (2012, p. 54). Yet, I know that too much emotion and no logic does not enable balance or enhance well being.

Figure 19. Emotional Whirlwind

The many faces or masks represent different emotions, and I do not search for who I am in this whirlwind. Instead, it shows more how open I am to my various emotions and how they come from a central internal force. I love that the black edge is farther from the centre of green and yellow, as it represents for me that the darkness is outside and not within. I know people react emotionally for a reason, whether they experience a trigger and/or feeling unsafe. I am not afraid or distressed by overwhelming emotions, so I can accept others who have them.

The contrast between Know No! and Emotional Whirlwind are the colors, and the circular, complex, emotional expressions versus the simple straight movements which pull me into the whirlwind, distancing me from the purely scientific black and white

view. A scientific explanation of a tornado is not the same as someone's description of their personal experience of a tornado destroying their home.

Figure 20. Thinking and Feeling

The next image, Figure 20, I did as an artistic exploration of research to bring both the colorful emotions and the scientific ideal together in the same frame, but still separated. I loved how the lower circular image reminded me of the playful face of a child. Keeping the emotions and thinking separate, a third entity appeared between the two. Mary Caroline or M.C. Richards (1973) would call this the crossing point. Can we really separate knowledge from our emotions? Would Marion Milner see this middle as a possible solution to my paradox or Winnicott's transitional space?   Potash (2013) believed that both subjective and objective views are important to surfacing insights and understanding our questions. He believed at times we need to be more subjective and reflective, and that there are times when we need to distance our self from the situation to surface insight.

My reflection on Figure 20 is that the science side has roads and ladders, symbolizing, for me, that if you want to climb the ladder in today's world you might have to set aside the art and your emotions. It could also be interpreted that if emotions and love are not taken into consideration, than it will all be downhill. Giving it the whirlwind shape made it less chaotic and more manageable. I often see faces in my drawings, and seeing a face at the bottom of my emotional side made me smile. I love the appearance of a heart between the art/emotions and the science.

In the next artistic exploration of research, Figure 21, I used the rigid/straight movements to represent knowledge, with the circular/free motion from a black oil pastel to represent emotions. Any time a black line crossed a square block I changed the color of the straight boxes. This made me reflect about how people (including me) at times change, depending on the mood they are in. The oil pastels were used and watercolors were then added to change the background. A closer look at Integration in Figure 22 shows why it took a long time to complete, as I wanted to have unique designs and different colors.

Figure 21. Integration

Figure 22. Close-up of Integration

This made me reflect on how emotions are so dependent on our own personal experiences with them. Since families accept the expression of some emotions and not that of others, I realized that I would have to take each participant's view of emotions into account. I found that the art/emotions and science worked together in this image, as they are not in opposition, but well synchronized resulting in an interesting composition. Yet, I also found that it was not very focused, and all over the place. What could I do to make it more centred?

Figure 23. Blended and Centred

Through the use of watercolors I found a more centred and aesthetically pleasing image (Figure 23) that permitted the circular movements to blend better with the linear movements. Placing some tape on the image allowed me to create empty spaces, breaking up patterns and movements. The lines are not all straight, but have some movement to them, and they blend into the circular movements. I both feel and know that I found a better balance in this image between my feelings, and my logic. I feel the straight lines are giving structure to my emotions, but not restricting them, and feel free to be moved by emotions while remaining logical. I love the fact that the heart is at the centre of the image. I also see more dimensions to the image; it is not two dimensional, but evokes a three dimensional quality. Every time I look at the image, it lifts my spirit and makes me smile.

Knowledge is not the main focus of this research, as knowledge is part of what makes the problem of counter-emotions possible. Thinking that we know what the counter-emotions mean when we feel them is the problem, since it almost makes us feel like we are in danger of expressing a forbidden emotion and possibly reacting in an unacceptable way. Because this possibility is distressing, it can be viewed as a negative experience. As previously mentioned, this research was more focused on unlearning and finding a new way to look at counter-emotion by disturbing our assumptions when being more compassionate to self. It was meant to enable participants to blend the knowledge and experience of feeling calm and centred, coming from the heart, and real even when experiencing a more difficult emotion. For me, this constitutes a positive view of self when appropriately expressing an emotion previously considered unbecoming.

A summary of the concepts that framed this research was that our inner experience is made of both our knowledge and our feelings. These two can at times be in conflict with each other when exploring our experiences of emoting. When we are able to place distance from self and the artwork of our counter-emotion, we become the observer of the counter-emotion instead of the person experiencing it. This position is a potential space for us to have a compassionate view of our counter-emotion, instead of being self-critical due to the feeling it automatically brings. Instead of being overwhelmed by the counter-emotion, a space is created between the person and the emotion, seeing it outside of self, permitting a response to the emotion that can be more self-soothing.

Arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013; Kapitan, 2010; McNiff, 1998, 2013) has many features that can lead to scholarly reflections on counter-emotions. Art is a creative tool of inquiry, as it permits the observation and identification of the phenomenon that brings us to an awareness of how we feel and think about our emotions, and what this might mean in the greater context of affect regulation. Arts-based research is an artistic process that can bring the participants to reflect on their somatic feelings when emoting (Fogel, 2009; Pearson & Wilson, 2009; Rappaport, 2009) encouraging conversations and aesthetic reflections on their experiences of emotions, staying with a difficult emotion as it bears a gift (Levine, 1997). Being present to the conflict between our calming and counter-emotion can make us question our assumptions about emotions that can ultimately lead to a better understanding of the psychological aspects of experiencing emotions and who we are.

Chapter III: Research Method

I have explained the reasons why I wanted to research counter-emotion, and presented my own personal and professional experiences with them, including: the challenges they created; and the positive outcomes of exploring and integrating them[3]. Situating counter-emotions in prior discussions around emotions and emotional regulation, I explained how ABR can permit observation of participants' experiences with counter-emotions, and any differences between what they said about them prior to expressing them, and if any changes occurred when they were integrated into their lives.

In this chapter, I discuss the research method, which refers to how a researcher intends to construct the study that allows answers to the questions regarding the phenomenon that is being studied. The research method explains the arrangement of conditions for collecting and presenting the data within a logical framework. It is the blueprint for collecting, presenting and explaining the data. I explain my decisions as to what, who, where, when, by how much and by what means I obtained the data regarding counter-emotions. As an ABR was used, the various data are explained, including the data from the art, and the transcripts that included participants' descriptions of how emotions affect their body, mind, heart and spirit. An explanation follows of the data being observed, the selection of participants, the research procedure and the

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[3] This research could not verify if the integration of the counter-emotion resulted in a permanent or only a temporary change in the participants.

instrumentation used. First, I explain the focus of the study to align with what was being gathered during the interview session with the participants.

Focus of the Study

As noted in the previous chapters, this study sought to observe participants in a research context exploring and integrating counter-emotions through creating and reflecting on their art. The intent was to identify each participant's unique personal theoria (theory) regarding their counter-emotion, their praxis or how they put into practice relating to others when expressing a counter-emotion, and how this exploration of the counter-emotion can transform their perception of experiencing a counter-emotion, or poiesis. Another aspect of this research concerned identifying whether there were similar components in participants' artistic experiences when exploring and integrating counter-emotions. This thesis explored how the art process of expressing and reflecting on their feelings when emoting, brought the participants to a new, deeper meaning about self-emoting.

To identify and observe the different aspects of the counter-emotion, a two-hour interview was conducted with each participant. This interview was divided into the three different phases mentioned above: theoria, praxis and poiesis. The first phase was designed to better understand participants' theoria or their perception and understanding of their emotions. The second phase was to explore the praxis of their emotions; how they expressed them artistically and visualized themselves expressing them. The third phase, poiesis, was to observe what transformation could occur, if any, by integrating their counter-emotion artistically with their chosen calming emotion. I facilitated the

process so that participants could find an artistic way to bring together the energy and colours of the stress-emotion/counter-emotion with their calming emotion. Once the artwork was created, I asked them to explain the meaning of their new work. From these three stages of the research, I obtained the data that allowed me to answer the thesis question concerning identifying the components of the counter-emotions. The three phases are explored further at the end of the chapter.

Axiological Level

This research was constructed and conducted with the approval of the ethics review board, under the guidance of St. Stephen's College. The view that all emotions are important, to be understood and explored artistically, was central.

I also adhered to the Canadian Art Therapy Association standards of practice, including: to have responsibility toward research participants, maintain confidentiality, and to have professional competence and integrity. Human expression is a right that must be respected, and any artwork done is not to be used to judge a person, but to maintain their dignity. The creation of art is an opportunity to be present to the expression and to better understand self and others.

An important ethical question during this research process concerned the question imbedded in the principle of utility that we "must" produce pleasure and prevent pain. As all emotional experiences are important and all are needed to be explored in counselling, how did I ethically and safely provide a way for participants to explore their unpleasant feelings when experiencing a particular emotion? Hill (2004) provided a way to navigate this ethical question of exploring painful feelings when emoting through

narrative ethics, virtue ethics and moral vision. Narrative ethics looked at how I engaged with ethically troubling issues. Virtue ethics (Cohen & Cohen, 1999) concerned my intention to provide a safe environment for the exploration of possibly painful emotions, in order to find a way to help heal the past cumbersome hurt. As I have faced my own counter-emotion of anger, I realized that exploring painful emotions can be helpful. Because of my experiences and understanding, I was able to help participants engage in this process. Through the medium of art, participants were able to safely face their image of the counter-emotion, and explore its meaning. Further, I remained with the participants throughout their exploration of counter-emotions to ensure they felt safe.

Participants and Recruitment and Selection

Approval from the ethics committee to start the research process was granted July 5, 2012. The criteria for the selection of participants was limited to choosing adults with no known mental health problems. Adults were chosen, as the study needed individuals who had life experiences with emotions, and who were able to concentrate for the two-hour process. I did not want to have individuals who had known mental health issues, as I was interested in the ability of participants to process emotions. Mental health issues could potentially be triggered during the process, in a way that could encourage disassociation or be overwhelming and trigger mobilization (fight or flight).

Demographics such as culture, age and gender were not considered in the selection of participants, as basic emotions are present in all cultures, ages and genders (Darwin & Barker, 1872; Plutchik, 2003). Also, as Chodorow (1999) and Frijda (1988) explain, cultural influences on emotions are all dependent on the individual's personal

understanding and interpretation of the influences of their emotional culture. Emotions, in this research, were seen as a personal construct. In other words, the participant's age, culture and gender were unimportant since all participants have a personal view of emotions, and their interpretations of emotions were based on their perception of how gender, age and culture influenced them.

Six volunteer participants were recruited, a number deemed sufficient for a basic master's level research, particularly in view of its multi-faceted nature. Due to the limited sample, this study was intended to be a preliminary exploration of a phenomenon that could be considered for further research.

The recruitment for volunteer participants occurred through electronic mail within the St. Stephen's College community, with the Strathcona County Family and Community Services, and the Edmonton francophone community. This process is referred to as snowball sampling. I worked at Strathcona County, and prior to sending an e-mail, approval was granted by my work supervisor and manager of the office, with the understanding that no clients would be used during this research, and that my interview room would be used outside my work hours.

During the selection process, three participants who responded to the call for volunteers were informed that they did not meet the criteria. After the six volunteers were selected, two other persons inquired about participating in the study after it was closed for selection.

The participants are not identified in this thesis, as they have been selected from small communities, which means there is a high risk for identification.

Location and Time

The study was done in two different settings, both private and safe areas, where participants were given the chance to speak freely about emotions and do art comfortably, without interruptions. Four of the six participants were open to meet at my office at Strathcona County Family and Community Services. Two participants did not want to meet me at work, due to distance and because it was a public place. They both felt more comfortable meeting in the privacy of my home.

At each location all the same art materials were offered and organized in the same way to facilitate the participants' access to the art material, and liberty of movement to do the art. At work, I have a desk with sufficient space to do artwork. In my home with the approval of my family, I turned our dining room into an art studio. I made sure that my family would not interrupt the interviews.

Participants were each given a one, two-hour session. The session included thirty minutes to answer questions regarding their unique emotional culture, and one hour and thirty minutes to explore the eight basic emotions and integrate their counter-emotion with a calming emotion. All participants were given choices of the time and day they preferred to meet.

Participants were given time to read and sign the consent form to take part in this study (Appendix B). All participants indicated they understood the purpose of the research, and understood they could withdraw from the research at any time. In addition, consent was also obtained to have their artwork published in the research and used for presentation of the results (Appendix C).

During the research process, one participant was asked if they wanted to stop the process due to an emotional moment, but once given a brief time to process their emotion, the participant chose to continue and complete the process. All participants completed the research process, answered the interview questions, and spoke about the effects emotions had on them. All were able to artistically express the eight basic emotions (joy, trust, fear surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, and anticipation), choose a calming and stressful emotion, and finally integrate their counter-emotion.

