

Group Sandplay on September 11 and 12, 2001:

Using Sandtray-Worldplay to Work with the Trauma of the Day

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Introduction

The fearsome hijacking of four passenger airplanes, the successful use of two planes to destroy the World Trade Center, a third to damage the Pentagon, and the fatal crash of a fourth plane created great suffering for so many in America, in the Middle East and all around the World.

September 11, 2001 marks a day of intercultural shock and trauma. Young and old sensed more fully the exquisiteness and the fragility of life. Many were catapulted into experiencing pain, fear, terror, paralysis, helplessness, anger, loss, uncertainty, or silence. Many found themselves ready to rescue, to help, to hope and to pray. Many were catapulted into the need to protect, defend, attack, kill, and destroy.

Our mundane view of the world was hijacked. As individuals, families, nations and global community we were challenged to review, if not revise, the way we are with life and with one another. Violence and terror, life and death, helping and helplessness, power and powerlessness were offered as a mirror to each one of us. The immeasurable surprise created an opportunity to go

beyond our habituated selves and to review the ways in which we meet the challenges of being human.

Many sandplay, sandtray and Sandtray-Worldplay therapists used the sandtray to help themselves, their families, friends, clients, and students explore and integrate the terror that so abruptly touched them and their communities. Using the sandtray room during such times makes perfect sense for the sandtray apparatus remains a solid cornerstone to the successful integration of trauma-in-the-present, be this trauma of a personal, familial, communal, or international nature.

Sandworldplay facilitates the manifestation, the witnessing and the exploration of life-changing and life-threatening events from an individual, a communal, an archetypal, and a transhuman point of view. Led by psyche, each builder whether alone or in-group uses the play to re-experience and re-arrange the ways his/her family, community, nation, ancestors, and humanity view life and being human. In play, the builder creates an updated personal meaning matrix that can hold his/her immediate experience of self, others, and the world. This very special type of play taps the rich reservoir of the many innate faculties of human consciousness. We sense, embody, feel, remember, think, intuit, embrace and expand into being-consciousness. We enter into the many realms of reality that give us the necessary perspective to understand the nature of life and death as a human being on earth.

The awakening of expanded presence measurably increases our access to the interdimensional realities that are frequently ignored by us, our families, and our culture. We are often surprised when, as ordinary people, we suddenly explore not only the social-communal, but also the personal, the ancestral, the archetypal, the primordial, and universal spiritual realms of reality, those realms often reserved for elders, mystics, spiritual seekers, dreamers, artists, physicists, healers or shamans. Once there, our expanded presence draws on the innate wisdom of these dimensions. As we enter into the deeper mysteries, we learn means of being-within the as yet uncharted and often tabooed territories of life.

This article was first published in the Winter 2001 and Spring 2002 edition of the Sandtray Network Journal. It has been adapted for the Vision Quest Into Symbolic Reality Website.¹ In this special edition of the Network Journal the editors took care to bring students of sandtray/sandplay the journeys of many. They demonstrated that the sandplay room is indeed a "laboratory of the world" where people of all ages can integrate the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Readers could read about the play of those who were nearby, who may have watched the burning and the collapse of the Twin Towers, those who lost family, and those who

¹ The STNetwork aims to post past Journals on its website: www.sandtray.org in 2006.

cared for the families of victims. They were offered the play of children, adolescents, and adults who lived far away from ground zero, the Pentagon, or Pennsylvania. There was an account of how one therapist used the sandtray to confront and self-witness the ways in which she was affected by the events. Her work illustrates how a solo sandtray play process may be used to support one's own integrative processes. Another child therapist traced the evolution of a communal client sandtray dedicated to healing the shock and the wounds of September 11. In yet another article the author traced the way in which the psyches of children and adults integrated the traumatic events of September 11 in a manner that actually expanded their capacity to meet and support their own growing edge, thus actively and synchronistically furthering their individual and social development.

This article shows how the group Sandtray-Worldplay processes created on September 11 and 12 offered healing visions that spontaneously appeared from the multidimensional planes of existence – they include the ancestral, archetypal, earth and spirit realms. Notice how in play we all are capable of accessing the view of the ancestors, of all of humanity, of the forces of nature and of Gods, Goddesses and Spirit: we discover capacities of Being-in-Life and the innate intelligence we lost as our civilization separated from direct relationship to Nature. Play helps us to view, sense, feel, remember, think about, and integrate frightening and 'big' events that are beyond our control and that threaten to overwhelm us.

As you read this special account of the stories birthed in the sandtray room, you may notice how the play process weaves the events of September 11th, for each individual member and for the group-as-one into a personal and communal rite of passage. The play ventures fearlessly into a direct exploration of the critical moment of intercultural and global crisis. Notice how the communal group psyche invites each one of the players to attend more consciously to the interrelationship of all the people of planet earth. Witness how each builder enters into a dialogue with birth and death, with human freedom and human enslavement, with human interdependence and human isolation, with human love and human rage, with human helpfulness and human helplessness.

