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How can sculpture therapy help with Trauma?

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To start I will introduce you to the 4 fold understanding of nature and the human being. These pictures were given by Rudolf Steiner, but are based on understandings that were already there from the times of the Greek philosophers. Here below is a schema that introduces these 4 different aspects of nature in a simplified way. As with anything that is living, it is impossible to fit everything into exact boxes, so the boundaries between the different realms aren't always so clear cut and there are areas of overlapping and moving from one to the other when we observe nature carefully. However, trying to differentiate between the differences is helpful in understanding the whole.

In this schema you find:

- in black: The four different realms in nature, and how they are found back in the human body.
- In orange: How does the sculptor work with these, how can we find them back in the creative process? (I use the male word sculptor, but please read it as encompassing all genders)
- In blue: Which is the main sense that is involved? (for further understanding of the different senses please see below)

The grey, green, red and gold describe the different realms.

Mineral world	<p>Physical body Here we have the mineral elements that are the building blocks for all of nature and what is physical. The form, shape of this is determined by influences coming from the outside of the matter: pressure, erosion, heat, solution and dissolving, deposits... There is no life, matter doesn't grow but becomes bigger by other matter being added to it.</p> <p>The sculptor has the raw matter of clay, wood, stone... as a starting point when he embarks on the creative process.</p> <p>Gravity</p> <p>Touch</p>
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Plant world	<p>Physical body</p> <p>The raw matter of clay, wood, stone...</p> <p>Gravity</p> <p>Touch</p>	<p>Formative, life body Added to the formative forces from the outside, the plant is also formed by forces that have become internal: growth, metamorphosis, physiological/chemical processes, are shaping the plant from the inside while also holding the forms belonging to each plant. Outside of the plant, but vital to its life processes, is movement in the form of insects and other animals, wind, rain... to complete the life cycle of reproduction. Digestion happens outside of the plant in the forming of humus, compost, where matter is broken down so the plant can absorb it.</p> <p>The sculptor is changing the shape of the raw material, by putting force, his will, into it. He is adding, taking away, altering it. He is changing the physical, material world and for this he uses his own life forces. The raw material seemingly comes alive, matter is lifted out of gravity into levity.</p> <p>Levity</p> <p>Life, Wellbeing</p>
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Animal world	Physical body	Formative, life body	Astral Body
	The raw matter of clay, wood, stone...	The sculptor changing the shape of the raw material, by putting force, his will, into it. He is adding, taking away, altering it. He is changing the physical, material world and for this he uses his own life forces. The raw material seemingly comes alive, matter is lifted out of gravity into levity.	Form now also serves the function of movement. The outside world is taken in and broken down, both with food and sensory impressions. Digestion has now become internal, and there are sensations of both the internal and external world. There is a dynamic, a dialogue, between the inner and outer world. There is a strong connection between the animal and its environment: fish and water, birds and air, mammals and land etc. The animal and its specific environment are one.
	Gravity	Levity	The sculptor is expressing movement in the form. Using convex, concave and flat surfaces he is bringing gesture, contraction, expansion etc. The form takes on an inner aspect with the surface being the boundary between what is on the inside and the outside of the form. I can imagine myself moving in the form, and I move inwardly when I look at the form. The sculptor's own sense of movement is engaged in bringing movement to a form. A continuous dialogue between the sculptor and sculpture happens: changing the form, observing it, adjusting the form until it is right.
	Touch	Life, Wellbeing	Inside and outside
			Movement

Human world	Physical body	Formative, life body	Astral Body	Ego
	The raw matter of clay, wood, stone...	The sculptor changing the shape of the raw material, by putting force, his will, into it. He is adding, taking away, altering it. He is changing the physical, material world and for this he uses his own life forces. The raw material seemingly comes alive, matter is lifted out of gravity into levity.	The sculptor is expressing movement in the form. Using convex, concave and flat surfaces he is bringing gesture, contraction, expansion. The form takes on an inner aspect, the surface is the boundary between what is on the inside and the outside. I can imagine myself moving in the form, and I move inwardly when I look at the form. The sculptor's own sense of movement is engaged in bringing movement to a form...	The human being has come into uprightiness and is free to move in all 3 dimensions of space. The arms are free to manipulate the world and no longer needed for locomotion. The head sits free on top of the torso with the spine in a vertical position. This allows for the thinking to become free from the instincts and reflexes, and brings consciousness. A separate individuality can now develop, in relationship with the environment and with other individuals. Social and Cultural life develops. Consciousness brings with it the ability to step outside of the connections with the other realms of nature and become the observer. There is a degree of separation, man can feel alone.
	Gravity	Levity	Inside and outside	Idea, a name or title.
	Touch	Life, Wellbeing	Movement	Balance