Artwork, Data and Material

The primary source of data was the artwork, and what the participants said about their artwork when expressing their emotions. Prior to engaging in any art, the participants were asked ten questions related to their emotional culture (Appendix A). An explanation of why this was done is presented later in this chapter.

Artwork was presented in the context in which it was created; that is, what was said about the particular artwork in relationship to how participants explained that a particular emotion affected them. All artwork was photographed and electronically captured in JPEG format. Artwork was not interpreted, but presented in the context in which it was created, and used to highlight and compare what was said about how emotions affected participants between each of the stages (1, 2 and 3).

All participants had a variety of art material at their disposal, and were told they could use whatever they felt was needed to express their emotions: soft pastels and oil pastels, colored pencils, pencils, paints, various paintbrushes, and a variety of paper sizes

and colours. The outlines of the neutral masks were pre-drawn to have a uniform shape

for all participants, although not all participants chose to use these pre-drawn masks.

As emotions are numerous and are interpreted in different ways, I limited the

participants to exploring and expressing the basic emotions. What are those basic

emotions?

Basic Emotions

I chose to have participants express artistically the basic emotions based on

Plutchik's (2003) list of human adaptive functions which include: joy, trust, fear surprise,

sadness, disgust, anger, anticipation. I was initially attracted to his wheel of emotions

because he used colour to correlate and amplify each emotion. I did, however, consider

his selection of colours to have a North-American bias, as he used red for anger and blue

for sadness. As a result, I did not limit colour selection by participants. Further, I knew

that Plutchik's choice of trust and anticipation, as basic emotions, has been criticized;

however, I believe that trust is an important component of all relationships. I also have

experienced that anticipation can open a door to discuss issues around anxiety and

negative predictions. Finally, this list of basic emotions has different intensities, such as

anger occurring between annoyance and rage.

Interview Transcripts and the Three Stages of Data Collection

Participants were video-recorded and the videos were subsequently transcribed.

The transcripts were divided into three phases, and each phase offered different data

regarding what participants said about each emotion, and whether it was a counter or

calming emotion. The transcripts were also divided to better identify what was said about each specific emotion.

Three stages were used to differentiate between what participants were saying about emotions before doing artwork (Stage 1), what they said about the counter-emotion after having expressed their emotions artistically and feeling their emotions (Stage 2), and what they said about the counter-emotion after they integrated it with a calming emotion in Stage 3. Table 1 offers a description of each stage.

Table 1. Three Stages of Research

Stage 1 Theoria	Stage 2 Praxis	Stage 3 Poiesis
10 emotional culture questions	Exploring artistically eight basic emotions	Participants chose counter and calming emotion.
Primary objective to understand what participants think and feel about emotions prior to exploring them with art.	Artwork/mask per emotion	Directed the artistically integrating of their counter-emotion with their calming emotion. How participants express and feel about new art.
	How participants express and feel about their emotions when exploring them, remembering a time they last felt the emotion. Open questions on how emotions affect body, mind, heart and spirit.	Naming the new artwork and mask. Open questions on how it affects body, mind, heart and spirit. Any last remarks or questions about the process.

Stage 1 Theoria. Following informed consent, ten questions were asked of the participants in relation to their emotional culture (Appendix A). My intent was that the

participants would not be given a list of the basic emotions prior to doing the art, however one participant did see and use the list to help answer the questions.

The participants were asked which emotion(s) they felt: more comfortable or more difficult for them to express; easier or harder to let go; and more encouraged or discouraged in the family and in the work context. They were also asked if there were any faith or spiritual beliefs that they felt had a tendency to influence their views about emotions. Finally, they were asked whether emotions were treated differently at work/school than in the home.

The primary objective of Stage 1 was to understand what participants thought about emotions prior to exploring them with art. This allowed me to notice possible changes from one stage to another.

Stage 2 Praxis. Participants were asked to explore all eight basic emotions with art, and to start this exploration with an emotion that was calming for them. They were given a list of the eight basic emotions: anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust. The participants were asked to remember a time when the emotion was experienced, and to express it with the art material of their choice. During this process of creating their artwork, participants were not spoken to except to answer their questions. This time was a time of silent introspection. Once the artwork and/or mask were completed, participants were asked to talk about the emotion, and to answer open questions on how the emotions affected their body, mind, heart and spirit. Following this, they were asked to feel the emotion, and once they felt that emotion to answer questions on how the emotion affected their body, mind, heart and spirit. This enabled participants to face the artistic expression of all their basic emotions.

Initially, I intended to have participants write about their chosen emotion. This, however, proved ineffective, as it required too much time. As a result of this experience with the first participant, I asked subsequent participants how the selected emotion affected their body, mind, heart and spirit.

Questioning participants' understanding of how the basic emotions were affecting their body, mind, heart and spirit allowed me to categorize and compare similarities and differences about what participants said about their experiences with their counter and calming emotions.

Stage 3 Poiesis. After expressing all eight emotions with art, participants were asked to choose the most stressful and the most calming emotion of the eight. Once the emotions were chosen, a metaphor was offered to help them understand how to bring their calming and stressful emotions artistically into union. They were told how buttermilk or sour milk alone were not necessarily good to the taste, but by adding other ingredients to the unpleasant tasting ingredient one can successfully create delicious cakes or pancakes. Then it was explained that the task was to bring artistically the colors and movements of the calming and stressful emotions into a new artwork and mask. They were encouraged to think of them not as emotions, but as colors, energy and movements.

Once participants completed the task, again in silence to offer them time for introspection, they were asked what they would name this new art piece. Subsequently, they were asked how this affected their body, mind, heart and spirit. After they had answered the questions, they were then asked to look at their last piece of art, and reflect on how they felt about it.

The participants were all asked what their thoughts were about the overall process, and whether there was anything else they would like to say about their emotions or art.

The objective of this stage was to see how participants creatively dealt with facing their conflicts of being both able and unable to regulate their emotions. Further, could they identify a self that was calm and one that was stressed, and a self that was positive and one that saw itself in a negative way. Finally, it was meant to help them to find a creative solution to this conflict by uniting the opposing energies from the calming and stressful emotions into a new work of art.

In summary, ABR allows the analysis of different types of data, as it is experienced by participants throughout the process. In the first stage, the participants talked about emotions in general according to their past experiences, providing qualitative data in the transcripts. In Stage 2, the participants were asked to explore and to express their emotions artistically, providing art data. Additional qualitative data were gathered, as they expressed how their experience influenced their body, mind, heart and spirit. In Stage 3, participants brought the calming and counter-emotion together in the same frame, and changes were noted in their artwork, and in what and how they said it affected their body, mind, heart and spirit.

Chapter IV: Results

As previously mentioned, the objective of this research was to identify components of the counter-emotion with the result that there may be a more holistic understanding of participants' stressful experiences when dealing with a counter-emotion. The goal was to have a better understanding of participants' perceptions of the counter-emotion (theoria), how counter-emotion was experienced and expressed (praxis), and how it can be used to transform their perception of self emoting when integrating a counter-emotion artistically with a calming emotion (poiesis), becoming more compassionate and more congruent when experiencing a counter-emotion. This chapter presents each participants' respective qualitative and art data from the two hour session, and is followed by analysis of each participants' unique experience with their counter-emotion through the art-based research process. Finally, I highlight each participant's unique experience with these five components: 1-lack of self-compassion; 2-lack of congruency (the divided-self or false-self); 3-search for a truer self; 4-more compassionate self by accepting our counter-self; and 5-how the process encouraged spiritual-emotional growth (Scazzero, 2006).

The participants in this study were: Kris, Erin, Jo, Dawn, Robbin and Ali. Each has been given a fictitious name to ensure anonymity. Each participant is discussed in turn.

Kris: Finding Hope by Dispersing Fear with Joy

Perception of the counter-emotion: Fear. In Stage 1, Kris acknowledged that the negative aspect of fear was unproductive and unhelpful.

You have to be up for a challenge. You cannot be fearful of putting yourself out there. I am …, so you can't be afraid to stand up and talk to people or challenge their beliefs and ideals. You have to be willing to stand and to have helped the people that will not stand up for themselves. Or the people who are still hiding who they are; you have to put yourself out there ... so you are putting yourself out there from that condemnation.

Praxis of the counter-emotion: Fear. In Stage 2, after completing a piece of art and mask representing her fear, Kris explained how the fear held her back.   Accordingly, the facial expression represented in Kris' mask (Figure 25) has wide open eyes. The mouth offered very little information, and this seemed to be congruent with the phrase "afraid to show any emotions" which emerged in Kris's commentary.

Figure 24. Symbolic Representation of Fear
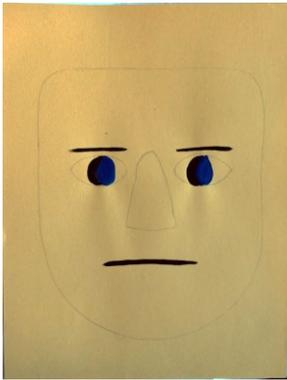
Figure 25. Mask of Being Fearful

Kris was eloquent in explaining this emotion and its debilitating effects.

> Fear is some of disgust and sadness but stronger. Fear, it's blocking. It's like it
>
> stops you to do things. It's like it holds you back. It does not go anywhere. It's
>
> like you are stuck. Fear, you are more stuck in the colors. It's that feeling it's like
>
> being road blocked. You just can't move forward because, because of it. It stops
>
> you from doing what you need to get done. When there is fear there is not room
>
> for anything else. Hiding, shutdown, lack of trust, fear that what you show will
>
> be used against you. You are afraid to show any emotions because it's not safe.
>
> Well it's, it's, it feels like you cannot think for yourself. You're stuck.

Perception of the calming emotion: Joy. In response to the questions in Stage

1, Kris revealed that joy was comfortable to express, and encouraged in the work place.

Q-1: Feel more comfortable in expressing?

- "Generally the more ah socially acceptable, so joy, happiness..."

Q-8: More encouraged in your work/school place than others?

- "Usually happiness and again calmness and being able to deal with everything, and not have any anxiety or frustrations."

Joy gave Kris the impression of being able to deal with everything. This seemed to be in contrast with the fear that prevented her from dealing with things: "It stops you from doing what you need to get done."

Praxis of the calming emotion: Joy. When creating the artistic representation of Joy in Stage 2, Kris symbolized this emotion with a growing flower, giving the impression of movement with the blue around the flower. The flower was taking more space on the paper than the design did in Figure 24. The eyes of the mask (Figure 27) seem closed compared to those of Figure 25, which seemed fearful.

Figure 26. Symbolic Representation of Joy

Figure 27. Mask of Being Joyful

... it's such a positive emotion for it's full of life. ... full of life, feel lighter, 'happy

colors'… not worry about 'outside' stuff. Usually happiness and again calmness

and being able to deal with everything and not have any anxiety or frustrations.

Artistic synthesis: Joy + fear = hope. In Stage 3, she was able to artistically

integrate the fear with joy, and found hope. Kris was also able to connect to a particular

fearful past memory that seemed to encourage her negative view of fear.

Figure 28. Hope
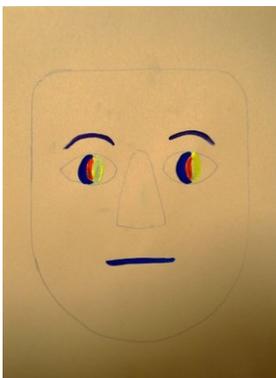
Figure 29. Mask of Being Hopeful

In Figure 28, the blocks were still present, but the element of the flower opened

the road. In the mask shown in Figure 29, the eyes were open and colourful, the mouth

not as wide as in the Figure 25 mask, and the lips were slightly thicker. The blue colour of eyes gave a different impression than in the fear mask (Figure 25) where they were black, and not as wide as in Figure 29. In this case, this fear of putting herself out there, may be related to a personal experience; feeling threatened during a custody battle.

It's pulling apart the fear but it's downplaying the joy. The joy isn't as ... as free, it's kind of stuck. Kind of maybe it's like, it's that unknown. Joy is something you're totally understanding. There's trust involved. Fear is that lack of trust. Maybe it's, it's kind of . ... It's, it's ... like, the, the joy is, is, is lost. But the fear is isn't as bad, because there is ... there is positive in there, there is some movement. It's not stuck, so you can see the end. As opposite just being stuck in the fear, you can move, you can get away from it. Almost disperse the fear. So it's not as strong, not as strong, not as dark. It's kind of (pause) in between. There is hope. It's not stuck. There is movement. You don't get those opportunities cause we are not, it's not acceptable to show fear. It's not acceptable to be angry, so again. ... Well it's different cause it's almost free cause you, it's like you can actually feel anger and see what it looks like or feel. You know fear again and fear you usually hide it because if you show fear it can be used (against you). Fear was yeah, looking back on my ex- … when we were going through everything that was initially doing our divorce and a . ... It was the threat to take away my daughter so there was ... (Observation of an emotional release and brief silence).

Kris described a shift from thinking about fear being an unacceptable emotion, to being free to feel fear. As Kris was able to disperse the fear with the joy, it allowed her to talk about and accept the experience of fear related to the threat of a custody battle.