Each is challenged to grow more fully human, both individually and collectively. Each strives to relate to how he/she creates life for themselves and others. Inevitably each has to confront life and his/her fellow humans by either undoing or supporting these individual or collective strivings.

As I worked with the journeys of my student-colleagues I felt so privileged to bear witness and to preserve our experience as a testimonial of resilience during a time of shock. As you read our journey, read slowly and let the

images come alive as you study the photos and feel your way into the space between the words.

Warning: Do not analyze the play – or assess the players. Do not get lost in symbolism – instead use the photos and the text from the builders to animate the Worlds once more.

These Worlds contain the seeds of life, birth, death and transformation of both individual and collective human consciousness. They are precious. They mark our innate strivings to move beyond our familial, cultural, and human limitations. Sense the struggle of what it takes to reach beyond our limited view and ignorance. Sense the deeply rooted stirring of the need to find a way to experience and acknowledge a situation of terror and rage from a position of peace, understanding, compassion, and forgiveness. Sense our deep capacity to “not turn away,” to insist on naming completely without denying anyone and any deed.

Notice that all of us are called to examine our role as witnesses and watchers in and out of the sandtray. Wonder what it means to “bear witness” in the inner and the outer world – and in the playroom. Ponder what qualities we can cultivate so that we may truly activate and embody the witness who carries that which has been witnessed.

For my own part, the honesty of this work continues to inform the way in which I look at my daily life. It continues to raise deep internal dialogues about how I harm myself and others, how I misuse my own and the planet's resources, how I am self-righteously insensitive in my own interpersonal relationships, and how I too destroy the efforts of so many generations that came before me. I feel ever so deeply the naggings of my communal self: somehow, I *am* a part of all of humanity that has engaged and continues to engage in the cultivation of selective murder. I feel myself in the shadow of the spoken and unspoken campaigns of genocide waged in the name of peace, justice, colonization, expansion, conversion, cleansing, civilization, development, or progress.



Group Sandplay on September 11 and 12, 2001:

Dedication:

I share this transformational group process with gratitude to the participants of the September 2001 level two Sandtray-Worldplay training group practicum intensive and with sympathy and compassion for all those involved in the tragedy of September 11: the victims and their families, the hijackers and their families, the watchers and helpers, our world leaders who have contributed to this event, and all the people who are trying to heal our global community.



The heart that breaks open can
contain the whole universe....
All is registered in the 'boundless
heart' of the bodhisattva.

Through our deepest and innermost
responses to our world ~ to hunger
and torture and the threat of
annihilation ~ we touch that
boundless heart.

Joanna Macy

On the morning of September 11, over 3000 people died. Many lost friends, enemies, benefactors, helpers, co-workers, fathers, mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers, sons, daughters, cousins, nieces, and lovers. In and of itself the actual event was not an unusual trauma: most of us are aware that many thousands of people are murdered each day for the sake of cultural, political, religious, economic or personal ideologies and passion. What was unusual about this day, however, was that much of the world stood still and watched the crashing planes and the crumbling twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York either directly at the site or on television screens at home, work at school. Most feared that additional attacks would be announced at any moment. Terror reigned. Trauma touched our national and international communities. The nations of the world witnessed and responded to the death, terror, and suffering unfolding before its eyes.



One planet ... one earth ... one humanity

At noon on September 11, a small training group convened at my Sandtray-Worldplay Studio in Oakland. We immediately knew that we would use the day to learn how to use the sandtray to communicate our innermost feelings, to find ways for understanding what was happening in the world, and to support one other in enduring the uncertainty and the shock of the day. Our hearts were ripped open. Our minds raced. Time was standing still.

We began with our ritual dance meditation, followed by a period of silence and story telling. One of our members had not been notified of the events in New York and Washington D.C. She had seen no images on television. In fact, she had had no idea why she had been unable to get a cab and had to walk to the workshop that morning. Sitting in a circle, we each spoke of our experiences - we created a communal altar to amplify the shared experience.

Then we each built our own sandtray. We chose to take as long as we needed. We followed the lead of our heart. We took time to silently experience our own and everyone else's World.

After we had looked at all the sandtrays, and had shared some of the stories hidden inside them, we knew that between us we had indeed opened our boundless hearts. We had embraced much of the essence of these events, which were shattering any notion that we were safe from the terrors of global violence. By each holding a significant part of this global event of terror, we had, in fact, constructed a sound communal foundation from which we could derive strength to continue learning more ways of integrating the complex reality of September 11, 2001 into our personal, professional, cultural and spiritual life.



The five Worlds and the altar built on 9/11.

