

PRETEND YOU'RE GOOD AT IT

Many of our clients struggle with the mere understanding of what could be different. When struggling with depression and anxiety, clients often get stuck in their way of viewing the world.

Through sandtray, we can help them fully experience viewing the world through a different lens, with the help of directives. Remember, YOU are the most important part of the sandtray room, so this sandtray technique will only be helpful if you are there holding the client within the cocoon of unconditional positive regard.

Also, even if your client's don't suffer from severe anxiety or depression, nearly all of us struggle with imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome is the fear that we experience that someone will figure out that we're really not smart enough, kind enough, good enough, etc.

This technique can be used for either instances (or even both).

Rather than using several steps for this technique, I'm providing you with five different directives targeted at this concept. Remember, directives work best with older children, adolescents, and adults.

1. Make a tray about what would happen if you pretended you're good at X (a math class, speaking in front of people, having a hard conversation with a friend). Fill in X for whatever their presenting issue is within the therapy session.
2. Make a tray about what holds you back from being your most confident self. *If the client is depressed, know that they may struggle with conceptualizing this because it all seems bleak, so you may want to reserve this directive for those who are anxious or have other struggles.
3. Divide the tray into two sides. On one side, make a tray about how it feels to be scared of not being enough or failing. On the other side, make a tray about what actually happens if the worse occurs and you do fail or when others find out you feel less than. *Clients will often go into a shame spiral and tell themselves stories that aren't true about what happens if others find out they feel 'not enough.' This tray helps them walk through what would ACTUALLY happen so they can see that they have untapped resources and strengths.
4. Put a miniature in the middle of the tray to represent yourself. Then place miniatures around the center in concentric circles those people or things who are strengths for you. Place miniatures representing your biggest sources of strength nearest to you then go outward in circles with those who represent strength but provide support from afar *Encourage clients to not just use people but also symbols of faith, pets, or even deceased loved ones who they carry around in their internal family system. The purpose is to allow the client to see CONCRETELY they are not alone even if they feel not enough, depressed, or anxious.
5. Make a tray about your depression, anxiety, or feelings of less than. If you could express this feeling in the form of miniatures, what would it look like? What would it feel like? Don't think too much about getting it just right, but grab those miniatures that seem to go with what you experience when those feelings arise within you and place them in the tray.

*Some clients may struggle with this if they are more concrete thinkers. Use this for those who have completed several sandtrays. This sandtray is helpful for clients to externalize difficult emotions and lessen their power. Extra points if the clients can NAME their fear. For example, I had one client who had an extreme fear of judgement from others name hers KAREN, so that when those feelings or thoughts arose, she would mentally say “Not now Karen!” which diluted the power from the thoughts and added levity.



To make the most of these directives, save, download or print somewhere were they are readily available.

When you use one, please let us know how the session unfolded for you and the healing that you witnessed.

And, just in case we haven't said it lately, **we're so glad you're here with us** in the Sandtray Suite program. YOU truly make our community amazing.