The Senses:

With our senses of sight, smell, taste etc we get information about the world around us. With the senses I mentioned in this diagram, the sense of touch, life/wellbeing, movement and balance, we get information about our body. Rudolf Steiner describes 12 senses, an expansion of the usually mentioned 5. The four body-senses I mention here are the foundation for a healthy and well-functioning of the world senses of smell, taste, vision and warmth, as well as the foundation for the 4 senses that give us information about the other: the sense of hearing, word/meaning, thought and ego/self.

- The sense of touch, when we peel away all other things that happen when we touch things, gives us the awareness of the boundary between my body and the world around me. My skin is that boundary. Everything that lies within that skin belongs to me, everything outside of it belongs to the world around me. With a healthy sense of touch I feel safe within my boundary. I don't get drawn out into my environment and the world doesn't come too closely into my space. Touch is not overwhelming, but reassuring.
- The sense of life/wellbeing gives me information about all the physiological processes that are constantly going on in my body. This sense is well and healthy if I don't notice it. When things are not well, then I feel in pain or ill. When all is well, then again it gives me a sense of safety in that I can use my body, it will serve me well, when I need to go out and be active in the world.
- The sense of movement gives me information about how my body moves in space. This is an innate, unconscious knowing, not an intellectual one. With a healthy sense of movement, I know where my feet are, when they move how far they are going etc without having to look or think about it. I also use it when recognising movement in the world around me, in shapes, other people moving etc. In reading letters and recognising the different directions in space, recognising when a circle isn't perfectly round, standing on a cliff and feeling the depth of the valley below...
- The sense of balance gives me a central still point of reference from which I can now start to go out into the world around me. Being able to be still, in my own centre of gravity, which is the middle point between left/right, above/below, front/back. If that central point of reference is not a still one, then the spatial orientations become confusing. The stillness of that point is one I am constantly actively holding through the adjustments in tensions in all the muscles in my body. With a healthy sense of balance I can be an upright being, free to move into all directions of space.

These four senses are mostly unconscious. They are functioning well when we are not aware of them and the effort it takes us to maintain their activity. These need to be healthy in order to feel well in ourselves which gives us the ability to meet the world and the other in a healthy and free way. (The scope of this workshop doesn't give space to go deeply into the other senses and how they all work together. That is for another occasion maybe.)

Trauma is found to be held in the body, memories in our life body and muscles.

- Sculpture, an art form that works with the physical, 3 dimensional world, for which we use our 4 body-senses, can support the 'digestion' of those body-held memories, tensions. It affects the physiological processes: often clients' breathing will slow down, wind may be passed and the need to use the bathroom may occur regularly.
- Sculpture therapy is a non-verbal therapy. It brings us into our body and out of our thinking. The conversation in a therapeutic session can be totally focused on what the client has produced outside of themselves, which reflects what lives inside the body. In this way it can be an indirect way of working with what lives in the physical body of the client.

- Sculpture works with touch. We use our hands to touch the material, with clay our hands are also moulding and shaping it. This haptic experience has a direct effect on the body and the boundary between what lives inside of it and outside of it. The use of the hands can be very soothing and can be reaffirming the sense of boundary of the skin.
- Sculpture works with the will. The doing, the action of shaping, making forms, comes before we find a relationship to it, feeling if we like it or not, want to change it or not, and before we think about what it is that has happened here in front of us and can name it. It works from the bottom up: first willing, then feeling, then thinking.
- Through engaging all 4 bodies of the human being, sculpture integrates the Self of the client into the physical body. It reconnects where there might be a disconnection or a distorted sense of the body.

Important!

When is sculpture therapy not right:

- When the trauma is of a sexual abuse nature, working with clay, with sculpture, can trigger traumatic memories or experiences. The Self can be drawn into the body from which there was a disconnection too strongly and too quickly. If the trauma is relived too strongly, and there is not the support of a medical team, then please desist from sculpting.
- If the life forces, the physical health of the client is not strong, then sculpting may ask too much of those limited forces of the client and one should desist from sculpting.

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