Procedure for our Group ST-WP Process:

Each person chose a rectangular, square or round sandtray and a given color or texture of sand such as white, black, orange, green, tan, mauve, soft or coarse. After a silent meditation to the accompaniment of Tibetan Lama chants softly playing in the background, everyone simultaneously created their own sandtray. There were no assigned witnesses and no leader was appointed to hold and protect the space. Instead, we witnessed ourselves and we held and protected our space together. Each of us was free to share, to be with another, or to work silently. This included the building phase of our session. Everyone took breaks whenever they felt the need to rest. We had not declared an ending time as we chose to work in the sand until we were finished. Everyone was encouraged to journal their process and most of us journaled at least some of the time.

For many hours the group built Worlds in the sand. The atmosphere of the Sandtray-Worldplay training studio was thick with mindful presence, deep feeling, heartfelt respect, immediacy of sensation, measured breath, intense focus, and such spaciousness that became a calling to all humanity, all living beings, the elements, the Ensouled and the Spirits to join us in our quest to take in and to become informed by what was happening in the world around us on this day of September 11, 2001.

When finished, each person was asked to experience their World in silence first. Then each was free to move or remove any elements in their World and/or make any adjustments in the scene. Everyone was instructed to experience their World alone and to journal their free-

associations. Then, they were asked to compose an essence statement.

Next, all the sandtrays were arranged in a circle. Everyone took their turn sitting in silent meditation before the others' Worlds, taking-in one World at a time. This was a very sacred moment: we knew we had journeyed deeply, had made visible the core realms of being human and had connected them to the far reaches of our Universe. While in the playroom we felt awe and connectedness to the Source of All that Is.

When the private viewings of the circle of Worlds had been completed, the builder who held "the beginning" shared her World with the others. The sharings were written down as they emerged. Everyone co-experienced and participated in deepening the builder's experience of his World. Everyone engaged in asking questions. In the ensuing discussions, we continued to explore and be touched by the events of the day, their effect on us and the Earth Community. We appreciated and savored the medicine provided by the Sandplayworldplay that had just been shared. When one builder was finished, the one who held the next story revealed his/her World.

We used two full days to create and to experience the fullness of the circle of these special Worlds. At the end of our fourteen hours together, we created a closing ritual to help us bring the gifts of our journey back into our private, professional, and communal lives. We knew we were fortunate to have been able to receive and process this time of sudden shock, uncertainty, pain, outrage, and grief while in the sandtray retreat. The play took us into the deepest chamber of our hearts, and brought us the capacity and wisdom we needed.

In this article only parts of the commentaries about each World are given. Some are direct quotes and others are paraphrased sharings of the builders. Notice how most have a poetic and free-associative quality about them. They are evidence of the innate experientially-based thinking process in action. They are **not** organized stories. None are interpretive commentaries or symbolic speculations about the builders' experiences.

Readers may use the text to engage in personal and communal discussions about the effects of the hijacked and crashed airplanes of September 11, 2001 and of other "big" traumatic events that challenge us.

Group Day One The First Sharing of September 11, 2001



What happened today is bigger than we are. It is part of a bigger event. It is bigger than we are ... it is more all encompassing ... It is difficult to grasp this with the mind. It is so big. It is hard to be with.

The group encouraged the builder to stay silently with her experiences and settle into the World before her.



They are all going home: The Source.

And here are the souls of all those who are dying right now.

All of them are dying ...

*the hijackers of the planes,
the passengers of the planes,
the people who are in the twin towers and
the firefighter who tried to rescue those trapped and
stranded inside ...*

They are all returning to their Source in the Center. All are all going together, illuminated by the light It is a long procession.

*I had to place each soul individually.
I named each one of them.
It was important that they have a name.
Slowly I placed each one ...*

*I held them in my heart.
Many have the same name.
So many people ... so many families.
Many are dying today.
Each and everyone have family left behind.*

They all came from the same Source, whether perpetrator or victim. And they all are going together to the same place, whether killer or victim ... they are going on the same path.

I do not know why, but I am so touched by the children, the innocent children who died today. Their Souls are white and are illuminated by the inner circle of light

I made a special circle of light for them. They are pure and white. They already are closer to the Source, the white hands holding the red rose of life.

*They are almost there. Such a short time they had here.
They are precious*



The little children who died are getting closer to their original source in the center.

*There is much sorrow in the world right now.
I feel this sorrow so deeply....*

Today, I saw (on TV) the light around the twin towers ... a tunnel of light surrounded the structures ... Higher Beings, LightBeings attended to the dying and to the ones who escaped, helped and lived. They escorted the dead. I knew that. Here, (in the World) they are returning to the Source that we all return to. The column of light extended out from the earth into the center of the Universe: a steady stream of the souls of those who had to leave the earth today ...

