Sandplay Therapy Institute
Course Descriptions
2019-20

Year One
Weekend 1: Fundamentals of Sandplay Therapy – 18 hours
Prerequisite for all other weekends.

During this weekend, participants are introduced to sandplay therapy, its history and development, its theoretical underpinnings, and the key components involved in its therapeutic application (introduction to clients, creating a collection, documentation and record-keeping). The course includes a discussion of the role of symbols in psychotherapy and sandplay, an identification of therapeutic change agents and their manifestation in sandplay, recent neuroscience findings relevant to sandplay, the essential aspects of a sandplay “process,” the role of attachment and mother-child issues, and the importance of the therapeutic relationship. The similarities and differences between sandplay and other treatment approaches is presented, with an exploration of how sandplay can be integrated with different modalities.

Weekend 2: The Sandplay Therapy Process - 16 hours

This course presents an in-depth exploration of symbolic language, showing how it spontaneously expresses unconscious material and stimulates psychological healing. Participants learn how to read and understand the symbolic expressions contained in sandplay case material through lecture, discussion, experiential exercises, and multiple case presentations with analytic commentary. Topics to be presented include distinguishing the differences between literal and symbolic communication, describing how symbolic communication enhances therapeutic processes, identifying symbolic meaning of particular symbols (personal, familial, cultural, and archetypal) and tracking the meaning of specific symbols in sequential sandplay case material.

Weekend 3: Jungian Theory in Sandplay Therapy - 16 hours

This course covers the basics of Jungian theory as the foundation for sandplay therapy. Jungian concepts are integrated with sandplay cases and theoretical material as they apply in therapeutic situations. Participants learn to apply the following Jungian concepts to clinical understanding of the images: archetypes, complexes, structure of the psyche, anima/animus, the wounded healer, the shadow, and the transcendent function. The amplification of symbols is included, along with an overview of symbolic language and how the unconscious communicates non-verbally through sandplay therapy.
Weekend 4: The Language of Symbols - 16 hours

In this weekend, participants learn how to understand and follow the meaning and evolution of a sandplay therapy process. Participants will learn different approaches for interpreting sandtrays, including Martin Kalff’s “Twenty Points to be Considered in the Interpretation of a Sandplay” and C.G. Jung’s “Four Functions.” Analyzing sandplay pictures through the use of themes, stages, age considerations and alchemical processes is included, with illustrations from sandplay case material. In addition, issues surrounding the training of a sandplay therapist (completing a personal process, knowing one’s vulnerabilities as a therapist, learning from certified sandplay teachers), and ethical considerations for case presentations and supervision are discussed.

Year Two
Weekend 5: Sandplay Therapy with Children – 16 hours

This course focuses on the joys, issues, and specific problems of working with children in sandplay. Topics include conducting initial evaluations, developing treatment plans, explaining sandplay to parents, integrating other modalities into sandplay therapy (e.g., EMDR, play therapy, CBT), working with parents, siblings and schools, and understanding when not to use sandplay with a child. Practical considerations include picture taking, setting boundaries, requests to take items home, stolen and broken figures. Special clinical situations are addressed, such as recognizing when regression is appropriate and when it is problematic, what do when you’re in over your head, and how to handle issues of co-transference.

Weekend 6: Sandplay Therapy with Adults – 16 hours

Working with adults in sandplay therapy brings unique issues of resistance and unconscious defensiveness. During this weekend, how sandplay therapy bypasses the bounds of rational thought and accesses the limitless creativity of the non-rational psyche is addressed. Case material is presented that shows how psychic wounds and/or trauma and attachment disorders are healed and integrated into the psyche. The characteristics of a normal, adult individuation process are included, as well as indicators of delays and/or interruptions due to trauma or difficult life circumstances. The ways in which sandplay stimulates spiritual development, addresses issues of death and dying, and integrates with other modalities (e.g., EMDR and CBT) are also addressed.

Weekend 7: Complex Clinical Issues in Sandplay Therapy - 16 hours

In this course, Jung’s goal of centering and individuation, which arises from the inner world of symbols and images, is addressed as it appears in sandplay, dreams, the body and the therapeutic relationship. The movement and transformation of images and symbols is examined and clarified as it appears in sandplay scenes. In addition, participants learn the aims and goals of depth analytic psychotherapy and identify the significance of symbolic images as they appear in clinical sandplay case material. The importance of a living symbol in
psychological healing and well-being is addressed, and participants follow a symbol/image to identify its meaning. The importance of containment and holding within the relational field is explored as a significant aspect of creating a free and protected space.

**Weekend 8: The Living Reality of the Psyche – 16 hours**

This last session expands the way sandplay is viewed by exploring the development of the psyche and unconscious communication as it appears in sandplay scenes, dreams, experiences of synchronicity, fantasy and movement. Through the examination of case material, issues relating to the reconciliation of opposites, the manifestation of the ego-Self axis, the role of the transcendent function, how archetypes appear in everyday life, and the importance of therapeutic containment are explored. Guided discussions stimulate the integration and absorption of previous course material.