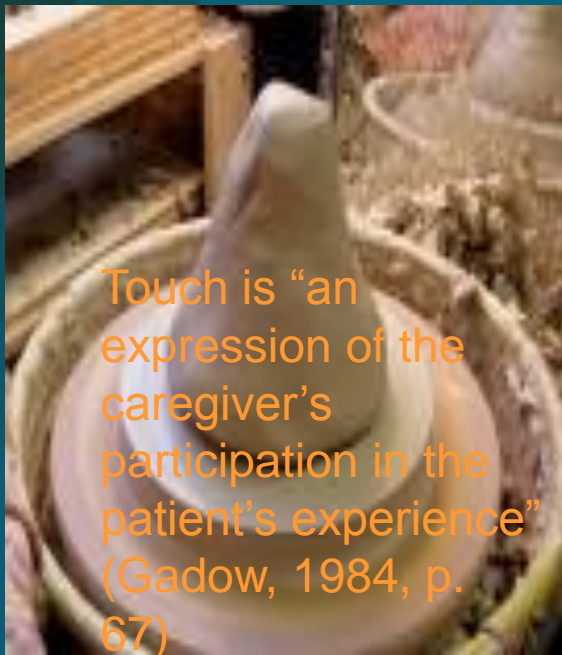


Therapeutic Tact

Being-with as Having the Right Touch





Touch is “an expression of the caregiver’s participation in the patient’s experience” (Gadow, 1984, p. 67)

They left me in that black hole, they left me in agony. Just because someone’s numb with grief you don’t block [them] off. What you actually do is you come towards them. When you are in the black hole you don’t want people coming nagging at you, ‘come on let’s get going’ - but you do want people to reach out to you....



Taking hold as Understanding

Getting in Touch

Getting in Touch Opens Play-Space

It is only because human beings have moods that they can be ‘touched’ by anything or ‘have a sense for’ something in such a way that what touches them shows itself in an affect (Heidegger, 1962, p. 177)

- Play = “To move or operate freely within a bounded space”



The origins of the word the Latin *tactus* means

It appears that tactful presence lies in between the deficient modes of ‘hands off’ indifference and ‘heavy handed’ obtrusiveness; it is “concern made tangible” (Gadow, 1984, p. 67).



The proper response to concealment is *tact* and being tactful involves having the right touch or sensitivity when being-with others (Heidegger, cited in Harman, 2007)

...the very notion of touch presupposes our lived distance from things and others. Without touch it would not be possible to go away, to let go, or to lose contact, and to get in touch again. This also means that touch is the primordial medium to overcome separation and relational distance.



The Opening Up of Being

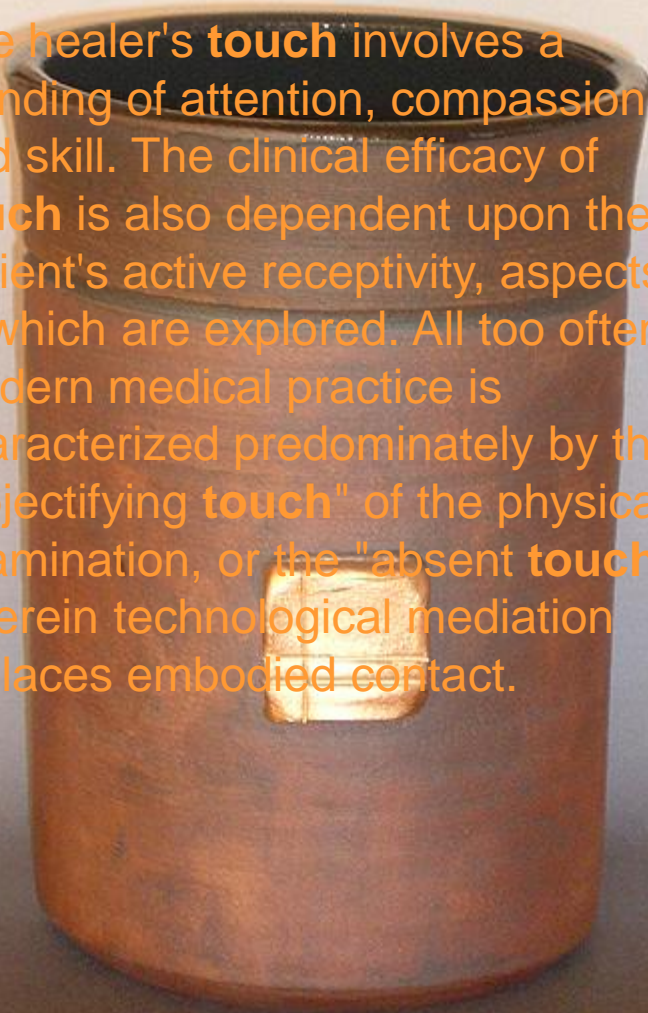
The tender, caring touch, which *feels* what it touches with a reverence that is also active “aesthetic” appreciation, gets in touch with a thing’s essential nature more deeply and more closely than the hand which wilfully grasps and clings, moved by desire (i.e., by attraction and aversion), or than the hand which is indifferent to the beauty of the thing in the disclosure of its truth, its ontological dimension of difference. (Levin p.139)

