



## IMPLICIT MEMORIES

*7 minutes*

If we are talking about the power of Sandtray, we've got to talk about implicit memories. For those of you who may need a little bit of a refresher from graduate school, it may have been awhile since you've been there, I know it has for me, we have two different kinds of memories. We have explicit memories, implicit memories. Explicit are what gets encoded at a hippocampus and implicit is basically everything else that gets laid down below the level of consciousness and within our body. Now when we have trauma, the large amount of the trauma, what happens to us, of course, doesn't get encoded into explicit memory, especially when the trauma is super severe and the body will just kind of go off-line, either dissociate or will go dorsal, as far as just shut down completely. So then, the memories as far as aren't even there to get encoded as far as explicitly. But again, everything happens to us does get laid down in our body. And really, that's what the intercult says, "The body does keep the score."

So, what the sand tray does, is allows us to have some power in working with implicit memories because they will often guide our ongoing perceptions and actions that will reinforce foregone conclusions. So our implicit memories, again, are what is the heuristic that is telling us about how the world is and what we need to do to expect certain things from the world. So this is what we call "The Truth or the Way Things Are." I capitalized those because this is a non-negotiable. This is something that is, again, a foregone conclusion. This is just how the world is. These are stated as realities because we don't have words for them, like it's just the frame that goes around everything.

When implicit memories are activated, there's no time-stamp. It's as if it is happening right now. So, we will often attribute causation to something that is not accurate when these memories are activated. So, again, let's think about what this looks like in terms of a story. So, maybe I have a father who is super, super critical. I grew up with a father who is really, really hard on me and I knew every time he was about to light into me and to about just give it, that he would do his hands like this. And, I knew my body picked up on that. It wasn't something that I just

# SANDTRAY SUITE

thought about consciously a lot. But I knew, my body got the message that those two things went together. So, now, maybe I'm in my twenties, I'm working at a job. I've been working there several years, putting my head down, trying to get things going, and then my boss comes in and he goes, "Hey Amy. I need you to come in my office." And, of course, immediately, what do I think, "Oh my gosh. I'm in trouble, or I'm going to be fired, or whatever." So, I come in. I'm kind of expecting the worst and my boss sits down and he does his fingers like this. When he does his fingers like that, all of the sudden I'm across the desk being like, "You know what? I never wanted to work here. You guys haven't treated me well. You take this job. . ." And all of the sudden, my boss, his eyes kind of get real big and he's like, "What are you talking about? I was just going to tell you you're doing a really good job and give you a promotion." But because these implicit memories were activated below the level of consciousness, I didn't. . . And again, it was as if it was happening right now. And I didn't have, because that was not integrated and that was trauma, that, of course, I hadn't dealt with, or whatever, then it will get activated, and you will lay it on whatever is in front of you even without realizing it. And this kind of stuff, you can't talk someone out of. They will go to their grave believing that that person was about to fire them, and "now that the only reason that he's saying that is just to save his own rear end," that kind of thing. But, again, this implicit trauma loop is super, super powerful, and our left-brain will come in and try to make sense of what's going on here.

So, these implicit memories, again, are formed below the level of consciousness. And these will take the form of Behavioral Impulses, Affective Experiences, Perceptions, and Sensations. So what happens then, is these implicit memories form together in the brain to form mental models. So we filter everything that's coming in from our body, or from the external, through these mental models of "the world is a safe place," or "people that look a certain way are safe or not safe". And, again, often these are below the level of consciousness. What happens then, is that these will continue even after they've happened to prime the amygdala, which you remember is our fear center--it's kind of the brain's smoke detector, to anticipate how life works. So, again, even if something happened to me thirty years ago, I am going to. . . my implicit memories are going to send information up to amygdala, and all of a sudden get my body ready to pounce, or maybe say, "OK, this is safe," all below the level of consciousness. Again, this happens. This implicit memory will often run the show until there is some kind of integrative

# SANDTRAY SUITE

experience with a safe person. And, oftentimes you need some kind of expressive arts or therapy to be able to really heal the whole body from again, the body to the skull brain, and that's the magic of Sandtray.