Two nights ago I had a dream: I watched two Roman Numeral One Structures crumble ... I linked them to the falling towers of the Tarot and to a time of change. This morning I realized that I had actually seen this event already in my dream.



Here is the Buddha under the golden tree ...



Here is Shiva dancing the dance of life and death ...



Here is the Christ with uplifted arms



Here are the great Mothers.

*All are all watching ...
They are the holy ones who are watching the procession
of the return to the Center ...
They are watching over everyone ...*

It comforts me to know this ...

**The Second Sharing of
September 11, 2001**



*A time of horror is here.
The World has been turned upside down.*

*It is a time of evil.
It is a time of confusion.*

*The buildings have collapsed.
Beliefs are collapsing.*

*So much pain ... so much death.
The universe can hold this ... this is not the biggest thing.*

*The Spirit Father teaches the child and the kneeling one.
The great teachers of life are here. In the center is
knowledge.*



**Time has been turned upside down ...
innocence has died.**



**Evil and death have come into the World
The wolves howl "stop!"**

*Evil and death are coming into the World.
The demons are coming out.*

*Time has been turned upside down ...innocence has died.
It is a time of evil.*

*The wolves, mother and baby, are howling for the whole
world ... "Stop! Stop!" This howling needs to be done
...This evil and violence need to stop ... this cannot be.*

*The baby (wolf) does not understand ... she just follows
the Mother ... and without knowing why, she knows that
it feels right to howl on this day.*



The giraffes are confused.

The blue hummingbird (on the rock in upper left) does not know anything has happened. It goes about its business.

But the little giraffes are so confused ... They go in all different directions.

*They run off and might be lost.
They bump into things.
They just keep going, not knowing.
They seek.
They are together and not together.
They are lost.
They are innocent ...
They know something terrible is happening ...
They don't know what happened, but they know they are going crazy.
They just don't know where to go and what to do.
They run about here and there.
They go back and forth.
They lose each other ...
They are so confused ...
Nothing is the same ...*

*They do not have their bearings.
The confusion is intolerable ...*

During most of the sharing time, the builder moves the small giraffes all around the World, dramatically enacting their panic and in confusion. They are in total chaos. They have lost touch with their center. They have no one outside to follow – we feel their panic.

Eventually, they find their way to be near the Spirit Place. This changes them. They can calm down. Only Spirit and the vicinity of compassion can exert the calming influence they need at this time.



The Earth is always there. The elk father has his baby underneath him, just like the wolf mother

*The rocks ... the earth is always there.
One of the giraffes goes and hides in the rocks. It does not change anything. But the Rock is there.*

The Earth is old.

The Earth is solid ground

No matter what, there is still life.

The elk has his baby underneath him ... she is underneath, just like the Wolf Mother and her baby. The babies follow the old ones. These babies have their old one.

The Earth is always there.

The Earth is solid.

The Seasons keep going



**There is help.
The Father is caring for the child in the Spirit Realm.**

There is an old woman who feels the pain ... and the sorrow

She is at peace

She sits. She looks. She feels.

She can do this. She is at peace.

The Father is taking care of the baby in the spirit realm.

There is more help in this World:

The Goddesses are there in all of their forms ... the ones we see here are but a small sample of the ones that have come into the World at this time of pain. They have come to help. They feel divine concern and compassion.

The Indian, the moon, the totem animals are all there to help.

The light illuminates. This helps.

The (triple) head is ancient, from a time before the Goddesses.

It does not know what is happening here today.

It is just there.

The kneeling seeker asks for help and desperately tries to understand.

She is reaching out to the invisible world. She feels the presence of the spirit, but is not yet sure ...

She cannot see to the other side.

She senses but she cannot yet see beyond ...

I sense my dead Father trying to console me from the other side.

He knows what is happening here.

He knows that this is very hard for me.



**In the center is the Light.
It is the most ancient thing.**

And in the center of the World is the Light.

It is the most ancient thing.

It is before the mystery.

This is knowledge.

All the colors are part of this Light ...

The colors make everything that is in the World.

Everything and everyone comes from these colors that are part of the Light in the center.



**Hands are holding the crystal.
This is a time for People to hold one another.**

The people are holding one another...

The hands are also holding.

They are small hands, but they are holding.

They cannot do much, but they can hold.

So, they hold.

This is a time for People to hold one another.

**September 12, 2001:
Group Day Two**

The second day everyone returns. We dance and express ourselves in movement followed by a brief silence.

In check-in circle, conducted near our group altar, we each speak of our encounters last evening, our dreams, and of our ways of coping with yesterday's events. We note how difficult it is to be away from family in this time of uncertainty.

When we are ready, we return to be alone with our Worlds built yesterday. After meditative and journaling time, we come together to be led into experiencing the third World of September 11, 2001.