Being truer to self, Kris admitted and acknowledged the fear experience, and expressed a difficult memory.   She experienced, and I observed an emotional release.

Kris' Lack of Compassion

Kris had a few ways of expressing a lack of compassion when describing the experience of having a counter-emotion.

Trying to hide the emotion, Kris said:

- "So fear, for me, it's lack of showing emotions so it can be used against you..."

Describing the overwhelming difficulty of dealing with the fear, Kris said:

- "It's very solid. There is not, it seems all encompassing. There is no escape."

Shutting down, Kris indicated:

- "You are trying to hide within yourself. You are trying not to feel anything. It, it's, it's like you are shutting down."

When she felt unsafe and vulnerable, Kris said:

- "You are afraid to show any emotions because it's not safe."

- "You can't move, you can't (pause) its stops you from being able to do anything or to get out of it."

Fear created a negative experience for Kris:

- "You don't feel comfortable."

Kris: Divided-Self, Fear Versus Joy

Kris indicated that she considered fear to be unacceptable, as it prevented her from being productive. She also admitted that her experience of fear made it difficult to deal with the threat of divorce. Kris experienced joy as a more socially acceptable emotion and seemed to believe that joy allowed her to deal with everything. The division of self seemed to be between wanting the self to be joyful, so Kris could feel capable of dealing with everything, and avoiding the fear that prevented dealing with things. Yet, the fear was part of her experience and part of her counter-self. There was a lack of congruency, since Kris said fear was unacceptable, and yet admitted experiencing it.

In Stage 1, Kris said about fear:

- "You cannot be fearful ... you can't be afraid..."

In Stage 1, Kris said about joy:

- "Generally the more ah socially acceptable, so joy, happiness. ... Usually happiness and again calmness and being able to deal with everything..."

In Stage 2, Kris said about fear:

- "... it's like it stops you to do things. It's like it holds you back. It does not go anywhere. It's like you are stuck."

In Stage 2, Kris reinforced what was previously said about joy:

- "Usually happiness and again calmness and being able to deal with everything…"

The divided-self seemed to protect the self from the fear, since being fearful gave the impression that the participant would be unable to deal with life events. The memory of being stuck, due to the fear of losing a daughter, could have made Kris believe that it

was unacceptable to have fear. This fear of not being able to deal with things could have

encouraged Kris to deny when fear was present or not accept that others were fearful.

The inability to accept fear could have made social integration more difficult.

Kris's Search for a Truer Self

The acknowledgment that there is a conflict between fear and joy encourages a

search for a truer self. For example, how can Kris be her true-self when she believes fear

is an unacceptable emotion and acknowledges that she is afraid? How does she reconcile

longing for joy, which reinforces for her the unrealistic expectation of being able to deal

with everything?

The appraisal of self being fearful is negative, and the feeling of fear is

undeniably unpleasant. When not joyful, Kris could be prevented from believing in the

ability to deal with things. This story of self is limiting, but the realization of the

unhelpful storying can lead Kris to find a better way of looking at self experiencing fear.

Art facilitated this for Kris.

Kris Experiencing Hope

When artistically integrating the joy with fear, the perception that fear was

unacceptable changed, and this change of perception permitted Kris to reconnect with a

particular memory that made the fear difficult.

> Almost disperse the fear. So it's not as strong, not as strong, not as dark. It's kind
>
> of (pause) in between. There is hope. It's not stuck. There is movement. Well
>
> it's different cause it's almost free cause you, it's like you can actually feel anger

and see what it looks like or feel. You know fear again and fear you usually hide it because if you show fear it can be used (against you).

In Stage 3, the integration of the fear permitted Kris to first remember why the fear was so difficult, and then realized that you don't have to be stuck by fear:

- "Fear was yeah, looking back on my ex-husband when we were going through everything that was initially doing our divorce and a. ... It was the threat to take away my daughter so there was..."

- "... the fear is isn't as bad, because there is ... there is positive in there, there is some movement. It's not stuck, so you can see the end."

In admitting and accepting that fear was part of being human, Kris took a step toward accepting that she was not always the way she would like to be.

Kris's Compassionate Self and Spiritual Growth

At the end of the process, Kris's hope lessened the difficulty with fear. She spoke of hope, as "this new way of looking at the Fear, as you brought in the joy to disperse, to. ... Almost disperse the fear…"

Kris's emotional and spiritual emotional growth could be interpreted, as having occurred when Kris was able to face the difficulty that the fear presented while finding a solution to the division of self by remembering the importance of having hope. Being hopeful was a more compassionate way of facing the fear. Kris acknowledged and accepted the counter-self of being fearful at times. Not fearing being stuck and unable to deal with things any more, or overcompensating in thinking that joy will permit her to deal with everything, Kris was freer to continue her journey knowing there was hope.

Kris's counter-emotion was fear, and the calming emotion was joy. Broadly speaking, Kris's theoria of fear was as an unacceptable emotion, and the praxis was the experience of fear preventing Kris from responding to social situations. In the poiesis stage, joy was able to pull apart the fear and bring Kris hope. It seemed to have done so by allowing Kris to: accept that fear is a part of life; resolving the divided-self; and finding a truer self that permitted the acceptance of the fear instead of avoiding it. This acceptance also made it possible for Kris to be more compassionate despite experiencing fear.

Erin: Gaining a Time-out by Adding a Little Anger to Trust

Perception of the counter-emotion: Anger. When responding to the ten questions in Stage 1, Erin identified a struggle with Anger as a knee jerk reaction but also explained that anger was a discouraged emotion and "... it's not acceptable to show the anger." Consider how Erin responded to the following questions.

Q-3: Easy to let go?

- "Oh, um, I have been working on anger. Um, I don't know if I'm letting it go as well as I want to. I'm working on that."

Q-4: Harder for you to let go?

- "Yeah, maybe anger. It always seems I'm struggling with some knee jerk ... reactions, and then afterwards, after a little, I let it go, that's complete. (Laughter) It's too late."

Q-5: More encouraged than others?

- "... anger, anger and, ... Encouraged, encouraged. My family, ah, used to hide their emotions. So I'm thinking what emotions are you promoting when you're trying to suppress emotions? So all of these under the surface. We're talking about my birth family, right?"

Q-6: More discouraged than others?

- "… anger and sadness."

Q-9: Seem less encouraged in your work/school place than others?

- "Yeah, that's where that anger again is. ... Yeah, ... it's not acceptable to show the anger."

Q-10: Treated differently at work/school than in your home?

- "So all of the emotions I think are there when you are working with people and you experience, you know, may be injustice that brings up, you know, obviously a little bit of anger just how things go in the world or, you know, anticipation or, or, um, joy. I see joy, but the intensity of those things that happen to you personally is just greater."

Praxis of the counter-emotion: Anger. In the two artistic representations of anger produced by Erin in Stage 2 (Figure 30 and 31), the images took up a lot of space on the paper. The skull-like appearance was reminiscent of a pirate flag and seemed to suggest a link of this symbol to what Erin mentioned in Stage 1, "it's not acceptable to show the anger". However in reflecting on her artwork, Erin took a more nuanced view of the emotion:

Figure 30. Symbolic Representation of Anger

Figure 31. Symbolic Representation of Being Angry

Okay. Let's do anger. I've been avoiding it. Uh, anger. … it has an energy to ...

sensing passion and ... so alien. So unrecognizable. There, that's anger.

Negative, and well, and positive. I guess sometimes you need to express anger in

order to make change. It's okay to be angry sometimes. Anger comes a little bit

over the edge sometimes. It, it leaves a charge in the body. When it holds a

charge of anger ... it fries the mind. I'm so angry I can't speak, right? I'm spitting

mad. It taxes the heart. I don't think there is any spiritual. I mean pure emotion.

It deflates the, it can deflate the spirit. And if there's anger for the right reason, it

exhausts the spirit. I think it really fatigues the spirit. Fatigued. Cause anger is such a huge energy and then that leaves. I mean, it leaves feeling leaving like an empty bubble, right?

The significance of anger is amplified by her verbal descriptions, such as "over the edge", "leaving a charge", "deflating", "energy draining", and as will become apparent, she acknowledged a need for a restorative "time-out"".

Perception of the calming emotion: Trust. In answering questions about the calming emotion, trust, Erin noted that it was difficult to express, but that distrust was unacceptable. Further, how does she manage being distrustful and expressing anger in the workplace where she considers such expression unacceptable?

Q-2: Feelings are more difficult to express?

- "... Difficult to express; trust, some fear."

Q-5: More encouraged than others?

- "So I guess joy would be the one you're um, joy and, um, joy and trust are the ones that we try to encourage to be expressed."

Q-7: Any faith or spiritual beliefs that you feel have a tendency to influence your view about emotions?

- "Okay. So that's about so, surprise and amazement is there in my current faith. Um, and I think fear and anticipation is also. Um, there's a whole big container of emotions around faith and spiritual history. Trust. So there's trust and joy, and there's also fear and, um, anticipation.

Q-9: Seem less encouraged in your work/school place than others?

- "Yeah, um, it's not acceptable to show the anger. Um, and not acceptable

  to show distrust.

Praxis of the calming emotion: Trust. In Stage 2, trust was described as

calming, in contrast to the anger that was draining. The colours used to describe trust

appeared very calming (Figures 32 and 33).

Figure 32. Symbolic Representation of Trust

Figure 33. Trusting

It settles the body. Your shoulders drop down. Calms, it's calming. It's like an

acceptance. … cool, coolness over the mind. It's, the breathing is a lot more even.

Quiet is the heart. So when I trust, sort of will be what it will be, and it will be

okay.

Artistic synthesis: Trust + anger = time-out. In Stage 3, Erin questioned wearing or getting rid of the anger mask. She was very expressive. Thinking aloud helped her to understand the impact of this process, and she made the decision to create a new piece of art entitled Time-out (Figure 34). In speaking about anger, she said:

Figure 34. Time-out

... there's a lot of paint on there. Are you going to wear that mask or get rid of it? It's all covered up. Okay. So, I think I have to layer, right? So cake is like layered. So that's trust and that's anger. That's my trust issue. I would take more than one. That's my trust issue. I would take more than one just in case. Um, I think I'll use this one and this one. Okay I'll put that there. Hopefully it will be fine. I want to superimpose some of this color, but I don't want to overdo it. [Places the anger mask on top of the trust mask] Just a little bit of anger over the trust. Okay. The trust being underneath knowing that the anger even if it's coming to the forefront and it's going over the edges. You know, touching into it the trust underneath. To pass through. Okay. No, no. I'm going to do that because now I'm going to bring that green over the top. I'm going to bring the colors over top and, um. So it's creating breathing room, um, a coolness. I'm

trying to make the anger still exist. It's more, um, I guess leave the face. Be contained. Put my ears on. I'm putting my ears on here. [What would you call this?] Hmm. Timeout. I think this is positive because it's, um, it's learning to own the anger. Sort of trying to neutralize the anger of it. So it's okay to feel the anger. The anger is going to be there. It's going, it's not trying to control it. But it's nice to think that. [What would a timeout do to you spiritually?] Rest. [What would it do to the mind?] Restore. Cool the mind. [What would happen to the heart?] Slow the, the heart. Rescue the heart. [What would it do to the body?] Stabilize the body. I'm starting to really like this portrait. I think I overdone it a little bit. I overdone it a little bit. I think the artist in me is getting a little bit carried away. Letting, letting go. Let, I like how I let go of the anger. Um, I feel like right now that I would like to, you know, go into a real quiet place and just, um, let my nervous system sort of reboot. Reconnect. Which I will probably have some tea and then I will go to, um, home and just spend a few minutes just to, uh, maybe be with nature. Be outside. Listen to the wind. Which I don't mind. And just be, I need to be quiet for a little bit.

To create Figure 34, Erin lightly placed the still wet anger paint on the trust image. Then Erin added ears and green color to the image. Erin had mentioned that anger had drained her energy. This process seemed to allow her more time to listen to self and be more emotionally honest by accepting the anger. Where it was unacceptable to show anger, in the workplace, a bit of anger was added to the trust; "so it's okay to feel the anger".

Erin's counter-emotion was anger, and her calming emotion was trust. Erin's perception of anger was that it was a struggle, and she was working on it. In the praxis stage, anger was described as physically and spiritually draining. When integrating the anger emotion with trust, however she gave herself permission to have a "time-out". A time-out was understood by Erin, as giving herself permission to accept the anger, and to reenergize; "Restore. Cool the mind. Rescue the heart. Stabilize the body".

Erin's Lack of Compassion

Erin had various ways of indicating a lack of compassion when describing the experience of having a counter-emotion.

By trying to avoid the emotion, Erin said:

- "Okay. Let's do anger. I've been avoiding it."

Describing the emotion as overwhelming, she indicated:

- "Anger comes a little bit over the edge sometimes."

Shutting down since Erin acknowledges the difficulty of speaking, Erin said:

- "I'm so angry I can't speak, right?"