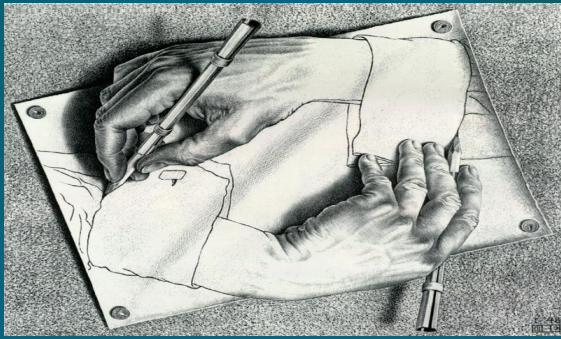
The grasp of technology (das Ge-stell) cannot reach into the essential nature of things, for its operations reify: they are tactless transgressions. (Levin, 1999)



Touch involves both sensing something and expressing something

The healer's **touch** involves a blending of attention, compassion, and skill. The clinical efficacy of **touch** is also dependent upon the patient's active receptivity, aspects of which are explored. All too often, modern medical practice is characterized predominately by the "objectifying **touch**" of the physical examination, or the "absent **touch**" wherein technological mediation replaces embodied contact.





Occupation

- The **act** or **process** of holding or possessing a place
- The **state of being** held or possessed

American Psychological Association (APA):

- occupation. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved July 17, 2008, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/occupation>

Occupational Dynamics

- Occupation is a dynamic state, a process of being and becoming through doing
- *Being held* requires abandoning oneself to the situation and being open to whatever is at hand
- *Taking hold* requires a composure and a responsiveness that allows one to grasp and handle whatever arises
- All modes of doing can be understood in relation to the notion of “play”
- Play = “To move or operate freely within a bounded space”
- Occupation takes place in the play space between the person and his/her physical and socio-cultural world.
- Movement within the play space will be shut down or opened up by personal and environmental factors.

Play and Potential Space in Psychotherapy

the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play" .

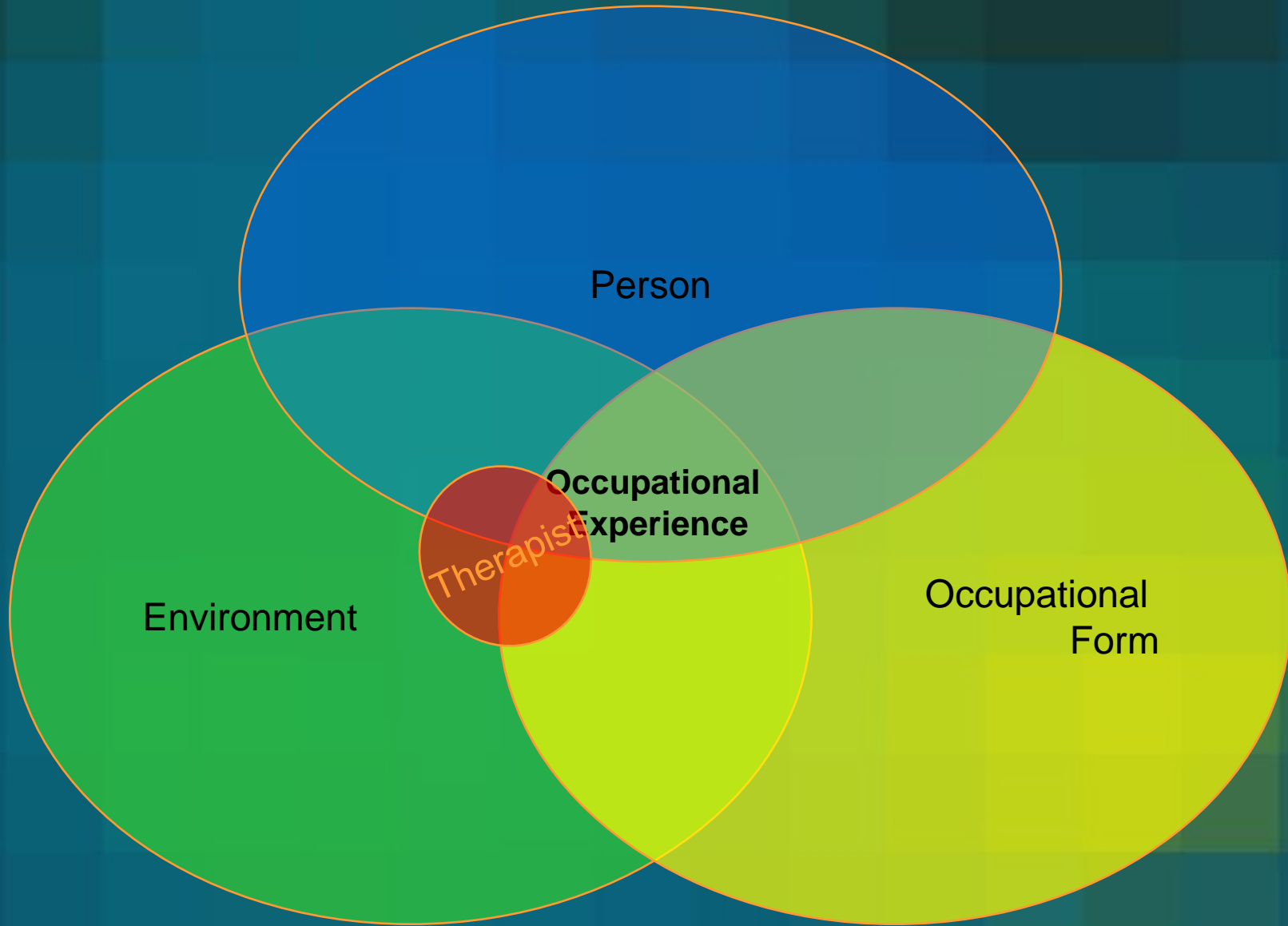
"The place where cultural experience is located is in the potential space between the individual and the environment (originally the object). The same can be said of playing. Cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested as play."