The Third Sharing of September 11, 2001



**All the positive energy in the universe surrounds us.
Every crystal knows its place in the Universe.
No crystal is more important than any other one.**

Yesterday, it was clear to me that the World had to be circular. It also could not be human, for it was to be universal. I had to go to the universal dimension. People, animal and plant life could not go there ... It had to be very universal. It was so big.

*This is not faith ... faith cannot touch this place.
This is the most ancient thing ... it's Before the Mystery.*

After I had created the World, I shifted from feeling the negative energy of what I saw in New York and in D.C. I saw what we could do to hold people ... I saw that we could pray ... The energy was so strong ... The energy that was emanating from this universal place easily overcame all the negative energy that was being generated.

*Not only the attacked are affected, but everyone: the families, the rescue people, and all of us. Whether you know someone there or not, you are affected. We are all part of this.
Last night it helped me so much to leave here knowing that all the positive energy in the Universe surrounds us, whether we pick up on it or not. People are in shock. But the positive energy is enormous.*

There was so much power in creating the World. It is hard to go back again today. I don't know if I can experience the intensity again.

The builder is asked to go into the Silence, to re-enter the World and to re-animate it once more. We do the same. He is encouraged to start at the beginning and to take his time.
New candles have been lit.
We all sit quietly for a while.



**The Gateway is in the Center. Energy is so intense.
With every drip (candle wax) the World changed.**

I first picked the gateway in the center, then the crystals came. I needed more and more crystals ... the World just assembled itself. They (crystals) went where they belonged. The candles needed to be directed inward: the energy had to first come in (towards the center) and then go out.

I watched the candles burn. The energy was so intense. With every drip it changed. I watched the little tea light candles burn, melt, get ready to spill, and then spill ... It is amazing to watch candles burn. I watched them melting, spilling, dying for such a very long time.

*I became fascinated by all the Colors of the crystals. In the universe everything is Different. There is not a sameness of anything ... different sizes, colors and shapes, some more and some less.
And then I brought it back to the Earth ... so many different cultures and so many different people ... and yet, we do not live like the natural world. All these crystals know their place in the Universe and one crystal is no more important than any other one.
The way that we humans war with one another is beyond belief ... for thousands upon thousands of years we have destroyed each other. We have our justifications, our beliefs, our lands, our religions, yet it does not make any sense.
We are one with all the resources we have on the Earth and it does not make sense that the resources aren't shared ... it really doesn't make sense that we do not share resources, medicine, fuel ... you are hungry and no one shares.*

We set off big explosions. We go to the moon ... we send satellites into space that become big chunks of metal. I am amazed (at) how we, as a race, destroy things. This World is about the energy that overcomes those destructive ways of mankind. Yes, this force is bigger

than mankind. Just as yesterday was incomprehensible to people, this force is far beyond our understanding. We are limited as humans ... whether it is in our thinking or our sensing ... This force goes far beyond what we think and what we experience.

I know there are a lot more people out there ... people bigger than those who planned and carried out this thing. I know that in time, people will take this on. In time they will heal. In time they (will) have a different perspective.

I admit I do not understand the thinking of the people who did this: for some, yesterday was a time to celebrate ...

I know that these positive forces of the universe are far greater than the negativity that exists ... and yet with what happened yesterday, when I think of all the people who were involved, the planes, the people at work, the people at the Pentagon, the people helping, they are so miniscule compared to the number of people on this earth ... but when I look at the wound, the incredible wound, the planners have caused, I know that it will take a long time to heal.

It will take a very long time to heal.

I have friends who work at the Pentagon.



**No one is more important than anyone else.
No one is more precious than anyone else.**

*This positive Energy will heal it ...
This Energy began before the hijackers, the attack and the destruction ...*

*All these crystals have a purpose and they know where they fit in the Universe.
It is very remarkable to know where your place is and not to worry about the crystal next to you and the ones at the other end of the Universe.
It's beautiful.
They all resonate Energy.
And it just is, like this. They just are.
And all is going into the center ... all the energy is going into the center.*



The healing Energy combined in the center flows out to us infinitely.

*No one is more important than anyone else.
No one is more precious than anyone else.*

*The center is collecting, resonating and combining all those individual energies. And then that combined Energy goes out into the Universe.
I just know that this is happening.
I just know that this is continuing.*

And I know that this Energy flows out infinitely to us.

I know that it is so.

We all knew that it was so.

The Fourth Sharing of September 11, 2001



We must learn to mourn after the great Wings of War come into our World.



The cold war machine has come again.

This is such a difficult time ... it is very hard for me to look at this ... hard to conceive that this really happened.

It is hard to believe that the wings of war came to this country yesterday and are now spreading around the world. This cold war machine is more than anyone can bear: mechanical, hard, and determined It is a cold machine that kills the living.