Seeing the experience as negative due to the effect it has on the body, mind, heart and spirit; Erin added:

- "I mean, it leaves feeling leaving like an empty bubble, right? It fries the mind. It taxes the heart. It, it leaves a charge in the body."

- "I don't think there is any spiritual. I mean pure emotion. It deflates the, it can deflate the spirit."

Erin's Divided-Self: Anger Versus Trust

Erin did not want to show anger, since it could be overwhelming and represent distrust, which she believed was unacceptable. The divided-self was protecting Erin from the fear of being angry which, if noticed, could prevent others from trusting her.

In Stage 1, Erin acknowledged difficulty letting go, and not reacting when the anger was present.

- "I don't know if I'm letting it go as well as I want to. I'm working on that. It always seems I'm struggling with some knee jerk ... reactions ... It's too late. ... it's not acceptable to show the anger."

In Stage 2, Erin spoke about the negative aspect of the anger when it's over the edge.

- "It's okay to be angry sometimes. Anger comes a little bit over the edge sometimes. It, it leaves a charge in the body. When it holds a charge of anger … it fries the mind. I'm so angry I can't speak, right? It taxes the heart. I don't think there is any spiritual. It deflates the, it can deflate the spirit."

In Stage 1, Erin in talking about anger and distrust, said:

- "… it's not acceptable to show the anger. Um, and not acceptable to show distrust." She indicates in the divided-self that it is unacceptable to be angry and show distrust, so what does this mean when the anger becomes overwhelming?

Anger was described as an unpleasant experience, and contrary to Erin's positive experience of trust. In Stage 2, she described trusting (Figure 33):

- "It settles the body. Your shoulders drop down. Calms, it's calming."

Erin seemed unable to accept self being angry, as it could affect the perception that it was unacceptable to show distrust and anger.

Erin's Search for a Truer Self

Erin said distrust, like anger, was unacceptable. This way of viewing self is limiting, and required Erin to explore how to accept self being angry while believing that others (or self) could trust her.

Erin Experiencing Time-Out

In Stage 3, Erin explained that adding a little anger to the trust seemed to give her permission to settle down.

- "Just a little bit of anger over the trust. Okay. The trust being underneath knowing that the anger even if it's coming to the forefront and it's going over the edges. You know, touching into it the trust underneath. To pass through. . . . learning to own the anger. Sort of trying to neutralize the anger of it. So it's okay to feel the anger. The anger is going to be there. I like how I let go of the anger."

Erin's ability to add the anger to the trust permitted her acceptance of feeling anger. The fear of having an overwhelming experience when the anger was present could be neutralized, as Erin recognized that anger was part of being human.

Erin's Compassionate Self and Spiritual Emotional Growth

This awareness enabled Erin to find a method or way to mitigate her anger through a time-out. She indicated that accepting the anger and giving herself a time-out permitted the "spirit to rest". This seemed more congruent with experiencing trust, and

appeared to indicate that Erin was working on trusting and listening to herself. I believe this is an example of a self-regulating practice, which encourages individuals to move away from a situation when in the red zone, and instead wait until you are in a green or yellow zone to respond (Kuypers & Winner, 2011).

Jo: Clarity - Rooting Anger and Bearing Fruits in Trust Tree

Perception of the counter-emotion: Anger. In Stage 1, Jo expressed being comfortable with anger, however he acknowledged that it was easier to express anger at work than at home with a loved one. As becomes apparent, his experience of not learning and experiencing the tools to deal with anger in his family of origin seemed to influence this discomfort. For example, Jo responded to some of the questions, as follows.

Q-1: Feel more comfortable in expressing?

- "Joy, happiness, anger."

Q-3: Seems easy to let go?

- "Um, I'm trying to figure out which one. Once I'm in anger, sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's not. Uh, yeah, it would be anger. Yeah. It's not. Sometimes the more closer the people are to me, the more difficult it is. Then it becomes, I guess, honesty attached to it. If it's, uh, third party people or at work or, then it's easier. No fear of loss."

Q-5: More encouraged than others?

- "I have the tools now that I didn't get from the home nucleus to be able to deal with defusing and, uh, anger situations."

Q-9: Seems less encouraged in your work/school place than others?

- "So, then, yes, the crew that I'm managing are trying not to lose it in front of the customer, to get totally angry and they don't care. We're working on steps so that they don't lose it."

Praxis of the counter-emotions: Anger. In Stage 2, Jo symbolized anger (Figure 35) with a red eye and bushy eyebrows. Later in the process this helped him to add apples and roots to the tree of trust (Figure 37).

Figure 35. Symbolic Representation of Anger

Figure 36. Being Angry

Jo acknowledged that his anger takes over physically, and described the fear of losing control over his reactions. As mentioned previously, this was more difficult at home.

> Anger for me is in the negative spectrum. I think it's a mixed reaction, and a mixed firing, um, you're still emotion, but there's lack of control in the emotion, there's lack of fine motor skills. That's all gone. Um, it's dark, it's red, it's, … it's like the last ditch attempt to, … kind of regain control over the pendulum, and trying to bring me back into a positive state. … there's still time to bring it back then. … but for me this is where normally once I get to this state, and if it gets deep enough, this is when I know I'm going to do the most damage. (What does it do to the heart?) Solid hard pump. I'm assuming it's fairly high, um, but it's a pounding one. It's not, it's not like just fast. There's full blown, um, all the blood vessels are probably, … dilated as well. This is the, um, like the precursor of full loss. We're trying still kind of negotiating about not totally losing control over whatever's going on, but, um, you know that, well, I know that it will eventually get to that stage, and I don't have a choice about that. So, it's going towards that full loss.

Perception of the calming emotion: Trust. In Stage 1, the only time Jo mentioned trust was to describe the difference between home and work.

Q-10: Treated differently at work/school than in your home?

- "Uh, joy, uh, trust …"

Praxis of the calming emotion: Trust. Jo chose trust as the most calming emotion, and created Figure 37 as the first image. The mask of trusting (Figure 38) has interesting full lips, and lacked expression. He explained:

It's neutral. You're in that neutral position. And you're just waiting to see what's coming towards you and you can react to it … that means the body's got the right amount of tension to it to react to life. And it's not overworking, it's not underworking. Um, everything is in tune. ... the brain is not questioning itself. And the internal speech is very quiet. Well, it should bring my heart rate down. It should, um; all my sweat glands are not working. Should be a calming effect. Shouldn't, like the expression as an EMT, shouldn't be like in cardiac arrest waiting to happen.

Figure 37. Symbolic Representation of Trust

Figure 38. Trusting

Artistic synthesis: Trust + anger = clarity. Jo did not want to change the initial tree of trust, and quickly created another image of a tree (Figure 39). This image appeared to have a more child-like quality. Red apples were added to represent the anger, as well as roots and grass to complete the image.

Figure 39. Clarity

I mean, it's more, it's a tree right now with fruits in it. So, it's a different type of tree that's got more complete experience out of it. It's the kind of tree that the roots are not nice. But it's a tree that's more rooted in, into, um, where it could be. (By adding trust to the anger, what does it do?) It would, when, well, talking about it now, I'm adding trusting to, um, to the anger makes me probably go faster through the process again. It is a good thing. It is a good thing. And it is an eye opener as well. (What does it do spiritually?) It brings clarity, uh, and it brings new views, new ways to look at. On the logical side of it, it gives me another, another thing to go work at and try another piece of the puzzle to work with. (What does it do to the heart?) Well, obviously now it, it's going to be normal, like in the sense… The more I have connections in life the more it makes me at

peace. (What does being at peace do to the body?) When you're calm. It was interesting, enlightening. Well, I found a couple of pieces of the puzzle that I can work with.

Jo's counter-emotion was anger, and calming emotion was trust. Jo had the perception that anger was difficult. In the praxis phase, Jo described the struggle to maintain control of his anger. Clarity was found in the complexity of the emotional experience in Jo's poiesis stage, as Jo indicated seeing more clearly when he integrated the anger, and added grass, roots and fruits to the trust tree.

Jo has a different way of expressing the image of this tree. He spoke of a "… more complete experience…" by noticing what was missing, and adding elements. Symbolically, adding the anger to the trust indicated he was beginning to own that part of himself; being truer to self. Perhaps what Jo said about the "… roots are not nice… [and] tools now that I didn't get from the home nucleus" could be related to his childhood experience of not learning and experiencing ways to manage his anger. The reference to the complexity of the tree, that of being rooted, bearing fruits and having grass around may have helped to bring clarity. The added symbols may be related to the phrase, "The more I have connections in life, the more it makes me at peace."

Jo's Lack of Compassion

Jo had various ways of indicating a lack of compassion when describing the experience of having a counter-emotion. When describing his anger, he said:

- "That's the only way I can describe it. Like a mean face. I make a really mean face."

When describing the description from others, he said:

- "Um, the description from other people, um, if we go to the animal kingdom, I wouldn't want to be close to that dog."

Knowing that the emotion was going to be overwhelming, Jo said:

- "We're trying still kind of negotiating about not totally losing control over whatever's going on, but, um, you know that, well, I know that it will eventually get to that stage, and I don't have a choice about that. So, it's going towards that full loss."

Further, Jo described not feeling safe:

- "Um, but for me this is where normally once I get to this state, and if it gets deep enough, this is when I know I'm going to do the most damage. To people around me."

Jo's Divided-Self: Anger Versus Trust

Jo recognized that anger can be problematic when dealing with people who are close to him. In Stage 1, Jo acknowledged the challenges of being angry. "Once I'm in anger, sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's not. Sometimes the more closer the people are to me, the more difficult it is. We're working on steps so that they don't lose it."

In Stage 2, Jo said:

- "Anger for me is in the negative spectrum. This is when I know I'm going to do the most damage. … negotiating about not totally losing control over whatever's going on, but, um, you know that, well, I know that it will

eventually get to that stage, and I don't have a choice about that. So, it's going

towards that full loss."

In Stage 1, Jo found trust different at work than at home. In Stage 2, he said:

- "And you're just waiting to see what's coming towards you and you can react

   to it. … that means the body's got the right amount of tension to it to react to

   life. And it's not overworking, it's not underworking. Um, everything is in

   tune. ... the brain is not questioning itself."

Jo Search for True-self

Despite acknowledging that the anger was a problem, Jo did not seem to trust

experiencing anger, as it could damage a close relationship. There is the "… right

amount of tension to react to life…" when trust is present, but is not so when the anger is

experienced. Jo acknowledged that anger seemed to prevent him from controlling the

right amount of tension to appropriately react to life, so Jo seemed to be searching for a

way to manage his anger in close relationships.

Jo Experiencing Clarity

In Stage 3, Jo discussed the counter-emotion of anger, which for him was trust.

He said:

- "… more complete experience. … I need to fully live on multiple levels of

   different emotions. I'm adding trusting to, um, to the anger makes me

   probably go faster through the process again. It brings clarity, uh, and it

   brings new views, new ways to look at."

By adding anger to the image of the trust tree, Jo seemed to find a different way of seeing the experience of anger. He seemed to have a clearer understanding of the anger and more confidence in managing it;

- "It brings clarity, uh, and it brings new views, new ways to look at."

Jo's Compassionate Self and Spiritual Emotional Growth

For Jo, the process seemed to bring clarity and a sense of peace within self. Whether this was helpful in dealing with the anger cannot be determined. Jo seemed to think that being mindful and kinder to himself would help him move faster through the process of anger. Knowing the tree was surrounded with grass, has roots and bears apples, gave the impression of a more complete experience of being alive, and for Jo, I believe this was a defining moment.

Dawn: New Growth - Facing Darkness of the Anger with Joy

Perception of the counter-emotion: Anger. In Stage 1, Dawn offered a verbal description of anger, which was clearly in opposition to how she wanted to be seen; joyful. She offered these responses to questions.

Q-2 Can you tell about any emotions that you feel are more difficult to express? If so, what emotions?

- "Feel are more difficult to express? Well, I guess the, maybe the emotion of frustration. Because sometimes it's really hard to express that. I guess because really in a way I am a people pleaser. Uh, I think I was kind of raised to be like that. And so, if you're trying to please everybody, you're kind of forget about yourself, and in that, you can get pretty frustrated.

Right? Yeah. Because, because I don't like to express that side of myself. Because I come across as being pretty happy go lucky and, and I feel that in my heart. So, for me to be frustrated and mad, are not emotions that I like to go to."

Q-9: Can you tell me about any emotions that seem less encouraged in your work/school place than others? If so, what emotions?

- "Less encouraged in your work/school place than others? Very cliquey. So, in that, you had to really kind of fight your way through many different situations because the boss did not have your back. So, your emotions would be frustration. Um, there was a lot of cattiness going on, so many times I would be in my boss's office saying, 'You know what, what's going on is bullshit and you need to stop that.' So, again I would get frustrated by, you know, people not getting looked after the way they should from management. So, I would always kind of step up to that. So, I would say frustration would be a big one. It made me sad. Dysfunction seemed to work for our administrator. I think she liked it when everybody was fighting because then they came running to her and that gave her a sense of being needed."