(from "Playing: Its Theoretical Status in the Clinical Situation," 1971)

Factors influencing therapy outcomes:

30% Relationship, 15% Expectancy/Hope, 15% Therapy Approach, 40% Extra-therapeutic Factors (Lambert, 1992)

Occupation as “Potential Space”



Occupational Therapy - Opening and Maintaining Play-Space

Occupational Therapists can:

- Open leeway or room to move through *presence*
- Establish the bounds of the play space through *understanding*
- Encourage movement in the play space through *commitment*
- A state of full occupation opens space, which allows the free interplay of self and world through which meaning and connections can be made

Presence

- Involves making oneself available by engaging in the play

You sense very quickly who are the ones that care about you and who are the ones that don't, and both of those types of people have a big impact on your healing. ...What comes second is what your memory is - you're left with a feeling...an impression.

Just because someone's numb with grief you don't block [them] off. What you actually do is you come towards them. When you are in the black hole you don't want people coming nagging at you, 'come on let's get going' - but you do want people to reach out to you....

I found that I wasn't finishing things unless somebody was there. They didn't even have to do it; just be there. If somebody was with me I seemed to have the motivation to do it. If there was nobody there I wouldn't do it. It wasn't that I felt guilty that they were there, or they would tell me off or anything. Having that person there I felt motivated, I felt happier at what I was doing, I felt less likely to dwell on anything and I felt I had achieved something. It really made a difference to me.

Understanding

- Involves reading the dynamics of the play through interaction in it and creating a shared awareness

You have this feeling that so few people do understand... Staff who see you as a whole person are really important, absolutely vital actually. A lot of people - they live life on a level where if you can't see it, it is not happening, or if it is not right it is not something you have to pay attention to. I suppose I live on a fairly emotional level and that's where you pick up on, and maybe we were just a really good fit.... I gave signals she picked up on and the result was quite extraordinary. That was pretty well much down to her - what would I call it? Her instinct, her picking up on signals of what I needed. That is quite a gift. It is actually extraordinary how one person can influence the shape of your life...

I remember once I was extremely unwell and my career had fallen down around my ears. [The social worker] came in this particular day and had an OT [occupational therapist] with her and he just absolutely gutted me... He didn't read signs, he didn't know me, he hadn't come to visit me, they just happened to be in the same vehicle. He sat at the kitchen table and had a cup of coffee and said 'tell me Sue what are you going to be doing now, have you got any plans?' and I just went 'oh my god he thinks I should be looking in the newspaper for a job'. I mean I thought that was a good day because I had got out of bed and answered the front door. It sounds pathetic but it threw me into a complete spin, I was about 6 steps back because.. 'well that is what they think, I should be out there doing something'. It was devastating.

Commitment

- Involves consistently responding to the play by leaping in and/or leaping ahead of it.

It was so nice to have someone who kept to their word and took action for you because you couldn't take the action yourself. He was also someone that got to know you, he was very reliable, he was one of those people that if said he was going to do something for you he would do it and he would follow it up until he got it done....

She said to me 'I think we should write you a CV'. I said 'there's no point now - I am not looking for a job I don't think I will ever work again'. She said 'no, I think if you could see on paper what you actually have to offer, even if you never use it...' She said 'try and think about how many transferable skills [you have]'. That was my homework that week, and I came up with this incredible list. So the CV got done...It is quite a powerful process actually. Part of that was empowering me - making me believe that I still had things to offer and making me look at things that I did that had value in my life and the life of my family...

The Analysis:

Some questions to reflect on.

- How were you present and available to the other person?
- What called for your care and concern?
- How did you develop an understanding of what was happening at the time (how did you read the play)?
- What were you attuned to and what emerged as being significant – (ie. what key dynamics were at play)?
- What did you do to alter the play – did you ‘leap in’ or ‘leap ahead’ of the play to maintain it?
- How did you know how to respond to what was unfolding before you – what guided your actions in the moment?
- What was at the heart of this experience – what happened that made it a moment of occupational therapy?