**Flowers have turned to ash.
It is too much to be with.**

First, the little one (lower left) hides deep inside and it goes like this:

*You make yourself small, as small as you can be.
You become very still. You barely breathe ...
You think that it just cannot be. But you know it is so.*

Something terrible has happened. The Wings of War have come into the World. The war machine is here. And all is gray. The flowers have turned to ash. All is ash.

The little monkey (first of the three monkeys on the left) covers his eyes, lest he might see anything. He thinks: 'This is beyond what we can see. The sight is so terrible ... such death ... such suffering ... such magnitude. It is too much to bear. I cannot stand to see it.'

The other monkey covers her ears, thinking: 'This will not be heard ... it cannot be heard ... It should not be listened to. How can anyone stand to hear the sounds of the Wings of War that have come into the World? The sound of terror is too much for me.'

The last monkey covers his mouth, lest a sound come out. Here are his inner thoughts: 'What can be said at a time like this? What can words do? Silenced I sit in despair ... knowing that I cannot show what I see, what I feel, what I hear ... I cannot say what I need to say ... I cannot say what needs to be said.'



Standing woman wails and shakes the earth.

The standing woman feels all this inside her. Her mouth is open. Her eyes are open. She holds in the wailing scream. This scream will shake the earth.

It is the scream of the Mother and of all the Mothers ... it is the wail of the world. It comes from deep below, from the belly, like the rumbling of an earthquake The sound builds.

*It grows wider and bigger and louder and more all encompassing as it rises to her diaphragm and into her chest and throat
The arms extend skyward ...
It is the wail of death, of loss, of murder, and of war.
It is the answer to the cold machine of war.*

As builder teaches us how to wail the scream of terror and horror, she learns more of her experience. We practice over and over again. Together we scream and wail.

*There is so much pain.
The sound fits the pain.
The light helps birth this sound of pain.
This is hard work.
Too much grief.*



Charon has come to help ferry the souls of the dead and the dying.

Charon has come to help ...

*This is so heavy ... It is so oppressive.
It is hard for me to breathe.*

*Charon has come to help ferry the souls of the dead and the dying
Into their death he brings the light, that they may come.*

*He has the light for safe passage.
He has a big capacity boat ...
No one will be left behind.*

*There are a lot of bodies ...
There are many bodies ...
They are going away honored ...
They are going away safe.*

*I feel much pain and much heaviness in my chest at the sight of all these bodies, the magnitude of the dead, and the enormous capacity of this boat ...
Yet, Charon receives them all...*

He ferries them across...and he leaves no one who has died behind.



The healing Fairy brings little bubbles of comfort to everyone.

*The healing fairy wasn't sure how to be when the Wings of War suddenly came into the World.
She holds a garland of flowers to honor the dead and the dying.
She has the light with her.*

*She can still fly.
She brings the bubbles, little bubbles of comfort to the mourners ... and to those who cannot mourn ... and those that feel so deeply, but do not now how to mourn.*

*She brings comfort to the woman who has learned to wail. She brings comfort to the dead and the dying.
Her healing goes out to the courageous workers who dig in the rubble.*



The workers are the courageous ones who dig in the rubble in the middle of it all.

*Here are the workers ... they are the courageous ones.
They do the unspeakable ... they are in the midst of it all.*

They do what I cannot do. They see what I cannot bear to see.

*Selflessly they dig in the rubble, searching to save a life ... they dig ... they listen ... they are there in the greatest danger ...
They work to find more of the dead and the wounded.*

*They have to do this.
They can do this.
The fairy sends them healing.*



**The mourners assemble.
Grandson honors the dying grandmother with flowers. It is hard to say good-bye.**

*And here are families gathered to mourn the dead and the dying.
The Wings of War prevent many families from coming together to say good-bye. It is hard to say good-bye.*

*My son's grandmother is dying back East ...
He has been unable to go to visit her because the planes are not flying ... He has been kept away.*

*I have been worried about how to be with my son and this dying
I have not known how to talk to him about it.
After this, I think I will know how ...*

*I will know how to make a beginning ...
I know a little about how to feel ...
how to talk about the pain of it all.*

*People need to gather and come together.
The healing bubbles of the open-armed, winged Fairy do reach them.
They touch each other ... hold each other ... they understand.*

Here is my son bringing grandmother the flowers of his love.

He cares about her so much. Everyone is there in the moment of her dying. It is special for them to be together at this time of her death.

*They touch each other ... hold each other ... they understand.
The healing bubbles of the open armed, winged Fairy do reach them.*

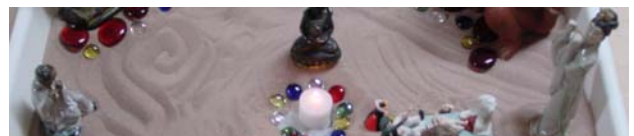
People need to gather and come together at this difficult time. In fact, people coming together is the most important thing that can happen now. The Fairy helps them come together.