Q-10: Treated differently at work/school than in your home?

- "Well, at home, again I encouraged us if we did have problems to just sit down and talk about it. So, if we were feeling very frustrated, I hoped that we could come to a place where, you know, we could resolve the issue. At work, you really couldn't do that. The frustration stayed there because,

you know, again if you went in and chatted with the boss and blah, blah,

blah, she says 'Oh, yeah, I will get on that.' It really didn't. So, like I say,

again, you would carry kind of a sadness and a heavy heart at work. You

know, so, and at home like I say, I tried to encourage that.

Communication. To get your whatever out that you need to."

Unfortunately, there was not enough time to explore with Dawn how her anger might

create challenges at work.

Praxis of the counter-emotion: Anger. In Stage 2, after drawing her anger mask

(Figure 40), Dawn reinforced her distaste of experiencing anger to the point of saying, "I

frown upon those that are." Further, she described how this counter-emotion affected her

spirituality.

Figure 40. Anger

Oh, anger is a tough one for me. I do not like being angry. I frown upon those

that are. It's a very negative, absolutely. Oh, it's just tense. … I think it can

destroy the mind. Oh, you'd have such a hard, we see it all over this world.

People have hardened hearts because they're so angry. And they always say the

anger has to go somewhere. And that's how that manifested itself in many dysfunctional actions and words and…

I don't even think my spiritual emotions, or whatever you, come into play. By the wayside. For me, when I'm angry there is no spiritual side. Maybe that's why I don't like it so much. I just push it away. It puts, because I'm not used to being in that place. I do not like people who are negative and in that place. Um, it's a real downer for me.

Perception of the calming emotion - Joy. In Stage 1, Dawn was more comfortable with joy (happiness) even when asked about emotions that were difficult to express. Dawn made the analogy that being happy was good, contrary to being angry which was described as a negative experience and not who she wanted to be.

Q-1: Feel more comfortable in expressing?

- "I would say the emotion of being happy."

Q-2: Feelings are more difficult to express?

- "Because I come across as being pretty happy go lucky and, and I feel that in my heart. So, for me to be frustrated and mad, are not emotions that I like to go to."

Q-3: Seems easy to let go?

- "Well, I think happy."

Q-5: More encouraged than others?

- "Um, I have always encouraged my children to go out and do what they need to do, what they were sent to do, and in that, hopefully find happiness and peace within themselves."

It would be interesting to know how Dawn dealt with children when they were struggling with emotions that were not peaceful or happy.

Praxis of the calming emotion: Joy. Dawn produced both a symbolic image (Figure 41) of joy, and a mask (Figure 42). Having come back from a trip to the mountains and enjoying life, she described her image of joy as "God's will". In the next quote, Dawn linked feeling joy with her "potential com[ing] out". This is an interesting contrast to the difficulty she experienced when anger was present. This reinforced again how being peaceful was better, but not necessarily realistic, as "life is a tough one".

Figure 41. Symbolic Representation of Joy

Figure 42. Being Joyful

I think I'm a bit more at peace. I think when you're more joyful, your potential

comes out. Your, people need goodness, and when you're happy, and your cup is

full, you can give it away. Well, I, oh, I think it just makes the heart glad. Well,

you know, I, I know our journey on this earth is, is a tough one. I don't know that

it was supposed to be all fun and games. So, I think God wants us to have a lot of

joy in our lives. And it's just kind of all there for us to find. And so, like, when

you can go to Jasper, it's right there for you. You know? So, I think spiritually,

you know, God does look after us. It's there; we just have to sometimes just look

a little harder maybe for it, eh?

Artistic synthesis: Joy + anger = new growth. In Stage 3, the three colours in

Figure 43, yellow at the top, red in the middle and blue at the bottom were crossed by

green which represented new growth to Dawn. The green was also present in the mask

(Figure 44). Contrary to what Dawn said previously about anger (red colour), she

indicated that "being human you may always kind of be a little bit of the red." She

seemed to recognize that anger, as an emotion, had its usefulness, and can facilitate

renewal.   Let's listen to her words.

Figure 43. New Growth

Figure 44. Feeling Good

And you come back from happy into anger, well, you kind of have a blue-y kind of heart, like, it just puts you in a darker place. (Is this neutral, positive, negative, a bit of both?) I would say it's positive because we're always trying to get out of the dark, and grow. And, like, to try to make things better. I would say that, hmm, for me it, it, a lot of it goes back to when my mom was really sick after my dad had died. So I was always trying to get from this darker place to, to grow. To make things better, to, does that make sense? Well, how, how that experience has helped me, I have passed on to so many of my friends to help them deal with really becoming an orphan. Because your parents are gone, right? So, um, I have helped so many people through that grieving process that I had to go through… (Talking about the three colours) this red represents, um, joy. It's a little bit of mix of maybe anger and anxiety, so I think, you know, for being human you may always kind of be a little bit of the red. Trying to achieve the yellow, right? It gives you hope. It gives you, um, time for reflection. It's almost like when spring comes you think, oh, you know, we have renewal, we have, uh, hope… Hmm,

again I think when you're going along life's journeys, and you're learning your

lesson. You feel good. Um, yeah, I'm going to make yellow eyes now because,

you know, you're really knowing that, you know, maybe this is what God sent you

to do. And you help where you can and it just brings you some fulfillment, right?

Dawn's counter-emotion was anger, and her calming emotion was joy. In theoria,

Dawn admitted not liking to express anger or fighting. Being angry was a downer,

something out of character for her, and her anger seemed to have had some impact in the

workplace. Dawn used joy to describe herself, yet this seemed to create a conflict

between the emotions of anger and joy. For Dawn, the reference to new growth was a

reminder that she could come out of a dark place and grow.

Dawn's Lack of Compassion

Dawn had various ways of indicating a lack of compassion when describing the

experience of having a counter-emotion. For example,

Dawn, as she spoke about anger:

- "I'd hate myself when I'm like this."

Dawn could be avoiding the emotion:

- "I just push it away."

Dawn described the impact of the emotion:

- "I lost my mind. I think it can destroy the mind."

She described the affect on her spirituality:

- "I don't even think my spiritual emotions, or whatever you, come into

  play. By the wayside. For me when I'm angry, there is no spiritual side."

Dawn recognized the challenge of experiencing anger in self, and in others:

- "Oh, anger is a tough one for me. I frown upon those that are. It's a very negative, absolutely. Very negative."

Dawn generalized the impact of the anger on a world level:

- "Oh, you'd have such a hard, we see it all over this world. People have hardened hearts because they're so angry."

Dawn's Divided-Self: Anger Versus Joy

In Stage 1, Dawn spoke about the divided-self. She described seeing self as a person pleaser while feeling anger was difficult. "I am a people pleaser. … So, for me to be frustrated and mad, are not emotions that I like to go to." This challenge with anger seemed to create difficulties in the home and workplace. She said: "So, if we were feeling very frustrated, I hoped that we could come to a place where, you know, we could resolve the issue. At work, you really couldn't do that."

In Stage 2, Dawn emphasized one of her challenges with anger, when she said: "I do not like being angry. I frown upon those that are." Dawn also seemed to associate a hard heart with anger, "People have hardened hearts because they're so angry." When she felt this way it affected her spirituality: "For me when I'm angry, there is no spiritual side."

In Stage 2, Dawn discussed joy and said: "I think when you're more joyful, your potential comes out."

Dawn's Search for a True-Self

Facing the anger with the joy in stage 3, Dawn reflected on the fact that she did not like herself being angry, and she has many reasons for being angry. She also acknowledged that she has many reasons to be joyful. How can she reconcile both these experiences, if she does not like herself when she is angry, and only likes herself when she is joyful? Who is she? Dawn search for true-self when dealing with anger prevented her from being joyful. She found it difficult to experience herself as a person pleaser when she was angry.

Dawn Experiencing New Growth

In Stage 3, Dawn recognized her ability to grow even when experiencing difficult situations. In her art, she joined the anger with joy to get out of the dark. She said:

"New growth… I would say it's positive because we're always trying to get out of the dark. Hmm, again I think when you're going along life's journeys, and you're learning your lesson. You feel good. "

Dawn appeared to have accepted the difficulty that the anger can cause. The process of creating art seemed to remind her that she is capable of get out of the dark. Knowing that even from life's difficult experiences you can grow, may help Dawn handle the stress of experiencing anger.

Dawn's Compassionate Self and Spiritual Emotional Growth

Once Dawn acknowledged her ability to move out of darkness, she conveyed feeling a sense of comfort. Dawn could view self in a more compassionate way, rather than limiting self, as able or unable to please others. By acknowledging her challenges

with anger and finding a way to be kinder to self, she no longer felt alone and was able to reconnect with God.

New growth - Well, it, it, like I say, it brings you joy.. It gives you hope. you're really knowing that, you know, maybe this is what God sent you to do. And you help where you can and it just brings you some fulfillment, right?

Robbin: Resiliency, More Dimension to Sadness by Adding Joy

Perception of the counter-emotion: Sadness. In Stage 1, Robbin would like it if sadness was easy to let go, because she found sadness unproductive. She said to the following questions:

Q-3: Seems easy to let go?

- "Well, the ones that you want to let go of, I guess, would be the anger and the sadness."

Q-9: Seems less encouraged in your work/school place than others?

- "...it doesn't help to be sad."

Q-10: Treated differently at work/school than in your home?

- "Well, I don't know, I guess sadness again if that's, if that's it, it's maybe not useful for getting stuff done."

Praxis of the counter-emotion: Sadness. In Stage 2 (Figures 45 and 46), when Robin reflected on how sadness affected her, she said:

...is mostly negative … it's overwhelming and intense … lump in your throat … it just shut me down. I just couldn't move for a few minutes, um, and it makes me want to cry. I just wanted to sit there and, um, think about the family. … gripping

in your heart. I would be hoping … he has something to hold on to … for me, I

don't know. In the spiritual sense, I suppose it's a, a bit of the prayer for the

family, not in the sense of an organized prayer.
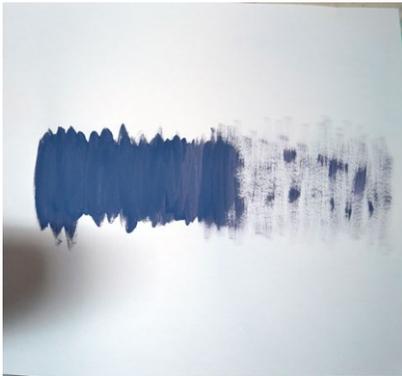
Figure 45. Symbolic Representation of Being Sadness
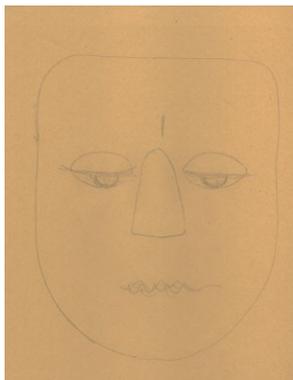
Figure 46. Mask of Sadness

Perception of the calming emotion: Joy. In Stage 1, Robbin preferred joy and

was comfortable in expressing it, pointing out there was no reason to let go of happiness,

in contrast to sadness and anger.

Q-1: Feel more comfortable in expressing?

- "Uh, calm, joyful, uh, that's easy."

Q-3: Seems easy to let go?

- "Well, the ones that you want to let go of, I guess, would be the anger and the sadness. I mean, there'd be no reason to let go of happiness or calm or, I guess… Uh, joy, um, fear, I guess, I'm not usually (afraid)."

Q-5: Seems more encouraged? Emotions more encouraged than others?

- "Um, well, I, I guess the, the easy ones would be, uh, joy."

Praxis of the calming emotion: Joy. In Stage 2, Robbin created vibrant images (Figures 47 and 48) using bright, sparkling yellow which she attributed to her spiritual experience of being surrounded by love.

Figure 47. Symbolic Representation of Joy

Figure 48. Being Joyful

I think I get calmer. … it would allow me to relax. … I feel relaxed. I don't know. I guess for me it lets me relax. …so it's interesting because when you say to me spiritual, I think in terms of Catholicity, but I would never make that equation with my kids. Certainly you could have a spiritual, um, experience without it being necessarily attached to your Catholicity … where was I spiritually when … just in a, a good solid place. You feel surrounded … with love…

Artistic synthesis: Joy + sadness = resilience. In Stage 3 and in contrast to other participants, Robbin did not like mixing colours to convey the calming and counter-emotion. Rather, she preferred to create a space between the yellow (joy) and blue (sadness) (Figure 49). Despite joy consuming more space in the image, and remembering all the good times, Robbin experienced a new insight about sadness.