The Fifth Sharing of September 11, 2001



The eternal and the human are one rhythmic cycle of swirling sand around the light in the center.

*It all begins with sand swirling and moving around the light in the center ... creating patterns in the sand ...
In the beginning this central light is all there is.*



Playing the song of creation

*This light births the different colors of the rainbow.
Color becomes the sound of the flutes that sing the song of creation (two flutists on left and right side).*



Color and sound make this man and woman.

*From the color and sound come Primordial Man and Woman in union.
They are an essential part of Creation ...
They are sacred*



**Blood flows.
Our Great Mother births us from the Light.**

*Nature Woman births children in blood. Kali woman kills all living beings ...
In Nature blood always flows ...*

*Our great Mother births us from the light within her.
She is huge. She births all of creation.*

*What happened in the world yesterday does not destroy her ... but it is disrespectful of her ...
She gives her blood just the same ... she sheds it onto the earth. She births all of us with equanimity ... she favors none....
We are the same to her. We are her wondrous creation.*

She and her sister Kali play with all of us. They are one.



**Great Mother Kali comes and sheds our blood.
Killers and warriors serve her.**

*Kali is Our Great Mother... She makes life possible.
The Mother of our death she is the path to re-absorption into the Eternal Light in the Center of all.
She is the Queen of Death.
She sheds our blood all over the earth ...
Killers, warriors, and armies serve her purpose ...*



We begin and we end in the light at the center.



At the center is just being in the light and dissolving in the full colors ... It is truly beautiful ... The light loves all ... it is love. There are no distinctions ... for out of the same light comes everyone and everything on our planet ...



Union

These two, the Father and the Mother are connected ... United ... they flow together ... They are the Vehicle for the light to emerge into form. Though they are Sacred, we can know them ... We are Them ...



Our Freedom: Annihilation

These two, the cobra and dragon, are also coming together ... they have embraced one another in annihilation ... Their intent is to shatter, to push apart, and to destroy. Father and Mother, cobra and dragon are coming together ... Both ways are forms of intimacy ...

One marks issuance from the light ... birth ... The other marks return to the light ... death ... One marks increase and the other decrease ... On their level it makes little difference. In our human world it makes all the difference.



The death of so many ... such untold suffering
It makes a difference

Here are the pools of blood ... many people dying ... many people screaming ... many are in pain ... lives shattered ... efforts of untold generations are lying here in broken bits and pieces ... lives destroyed ... ancestors dishonored ... ruins. Nothing will ever be the same for generations to come ... such pain.

My Mother called yesterday morning to tell me about New York ... it was so early in the morning ... yet, I heard the echoes of her adolescent World War II voice awakening deep inside her belly ... it crept into her story about this new terror ... I recognized it ... unbearable suffering came back home again ... bombs ... destruction ... fires burning ... worry ... buildings falling ... evil and malice ... hatred.

Who can witness this? Who can hear this? What mind can think about this? What could ever justify this horror? Who would want to do this? Children are crying ... people are bent into all shapes of agony ... some are wielding clubs and are raging angry ... one carries the wounded ... one is twisted ... some cannot be recognized ... parts of human bodies are scattered over the site.

The space man rages against divinity, putting the blame into the lap of the Gods. Somehow this too makes sense, for this is just too big. Let God be responsible!

The Madonna looks on without flinching ... she knows the work of nature and she knows the work of man. She has compassion for everyone. She takes no sides.

Everyone's response is needed.

Everyone's reaction, no matter how great or small responds to some aspect of the truth of it all.



The peoples of the world

*Here is our world community ... such a rich celebration.
Different cultures ... different people ...
Different races ... different ages ...
Different religions ... different ways.*

*Yet, all have much in common ...
We all play. We all dance.
We all sing. We all tell stories.
We all need food. We all need shelter.
We all have children and families.
We all do our work. We all love and fight.
We come from long lineages of ancestors.
We are here to share the earth.
We are here to gift one another.
We are all vulnerable.
We all must die.*



Holding the dying child

In the rubble He holds the burning, dying one. He is being humbled ... In this very moment he is taking something from the dying one ... it is a transfusion of understanding what was not known before... the knowing that life will never be the same and that no cause is big enough to justify humans inflicting such suffering on anyone.



Holding the starving child

He also holds the starving one ... the one who is not in the fire in New York, D.C. or Pennsylvania. He holds the child in Afghanistan ... the starving child that is to be found everywhere, on every continent including the Americas. He is humbled. Again he takes knowledge imparted by the dying one ... it is an understanding that we are all brothers and sisters ... that we all deserve to share privilege and the bounty of the earth. Our bottom line is life and death, community or devastation, elitism or parity. It really does not have to come down to dollars and cents.