Figure 49. Symbolic Representation of Resilience
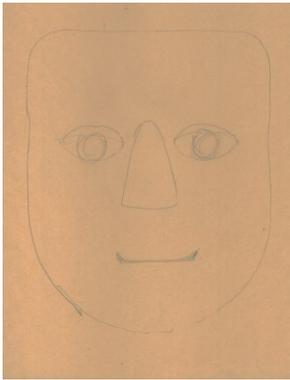
Figure 50. Being Resilient

Um, joy concurs sadness. Um, because it's definitely dominating, although, um, well, I like the purple. … Well, it makes the sadness less one dimensional. If you're sad, you want to, um, value that I guess and experience it because it is intense. But you want to move away from that, no one wants to live in sadness, so you want to get to the other place. How do you get there religiously? Um, yeah, you do, I would think you would be looking for a spiritual rock. Um, um, just recognizing the, the, uh, recognizing and valuing the sadness and then, um. Well, I think it gave the sadness a little bit more dynamism. Uh, so it, well, not, not dimension, well, maybe another dimension, but more of a, less of a passive emotion, and, uh, giving it more, making it a bit more of a dynamic emotion, a bit more layered. I would be moving from that overwhelming sadness of the whole event, and then try to be getting to, you know, all of the clichés of remembering all of the good times and holding on to the love and then they, um, the, the, the memory of the joyful times there would be. Well, yeah. You would be, you would be definitely working at, um, pulling out those joyful moments and trying

to overlie the sadness with, uh, with, uh, the more, um, productive emotions. Um, productive maybe isn't the right word. The more, um, you know, calming, centering, uh.

When I asked Robbin about the transition between the sadness to be more joyful, she called this ability "resilience".

Robbin, initially, experienced sadness as a negative and overwhelming emotion. Subsequently she created another image (Figure 50), which on reflection, offered her another dimension of sadness, one she described as more "calming [and] centering".

Robbin's counter-emotion was sadness, and her calming emotion was joy. Robbin found sadness unhelpful and unproductive. When first exploring the counter-emotion, sadness was described as being overwhelming, and an emotion that prevented her from fully living her life. When integrating the counter-emotion with joy, Robbin found sadness less one dimensional, and believed she could transition from sadness to joy through "resiliency".

Robbin's challenge with self-compassion

Robbin, when describing her experience of a counter-emotion, expressed a number of ways in which she has challenges with compassion for herself. For example, Robbin seemed to have a negative view of self when experiencing fear. She said, "So how do I look when I'm sad? Um, probably shaky." She acknowledged that sadness did not promote a social interaction, in saying: "I probably mostly need to be just left alone. Sadness is a private and personal and deep and visceral, and you can't just pull it up for

the cameras…" Finally, Robbin recognized that the sadness can be overwhelming to the point of immobilizing her, and feeling vulnerable:

> And I was, like, it's overwhelming and intense, um, so, um, and it's rare that you have that, um, surprisingly sad, sad, sad. Um, well, it just shut me down. I just couldn't move for a few minutes, um, and it makes me want to cry. Um, they probably see vulnerability and, um, uh, need. Um, I mean, if you're, if you're sad, yeah, you're maybe in a vulnerable place and, yeah.

Robbin's Divided-Self: Sadness Versus Joy

In the divided-self, Robbin experienced sadness as unproductive, as it can be overwhelming and shut her down. She preferred being left alone, in contrast to experiencing to the joy of being with family; "surrounded… with love…". Robbin also spoke about the importance of having family together, and expressed sadness that it might not happen again. The conflict seemed to be between a self who wants to be left alone when sad, thereby resisting comfort or too much attention from others, and the joy she experienced when surrounded by love and family. The false-self wanted to be with others, although not when feeling sad. For example:

In Stage 1, Robbin said:

- "... it doesn't help to be sad. … it's maybe not useful for getting stuff done."

In Stage 2, Robbin spoke about sadness:

- "I just wanted to sit there and, um, think about the family. … it's overwhelming and intense… lump in your throat… it just shut me down. I

just couldn't move for a few minutes. … sadness is this more private …

I'm not going to be sharing that honour in a public venue sort of thing.

…makes me angry when … people expect that public display of sadness.

Sadness is a private and personal and deep and visceral, and you can't just

pull it up for the cameras…"

In Stage 2, Robbin spoke of joy:

- "I know what I'm remembering is last year at Christmas… we were all

  together. I know it's just going to be really hard to organize that again.

  (Talking about their own children)…because they're growing up so, um,

  and they've left. (Talking about joy) Like, that's something solid that I

  want to be able to hang on to."

Robbin's Search for a True-Self

Robbin's search for true-self presented a dilemma, as sadness left her isolated

while joy was found in being with others. How can Robbin accept sadness when it is

experienced as a solitary emotion?

Robbin's Experience of Resilience

Robbin's ability to place the symbolic representation of the joy with the sadness,

transformed her view of sadness by acknowledging that sadness has more dimensions

than previously thought.

Well, I think it gave the sadness a little bit more dynamism. Uh, so it, well, not,

not dimension, well, maybe another dimension, but more of a, less of a passive

emotion, and, uh, giving it more, making it a bit more of a dynamic emotion, a bit

more layered. I would be moving from that overwhelming sadness of the whole event, and then try to be getting to, you know, all of the clichés of remembering all of the good times and holding on to the love and then they, um, the, the, the memory of the joyful times there would be. Well, yeah. You would be, you would be definitely working at, um, pulling out those joyful moments and trying to overlie the sadness with, uh, with, uh, the more, um, productive emotions. Um, productive maybe isn't the right word. The more, um, you know, calming, centering, uh.

The process of creating art presented Robbin with a different view of the sadness, finding true-self by accepting the sadness since she experienced more joyful moments than sad. As previously mentioned, when I asked Robbin about the ability to move away from the sadness toward joy, she identified an ability called, "Well, it's resilience, um". I believe Robbin's sadness was more meaningful, as a result of reflecting on the meaning of resiliency. She said: "… spiritual analogy maybe the, the, the, the silver lining. Um, um, just recognizing the, the, uh, recognizing and valuing the sadness…"

Robbin's Compassionate Self and Spiritual Emotional Growth

Resiliency permitted Robbin to see the silver lining, and recognize and value the sadness. She was now able to allow more emotional tolerance of sadness, acknowledging its many dimensions. By cueing herself to recall moments of joy while sad, seems to have helped Robbin realize she can be more resilient to life experiences.

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Ali: Healing by Adding Trust to the Sadness

  Perception of the counter-emotion: Sadness. In Stage 1, Ali mentioned sadness when speaking about the difference between home and work life. For instance, she seemed to have a perception that when at work she cannot comfort someone who is crying or having a difficult day. When asked about emotions being treated differently at work/school than in your home, she said: "Um, however at work let's say somebody has, especially if somebody's had a bad day and they start crying in front of you, you cannot comfort, comfort them."

  Praxis of the counter-emotion: Sadness. In Stage 2, Ali created images (Figures 51 and 52) of blue tears, which were her symbols for sadness. As Ali identified the need for comfort, I wondered what this meant for her when there was need for comfort at work?

Figure 51. Symbolic Representation of Sadness

Figure 52. Being Sad

Negative. I want to say, like, it gives up. It comes down. It really focuses on for that time; it really focuses on what makes me sad. The heart, it bleeds ... similar as trust. I need, I ask for guidance… Comforted.

Perception of the calming emotion: Trust. In Stage 1, Ali did not say anything about trust when answering the questions.

Praxis of the calming emotion: Trust. In Stage 2, Ali created a symbolic image of trust (Figure 53), and it was noteworthy how the blue-purple circle was not completely centred.

Figure 53. Symbolic Representation of Trust

Figure 54. Trusting

To me, it's trust. Purple. Positive. (Last time you experienced trust) Um,

yesterday. Is that what you mean? You mean a time in my life? Or a time? So

that would be yesterday. Spiritually? It, um, it just brings a lot of calmness, and I

want to say the word light. Warmth. Um, it just, for me, it's in my heart. It's

rarely in the head. It's rarely the head. And, uh, warmth, just the heart and, um,

it's physically, it's on my shoulders and neck. It's being radiating light. Okay.

What do I need? So the need for me is a hug. Yeah. Physical reinforcement. Uh,

feeling protected. Uh, it's not, it's clearer. The heaviness, the cloudiness goes

away. So it's that way. So with the heart, um, when the trust comes in, it just

feels like a lighter beat. Um, better flow. So on the face? So my eyes are brown.

First, bigger eyes. Just the, uh, how can I say it? …on the forehead. Hmm, for

sure I have this. I want to accentuate my eyes. So just open bigger. What would

I think of them? Um, confidence. They're very confident and, uh, they know

they're very with where they are. Mostly confidence.

Artistic synthesis: Trust + sadness = healing. In the integration of the sadness with trust in Figure 55, Ali brought in the element of trust, as a blue-purple circle with the blue sadness, and then added a red circle in the middle. I wondered about the significance that the circle was more centred in Figure 55 than in Figure 53. Red cheeks were then added to the mask (Figure 56), the lips were more full, but there were no eyelashes. Ali seemed to find it hard to focus when she experienced sadness, but when integrating the counter-emotion with the calming emotion, Ali described having a better reaction toward the sadness.

Figure 55. Symbolic Representation of Healing

Figure 56. Being Healed

So I see, um, a wave of emotions, like, just a whirlwind. But with the light in the middle. Just. A healing. Positive. It, uh, spiritually, spiritually gives a sense of peace. (What does it do to the mind?) Clears, clears, clear, yeah. (What does it do to the heart?) Soothes. (What does it do to the body?) Relaxes. When the healing is present. I need to celebrate. With I would say dinner or something like that. (If you saw somebody like that down the street, what would you, what would you think of them?) Lucky. I'm very, I'm very happy for them. Uh, I just I found it brings, um, balance in the emotions. It just, if I just find when I look at it, it just gives me a, how can I say it, it not blankets, but it envelope, envelopes the whole emotion, negative emotion with the positive. And it just makes me focus into feeling good. Yeah, yeah, it does that. It does help a lot actually. Because it just, it doesn't mask it, but it just gives it a, a better reaction in some way.

Ali's challenge with self-compassion

Ali, when describing her experience of a counter-emotion, expressed a number of ways in which she has challenges with compassion for herself. For example,

Ali: (Speaking about sadness)

- "It, um, I want to say, like, it gives up. It comes down. It, yeah, like letting go. Like, everything becomes heavy."

- "It really focuses on for that time; it really focuses on what makes me sad."

- "The heart, it bleeds."

- "I also need time alone."

Ali's Divided-Self: Sadness Versus Trust

Ali's divided-self was expressed between being able to trust and being sad. The false-self knew that Ali needed comfort when sad, but the professional mask prevented Ali from asking for comfort. For example,

In Stage 1, Ali said about sadness:

- "if somebody's had a bad day and they start crying in front of you, you cannot comfort, comfort them."

In Stage 2, Ali said about sadness:

- "The heart, it bleeds ...similar as trust. I need, I ask for guidance… Comforted."

In Stage 2, Ali said about trust:

- "So the need for me is a hug. Yeah. Physical reinforcement. Uh, feeling protected."

Ali's Search for a Truer-Self

Ali's search for true-self was the inability to comfort or be comforted at work when sad. How can Ali comfort or be comforted even if she or others experience sadness? If fear is unacceptable, how does she make sense of fear?

Ali: Experiencing Healing

Ali's ability to bring protecting and physical comfort to sadness seemed healing for her. She indicated:

So I see, um, a wave of emotions, like, just a whirlwind. But with the light in the

middle. Just. A healing. Positive. It, uh, spiritually, spiritually gives a sense of

peace. Clears, clears, clear, yeah. Soothes. Relaxes.

Her symbolic exploration of emotions provided a way to incorporate the sadness and not

be overwhelmed, since it was a way to heal the overwhelming sensation by incorporating

trust.

Ali's Compassionate Self and Spiritual Emotional Growth

Ali's counter-emotion was sadness, and calming emotion was trust. In theory she

found it hard to comfort individuals who were feeling sad at work. Acknowledging the

need to be comforted when sad, Ali found it healing and experienced a sense of peace

when focused on the good feelings even when dealing with a wave of emotion. Ali

accepted the sadness, and found a better way to react. Healing, for Ali, has a spiritual

significance, since it provided her with a sense of peace.

Summary of Results

All participants, in exploring their counter-emotions, were able to face them and

know that these emotions were undeniably part of their life experiences. Acknowledging

that these emotions were counter to self and can be false, they found ways to be more

compassionate to self, and move through their respective difficult emotions. Resolving

their inner conflict between the calming and counter-emotion enabled them to find

spiritual and emotional growth. Thus, they began to unlearn the automatic negative

reaction and appraisal toward self when experiencing a counter-emotion, and became

more mindful of their experiences. Ultimately, there was an integration with how they

presented themselves to others and how they experienced themselves within. The true-self became present to everyday life.