Even before the dead and the bereaved are tended to, some take out their guns

*Others readily find people to blame ...
The fire is still burning ...
Already the call comes for bloody revenge.
Some take out their weapons.
They ready the soldiers while the fire is still burning.
They prepare for a Holy War.*

Others in the world shall suffer too ... we will force other families, other people in the world to join us in our suffering. We do not see our reflection in their eyes.

*Crazed, we run declaring another holy war.
There is no pause. Blood lusts for blood.*

*It is hard to look into the eyes of the dead.
It is hard to be still and to listen to the depths.*

I wonder what would happen if we stayed with the dead and lingered with the pain of this great suffering in our midst...

*Could we see how everyone is already suffering?
Would we be more selective about our killing?
Would we stop to look at our accusers?*

*Would we wonder why 'they' want to terrorize us?
Would we see what we have done to evoke revenge?*

Would we notice the path of death and would we honor the innocent people whose lives were ended so abruptly by the acts of a few?

*Would we support **all** who have been catapulted into this suffering? Would we help the survivors and the families of the dead? Would we start caring about everyone?*

There are so many questions, so few answers.



Tracking the path of return into the earth

And what would happen if we really paid more attention ... if we stayed with our dead for a while ... if we experienced the flow of bodies dissolving back into the great Mother Earth.

My son's best friend died this year ... I was in the presence of his dead body ... we buried him nine months ago ... I know his body is dissolving ... I miss him being alive. Why do we kill? There is plenty of Death in our lives ... there is an overabundance of tombstones in the world

In the earth the physical form is composted and recycled ... the consciousness of all of the people who die becomes part of the planet too. Bodies are not insignificant. Like Spirit, they are precious ...

Our people put up the memorials and the tombstones ... but who actually misses what we have lost in the people who died because of our violence, rage and greed?

The international community must assume a responsibility to give strong and effective support to non-violent movements committed to peaceful changes. Otherwise, it will be seen as hypocrisy to condemn and combat those who have risen in anger and despair but to continue to ignore those who have consistently espoused restraint and dialogue as a constructive alternative to violence.

The Dalai Lama, 2002



The broken family that makes children for Hitlers and Queens of Heart

*All of us, enemies and friends, were once little children. Some of us become pawns of war. This cycle of suffering will not end until we **stop** making children to be used as agents of war....*

Mothers and Fathers can take a stand ... old parenting paradigms can break down. Here they are shattered in so many pieces. As I placed the Mother – Father and toddling child into the sandtray they broke into pieces ... just like yesterday shattered many families. It is unfathomable how much love, how much care, how much labor, how much devotion it took to bring into the world all the people who were killed yesterday and all the people that will be killed by us tomorrow in revenge of yesterday. We are so fragile. Can we not teach ourselves and our children differently?



We are the Earth.

The globe had to go on top of the pain and the suffering. The globe is the earth.

It is our earth. It is awareness of our earth.

The earth feels the caring, the nurturing, the helping ...

This earth is fully aware of all of its people.

As I look at the planet, it seems that we cannot have peace and world community until we stop ravaging the earth. We cannot respect one another until we can

respect the earth. Only then can we see what we are doing to each other.

We are all in this heap of blood and death ... We each think that we and everyone else should be one way and not the other. We do indeed have the option to do this to each other. We are the killers and the victims. We are the helpers and mourners too.

This terrorism and the war on terrorism are agents of change ... this cannot stop until men and women stop raising their own children to serve games of death ... terrorism is a part of the continuing story of humanity struggling to unite in global community, wanting to be seen and responded to ... whether dead or alive.

Conclusion:

I cannot help but marvel at the beauty, the ingenuity and the capacity of the ageless human psyche at play. No technique or treatment model can begin with such devastation and then carve out untold numbers of exquisitely tailored healing journeys into the less-explored mysteries of life. As I review the work of this Level Two Sandtray-Worldplay Training Group I am gripped by the universal wisdom of the group psyche and how each member of this group holds some essential aspect of life's revelations. Birth and death keep such close company. Each one of us followed an inner guidance that brought forth all that was essential for us to move into and be with this trauma. Each one of us accessed the depth of our consciousness to teach ourselves and the others how to see, sense, feel, think, accept and be with what was happening in our world community. Between the five of us, no dimension and no capacity of consciousness was denied or ignored. This brought us a special kind of wisdom and groundedness that is teaching all of us to not be numbed by the magnitude of the terror, the devastation, the suffering, and the loss. But this wisdom is also allowing us to recognize and acknowledge the more silent suffering and subtle exploitation of the unseen, the poor, the hungry, the disenfranchised, and the persecuted peoples of the world.

I have no doubt that a similar sentience emerged in each of the playrooms across the nation and the world. May we not shy away from using play – all forms of play – to allow us to endure, heal and avert human-based trauma. May we learn to use it well – in Nature, in Playrooms, in Classrooms, at Conferences and whenever the opportunity arises.

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