Prior to discussing the implications concerning this study, it is important to emphasize that exploring and integrating a counter-emotion through the use of art permitted the participants and I to see the truth about the masks we wear. All of us were able to: acknowledge that we were not always able to control our emotions the way we would like; and find practical ways to manage and transition through those difficult emotions with more compassion.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to link literature, theories, and practice to the findings. Linking the findings to practice, I elaborate on the implications for counselling, and offer suggestions for further research. I also use this opportunity to share what I learned, and how I experienced emotional-spiritual growth through this process. The discussion begins with a brief review of the study.

Summary of the Study

As previously mentioned, the research questions were: How were six volunteer participants able to detect and integrate their counter-emotions; those emotions that represent a conflict between how we internally feel and experience an emotion, with our actual presentation of ourselves to others because of social conditioning. Further and through theory and practical experience, I explored whether, if any, central themes surfaced for uncovering and integrating counter-emotions.

My personal and professional observations when exploring stressful or overwhelming emotions artistically encouraged me to pursue this research. From Prinz's (2004) embodied appraisal theory of emotions, I wanted to better understand what occurred when exploring and integrating counter-emotions; how feeling the physical sensations of an emotion, and the individual appraisal of emoting could make it easier to understand why certain emotional experiences might be considered stressful. Knowing that all emotional experiences are important, I also wanted to better understand how to help people lessen the stress of experiencing an emotion that they considered stressful. This research focused on the components of counter-emotions, providing a primary look

into the artistic process of exploring and integrating counter-emotion in our lives. A more holistic view of the complexity of emoting was offered through observation and discussion of participants' perceptions of emoting, and how they integrated counter-emotions within their lives.

Five components of the counter-emotions were found: lack of self-compassion; lack of congruency or a divided-self; a search for our true-self; a more compassionate self; and spiritual-emotional growth. These five components were identified in the way each participant experienced a counter-emotion and integrated it back into their life. The discussion that follows elaborates on how these components are related to the literature and theories.

Linking Findings to Literature and Theories

Neff (2009) explained that the compassionate self includes: "self kindness, common humanity and mindfulness" (p.864). Mindfulness (Davis, 2015; Rappaport, Chang, Mullin, Trantham, & Surrey, 2013; Siegel, 2007, 2010) is learning to be present to our experiences without habitual reactions or judgments. As participants became present to their counter-emotion and calming emotion through art, they seemed to experience how to be more compassionate toward themselves. This liberated them from the possible shame and guilt of past reactions, and enabled them to see a different way of being when experiencing the counter-emotion. They unlearned their habitual reactions, and found new ways of perceiving the experience. Although, Kris for example, began by saying that fear was not an acceptable emotion, the art process permitted her to face her fear, and still have hope. Changing thoughts and feelings about their subjective

experience with the counter-emotions allowed resolving the divided-self, and finding a truer way of being that was more compassionate and congruent.

Lack of Self-Compassion: Counter-Self

Participants had difficulty with being compassionate with themselves when experiencing and expressing the counter-emotion. This may be due to the negative appraisal of self and/or the somatic negative feeling that the emotion produced. This negative appraisal of self, reinforced the belief that the emotional experience was counter to the self; how we want to be, and need to hide, thus denying our emotional reactions. The unpleasant physical sensation of the emotional experience reinforced the negative aspect of the experience and made it more difficult to tolerate the distress.

As Gilbert (2010) explained, the threat and protection system can be triggered by certain emotions and personal meanings. Some possible triggers surfaced in the transcripts of the participants, including: "shame"; "block-out and avoid feelings"; and "feeling over-whelmed". From Matos and Pinto-Gouveia's (2010) perspective, shame is stored in feeling memories and can be triggered due to fear of being rejected, criticized, shamed and/or abused. All participants indicated that when experiencing stressful emotions they saw themselves as negative, and described experiencing this as "shutting down," "being negative," "felt unsafe or vulnerable," and "disconnected and having no spirituality". These phrases suggest that participants had difficulty finding compassion for themselves when experiencing a counter-emotion. As an example, Kris, in speaking about fear, said: "Well it's, it's, it feels like you cannot think for yourself you're stuck."

The inability for self-compassion when experiencing a counter-emotion helps us to understand why someone might want to avoid or hide the experience of having one. Also, this begins to explain the lack of congruency or the emergence of the divided-self when talking about a counter-emotion. The participants spoke about these emotions being unacceptable, yet admitted to having them. If individuals want others to have a positive appraisal of them and the counter-emotion is negative, the tendency is to avoid, minimize, or deny the experience.

Lack of Congruency: Divided-Self, I Am My False-Self

I believe our divided-self is created to protect us, because we do not want to acknowledge that we are not always at our best and/or hide the part of ourselves so others do not see us in a negative light. The divided-self prevents us from realizing that we cannot always be who we would like to be all the time. Erin's experience with anger was difficult, since there were times when the anger was overwhelming. Erin did not want others to see this side of her, as distrust was not an acceptable emotion.

When experiencing an emotion identified as negative, there seems to be a longing for a more calming emotion, yet we judge ourselves instead of accepting that we are having a normal human experience. This negative view that occurs with little compassion for self does not encourage acknowledging and accepting the counter-emotion. The admission, that we are not always a self that is socially acceptable, and that we are at times counter to what we believe is humbling to admit. However, acknowledging this is the first step toward finding who we truly are.

In Search of a Truer Self: Admitting our Counter-Self

The acknowledgment that we are at times counter to our ideal is found in understanding the division between our calming and stress emotions. When Robbin was able to acknowledge the artistic and emotional division between joy and sadness, she realized that sadness was part of life, and that she could not always experience being joyful. Through art, Robbin was encouraged to find a better way to deal with her inner conflict. The visual representation of each calming and counter-emotion seemed to make it easier for the participants to become present to their respective images of art, and reflect on the meaning. The acceptance of the difficulties with our counter-emotions was the beginning of their search toward their true-self.

Who am I if I do not like my emotional reaction? Acknowledging challenges with our counter-emotion instead of denying or minimizing the problem prepares us to have an open mind to question how we can remain a good person even when having a negative emotion. The experience of the emotion is negative, not the person having the experience, or the emotions themselves. Emotions are a normal part of life; our experience of them can be negative due to negative feelings, and/or having an appraisal of self that is considered counter to the way we should be or act.

More Compassionate Selves, an Emotional-Spiritual Experience

As presented above, all participants had some element that would indicate a lack of compassion for themselves when experiencing a counter-emotion. After integrating the counter-emotion, the participants seemed more compassionate toward themselves. They reported this experience, as being more spiritual. Erin was kinder to self by

permitting herself to have a time-out when the anger was present. She saw this as a time to replenish her energy, which facilitated a spiritual connection.

Self-compassion is the ability to recognize that we are human, fragile and imperfect. Mindfulness is being attentive to our thoughts, feelings and behaviour, without judgment, seeing them as they are, yet not being overwhelmed or reactive to them. The process of creating art can be a mindful activity, as we can take the time to notice our choices and reactions. Facing our expression of art, and the masks representing our counter-emotion creates a distance from the experience. When asking the participants if they would judge a friend or family member in the same way, there is a shift in perception. As most people are kinder when close family or friends are experiencing a counter-emotion, this change in perception, from being the one experiencing to being the one comforting someone else, gave an opportunity to question why they are so hard on themselves.

Creating and reflecting on art can be a soul-centering experience. For example, as I express my emotions with art, I can question my automatic reaction to how I feel and think about them. The images of art I create can also remind me of my behaviour or someone else's behaviour that influences my reaction of feeling and thinking about the counter-emotion. This artistic process permits me to reflect on my experiences of emoting, to see the part of me that I do not like when emoting. Facing my own inability to have compassion for self when experiencing a counter-emotion, for me, is part of a spiritual experience. Admitting a division of self, in what I think and feel about my counter-emotion, encourages a search for a truer self.

Peter Scazzero (2006) encourages the combining of emotional health with a contemplative or reflective spirituality. Accepting that I am not always my true-self, I can then question who I really am. Crucifying my false-self, admitting that I am my counter-emotion and lessening the need to protect myself by overcompensating when trying to be the calming emotion, I accept that I am both the counter and the calming emotion. I am no longer divided, and I am more than both. I find new perceptions of myself when I accept both parts of me. The spirit brings me away from the dualistic thinking into a third, inspired by the art and expressed by love that is the trinity. Accepting a side of me I do not like, I become more congruent. By being kinder to myself and more mindful, I realize I am not alone and move closer to a self that is truer to the person I want to be. This makes it easier to accept past life challenges with the counter-emotion, and tolerate my distress when feeling and thinking about them. By moving away from thinking about emotions as negative or positive, I can be true to self, regardless of life challenges. Being more understanding and compassionate concerning the challenges of emoting is part of being human.

Brenner said that a soul centering experience occurs when we are able to identify our false-self, and get a little closer to who we truly are; acknowledging we are imperfect human beings despite our desire for perfection. We are perfectly human in God's eyes. This is a life-long process, as we think we understand who we are by always learning to question and better ourselves. Do we ever truly know who we are or what is our true-self? We can only become more aware of our behaviour, what we think and how we feel. The better we are in becoming aware and mindful, the better we will be able to reflect on our life. The soul, for me, is not a physical thing but a space for reflection between us

and our life events. The time we take to reflect, talk and feel our emotions is an opportunity to grow spiritually. This search makes us realize we are not always good, yet we can forgive self and others, learn, re-story, and be more compassionate toward our self and others in everyday life.

Further, art therapy (Davis, 2015; Rappaport, Chang, Mullin, Trantham, & Surrey, 2013) encourages mindfulness, and mindfulness (Germer, 2009; Siegel, 2007) has been known to help individuals with emotional regulation (Cullen & Brito Pons, 2015), anxiety (Orsillo & Roemer, 2011), depression (Teasdale, Segal, & Williams, 2014), and other life challenges (Hạnh & Vo-Dinh, 1987). Mindfulness has been described as a compassionate awareness or heartfulness (Kabat-Zinn, Segal, Teasdale, & Williams, 2007). For example, Dr. Kabat-Zinn in 1979 developed a mindfulness-based stress reduction program that was found to be beneficial in changing thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Encouraging only positive emotional experiences could indirectly feed the divided-self by encouraging both the avoidance of difficult emotions and overcompensation of the calming emotion. No one wants to have unpleasant emotional experiences, but avoiding them also has drawbacks. Emotional honesty (Brill, 2000) and emotionally healthy spirituality (Scazzero, 2006) have many benefits. Facing our emotional challenges can be liberating, if we take time to better understand our difficulty with an emotion, and liberate a repressed emotion or traumatic memory in a safe way.

As previously mentioned, creating art permits the expression and reflection on thoughts and feelings about emotions, enabling the differentiation between behaviour regarding a counter-emotion, and facing the truth about the behaviour. The embodied

appraisal theory incorporates our subjective experiences enabling us to better understand how our bodies feel, and what we think about their emotional experiences. This research allowed six participants and me to describe the difference between our subjective experience of a calming and a stressful emotion. The difference between these experiences revealed that the calming emotion can encourage a more positive view of self by discovering a way to incorporate the counter-emotion in a more congruent manner. Ultimately, I view exploring and integrating counter-emotions as the art of compassion, since by accepting our false-self and being more compassionate toward ourselves, we can learn from our difficulties and suffering to accept part of ourselves that was not always considered socially correct, but undeniably part of our lives.

Self-Reflective Practice

This research gave me time to reflect and better understand my own spiritual journey by using art as a contemplative process in search of a more compassionate, congruent self. Being truer to myself can in turn help me professionally encourage others to find a truer self through artistic contemplation. Understanding how to be present to my counter-emotions and how I feel and appraise them, can facilitate others to discover the same. Daniel Siegel (2010) encourages therapists to be mindful, and this research found it important for me and the participants to be present to our stressful emotions in order to face our imperfections, and become more compassionate of ourselves and others.

Implications for My Own Counselling Practice

I struggled with the title of the thesis, between, The Art of Self-Compassion and The Art of Compassion. This struggle was related to finding my own self-compassion. To

be compassionate as a counsellor, I first had to understand how to be self-compassionate. I had to be self-compassionate toward myself emoting my counter-emotion, in order to facilitate my ability to be compassionate to those who seek my help, especially those who are dealing with anger. This experience affirmed my decision to title this thesis, *The Art of Compassion*, since it includes the importance of first being self-compassionate to my own struggles, so I can be compassionate to others in a therapeutic way.

Thích Nhất Hạnh (1992) explained "when you look deeply into a flower you can see the rain, the compost and the sun that made the flower bloom" (p. 23). When someone is having difficulty with a counter-emotion, giving them a chance to look deeply into their emotional experience they might discover: a lack of self-compassion, a division of self, a longing for a truer self, a more compassionate-self, and an opportunity for spiritual-emotional growth. Facing our emotional challenges in a creative way can help others to question their assumptions and minimize their reactions toward experiencing emotions that are stressful. What was once a difficult inner experience can become easier, and this process can give us clues as to why inner experiences of feeling or appraisal of our emotion can be difficult. I see myself as a facilitator in this personal artistic exploration. Being a witness to the struggles of my clients, I also need to be mindful, that by creating a safe-space and in my compassionate presence, they will be safe enough to create, and to figure out how to overcome the challenges of a counter-emotion. As previously mentioned, there is an attraction to knowing and doing, but we forget, at times, the most important part of life is becoming. One contribution to the practice of counselling is lessening the distress of overwhelming emotions by teaching individuals to be themselves even when experiencing a counter-emotion.

Because no one knew the complexity of my past history, no one could have known what I needed; I had to figure that out on my own. This longing to better myself and enhance my training as an art therapist facilitated my journey, and influences how I encounter challenges along the way. Similarly, individuals who seek my help need confidence that I can be helpful while encouraging them to figure out what it is they need. After first noticing my automatic fear reaction to anger, it took me years to understand and be confident in my ability to reduce my fear and manage my anger.

Being able to understand other people's experiences with counter-emotions, and writing this thesis facilitated my own process. The more I am able to understand, feel and express my anger in an assertive way, the less I experience fear.

Another implication for counselling is the importance of handling the positive emotional trap. For example, if I want my clients to be calm, I focus on what makes them calm, and encourage them to think only in a positive way. Encouraging only calm and positive thoughts in a person, who is avoiding an emotion, might encourage the divided-self, and make it harder to integrate the counter-emotion. Using my own life example, if I was trying only to be positive and seek my colourful guy to lessen my stress, I would avoid situations that make me angry. In doing so, I might not work on or have relationships with others. My fear of anger had to be faced and dealt with for me to accept the reality that life sometimes brings me to anger.

Knowing that I was able to discover a way to be more congruent when experiencing anger enabled an emotional-spiritual experience. My mask of the colourful guy no longer needed to protect me from the fear of my anger, and I could express humour when I wanted to, not because I needed it. Being more mindful and self-

compassionate, I no longer feared an automatic overreaction to anger, and found I could express my anger in a loving way that brought others closer to me. I can be my anger, the colourful guy and more if I want to, not because of a reactive response to fear. These various experiences of life are not in opposition; I am not divided but whole and ready to discover more. As I experienced this myself, I am able to encourage and observe this phenomenon in others.

I believe art therapy and counselling can bring awareness and confidence to individuals so they can handle the distress of a counter-emotion. Through confidence and practice they will no longer fear their counter-emotions, and manage their behaviour in a more socially acceptable way.

People are not the problem, the problem is the problem, with mindfulness and self-compassion, a counter-emotion can be integrated in a way that stops the experience from being automatically stressful by slowing down the process to give participants time to question their assumptions. I believe this enables us to have a more pleasant and less stressful life.

It is important to recognize and deal with accepting the difficulty with a counter-emotion in a respectful and safe way. In acknowledging the difficulty, it is important not to encourage avoidance and enable overcompensation. Rather, it is having participants acknowledge the difficulty and find their particular creative solution(s). The participants knew their positive aspect of emoting, yet that was not always helpful when dealing with the negative aspect of the counter-emotion.

Emotions are part of our lives; some emotional experiences are pleasant and some are unpleasant, but they are all part of the experience of being human. Labelling

emotions as negative or positive could potentially prevent individuals from learning from their counter-emotions, from being emotionally truthful, or from being socially integrated. As most people long for and seek pleasurable experiences and avoid unpleasant experiences, counter-emotions could be avoided or denied. As emotions are mainly unconscious responses to our life events, learning to deal with the unpleasant aspects of experiencing counter-emotions is an opportunity to learn how to handle and tolerate distressing feelings and to reassess our appraisal of self-emoting. Instead of distorting the reality of a situation, we can be more realistic when dealing with normal aspects of life that are unpleasant. Influenced by past experiences, counter-emotions can be an automatic reaction to certain stimuli, as a way to protect self from others seeing us overreact or reacting in a perceived unacceptable manner. Witnessing someone else experiencing a difficult emotion and not judging them, places people in a position to reflect on why they are being hard on themselves when being emotional. Becoming more mindful of our counter-emotions and learning to tolerate the feeling of a counter-emotion has the potential to lessen the difficulty and possibly the stress when the troublesome emotion is present in our lives.

Facing our imperfect reactions and admitting our challenges with emoting can in itself be beneficial. Helping individuals to both feel the emotion and how they make the appraisal of themselves emoting can bring a better understanding of the problem when they experience an emotion that is counter to their ideal self. Protecting self from being seen in a negative way could encourage a denial of our behaviour and/or blame others. This denial can make it harder for people to learn from the experience. Blaming others could push people away from us. Working on a symbolic artistic level can gently teach

individuals that they are both capable of calming themselves, and what emotions are still difficult to deal with. Using the arts to find a balance gives them an opportunity to unlearn what they previously thought about their particular counter-emotion. Creating a distance between self and the experience of feeling makes an appraisal of self-emoting easier to observe. Highlighting the difficulty of feeling the emotions and the negative appraisal of self-emoting as the problem, gives individuals an opportunity of seeing self as the problem, since they can do something about this instead of seeing this as unconscious reaction that is out of their control. Bringing in the calming emotion is a reminder that they are not just angry, sad or scared. The divided-self is named, creating an opportunity to find a solution to the problem, preventing a person from encouraging guilt feelings.

In counselling, we often deal with individuals who blame others for their emotional reactions or feel guilty that they have reacted in a way outside a socially acceptable manner. As no one can control how others will react, it is important to teach individuals how to take responsibility and be more mindful of their own emotional reactions. Most people understand socially acceptable reactions and those emotional reactions, which are not acceptable. We do not want to reinforce their guilt. Instead, we want to reinforce their creative ability to resolve their internal conflict of the divided-self, and find their true-self. This means being self-compassionate when experiencing emotions that are counter to self. Self-compassion, as identified by Neff (2009), is being mindful, kind to self and seeing that others have also suffered. This change of perception around our counter-emotion is a small step toward a more compassionate world.

Suggestions for Future Research

I have to admit that when I first started this research process that I did not know I was researching counter-emotion, mindfulness and compassion. When I first looked at the results of the research, I was primarily looking at the similarities and differences in participants' experiences with stressful and calming emotions. I missed the more complex and creative emotional-spiritual aspect of how the participants were explaining their experiences with emotions. The shift was made when I looked at the research from my own personal experience with counter-emotion, and seeing it from the view of a spiritually informed art therapist. My impulse to find the link between counter-emotion and heart problems is still present, since I have seen a personal shift and seen numerous examples of how this process can lessen the stress in people's lives. I believe there is an opportunity to verify lessening stress through art, and the integration of counter-emotions using bio-feedback and other physiological indicators which are monitored over time.

There is also an opportunity to explore the long-term changes concerning the uncovering and integrating counter-emotions into someone's life. This could include exploring changes in behaviour and stress. Finally, it is possible that this self-acceptance could also influence how we regard others emoting. While this could not be verified in this research, it could be considered for further study.

Conclusion

Counter-emotions are not negative, but our experience with them can be. We need to accept our counter-emotion, feel it, give time for our reflective-self to observe our perception (theoria), and admit that our counter-emotion is a reaction (praxis) that we

cannot always control, and does not always allow us to socially integrate. The habitual

reaction to our counter-emotion could be due, both to the difficulty of feeling it and the

appraisal we have of ourselves experiencing it. Taking the time to be present to our

experience of our counter-emotion can help us slow down the process so we can learn to

tolerate the feeling of emoting a difficult emotion, and also recognize how we are hard on

ourselves when experiencing a counter-emotion. This could help the negative automatic

reaction when experiencing an emotion that is considered counter to ourselves.

As art permits us to have a space between self and our emotions, it is easier to

observe and be present to our way of perceiving and feeling our emotions. This

realization allowed participants (and me) to: unlearn certain perceptions they have of

themselves emoting; have a more compassionate view of themselves; and facilitate the

integration[4] of the counter-emotion back into their lives. In essence, they were able to

find their true-self, even when experiencing an emotion they considered counter to

themselves. By crucifying what we think is the truth, admitting our faults, feeling the

love of God, we can move on and find a better us, but only by both admitting our

difficulty and being compassionate toward our own suffering and humanity, ultimately

finding a new way of being with our difficult experiences.

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Appendix A Structured Questions

Questions: Exploring the participants' unique emotional culture

1. Can you tell about any emotions that you feel more comfortable in expressing? If so, what emotions?

2. Can you tell about any emotions that you feel are more difficult to express? If so, what emotions?

3. Can you tell about any particular emotion that you have that seems easy to let go? If so, what emotion?

4. Can you tell about any particular emotion that you have observed that seems harder for you to let go? If so, what emotion?

5. Can you tell me about any emotions in your family that seemed to be more encouraged than others? If so, what emotions?

6. Can you tell me about any emotions in your family that seemed to be more discouraged than others? If so, what emotions?

7. Can you tell me about any faith or spiritual beliefs that you feel have a tendency to influence your view about emotions? If so, what beliefs and emotions?

8. Can you tell me about any emotions that seem to be more encouraged in your work/school place than others? If so, what emotions?

9. Can you tell me about any emotions that seem less encouraged in your work/school place than others? If so, what emotions?

10. Can you tell me about how emotions are treated differently at work/school than in your home? If so, how and what emotions?

Appendix B Informed Consent

Name of Researcher: Charles Chenard, Masters Student in Psychotherapy and

Spirituality/Art Therapy specialization, St-Stephen's College

Title of Project: Art, emotions and the autonomic nervous system

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent Form

You are strongly encouraged to read the following explanation of this study, its purpose

and procedures, and your right to withdraw from the study at any time. The Research

Ethics Board of St-Stephen's College has approved this study.

EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES

- This study will examine how emotions affect the autonomic nervous system.

- Participation in the study involves a 30-minute interview that explores your views

  about emotions, followed by a 90-minute art exercise.

- Autonomic function will be through heart rate, measured by cuffs.

- Interviews will be recorded and the data transcribed.

- You may be contacted to participate in a one (1) hour follow-up interview.

POTENTIAL RISKS

- The interview process may bring up distressing thoughts or feelings when you

  explore your emotions.

- You may revisit your beliefs and alter current beliefs about your emotions.

- The interview is conducted by a counsellor (B.S.W./R.S.W.) trained to address these situations.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS may include:

- a better understanding of your emotions, and learning how to self-soothe through art.

- better regulation of your emotions.

- an increased sense of personal congruency of your heart-mind-body and spirit.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- All data collected from the interview will remain strictly confidential and stored in secure premises with access only the researcher and thesis supervisor.

- Interview transcripts will be coded with no identifying names included.

- The videotapes will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

- Any reproduction of your artwork will be used only with your expressed written consent.

- Presentation of this study at conferences or in manuscripts or in book form will include no identifying information.

- The knowledge obtained from this study may be of great value in guiding professionals to be more effective in helping others learn to regulate emotions.

WITHDRAWAL

- Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw (without penalty) from the study at any time and for any reason.

- You are free to refuse to answer any question (s) at your own discretion.

FOLLOW UP

- If you have further questions once the interview is completed, please contact the researcher, Charles Chenard.

- If you have other questions or concerns about the study please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Board at (780) 439-7311.

To participate in this study, I confirm with a check mark that:

__ I have no known heart condition.

__ I have no known mental health issues.

__ I have no known physical health issues that might affect my heart rate.

I, _____ (name; please print clearly), have read the above information. I freely agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous.

_____   _____

            Participant Signature   Date

Please circle the letters that apply:

(a) You would like a copy of your interview transcript once it is available.

(b) You are interested in information about the study results as a whole.

(c)If you would be willing to be contacted for the follow-up interview, please provide contact information below:

(d)If you can be contacted to obtain permission to use your images/data in a context other than this research, please provide contact information below:

Write your address clearly below. Please also provide contact telephone number, or an email address if you have one.

Mailing address: _____

                          _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

Appendix C Informed Consent for Images of Artwork

St. Stephen's College

University of Alberta Campus

8810-112 Street NW

Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2J6

Volunteer participant to the research on Art, emotions and the autonomic nervous system (initial name of project).

I, (name of adult participant) _____ give the following consent by marking a checkmark in front of the various options. Sign the document and return to the researcher.

☐I give permission for the researcher to use digital replication of my artwork in the final paper of the research.

☐I do not give permission for the researcher to use digital replication of my artwork in the final paper of the research.

☐I give permission for the researcher to use the digital reproduction of my artwork when presenting the results of the research in workshops for educational purposes.

☐ I do not give permission for the researcher to use the digital reproduction of my

artwork when presenting the results of the research in workshops for educational

purposes.

If you have any questions please contact the researcher or Ethics Board at (780) 439-

7311.

Name of researcher: Charles Chenard, Master's Student in Psychotherapy and

Spirituality/Art Therapy specialization, St-Stephen's College.

I, _____ (name; please print clearly), have read

the above information. I understand that I am free to refuse to have my artwork presented

in the research. I understand that my artwork will be kept anonymous if it is used in the

final paper or in workshops presenting the final results.

_____   _____

           Participant Signature