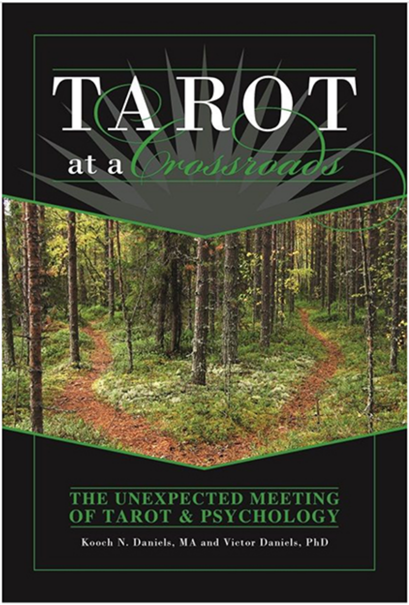


TAROT
at a Crossroads

"This book is destined to become a Tarot classic. It fills a unique spot in the literature, bridging the gap between traditional divinatory Tarot readers and psychotherapists/counselors wishing to weave this powerful tool into their own practices. I'm especially impressed by the generosity of the authors in their open-handed instructions on the use of techniques they have personally pioneered. There is much here to enlighten not only the beginner but also those who've used Tarot for years."

—David Van Nuys, PhD
Emeritus Professor of Psychology

"A very informative, thought-provoking and useful crossover between psychology and Tarot. A lot to think about and absorb. What is obvious and standard for one side of the psychologist-Tarot reader equation will be useful and original to the other. You will be a better Tarot card reader or a better psychotherapist or counselor after you have read this book. It will take you places you have not been before."

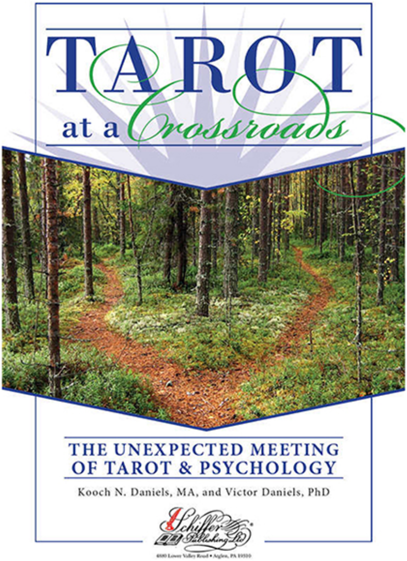
—Wald Amberstone
Director, The Tarot School and Reader's Studio Conference

"[This] book is fun, creative, deep, and full of usable information and ways to immediately engage with the cards to enhance self-knowledge. It is written in a way that allows both psychotherapists and Tarot readers to use its information and exercises with equal ease. With great pleasure and anticipation, I invite you now to open this book and look inside at yourself."

—Elinor Greenberg, PhD, GGP
Co-chair of New York Institute of Gestalt Therapy Program Committee

DEDICATION

Our heartfelt love and infinite thanks to
Helen, the Queen of Swords,
Martha Marie, The Queen of Cups,
and Mata Amritanandamayi, The High Priestess.



TAROT at a Crossroads

THE UNEXPECTED MEETING OF TAROT & PSYCHOLOGY

Kooch N. Daniels, MA, and Victor Daniels, PhD

Schiffer Publishing Ltd

Please note that the material within this book is not intended to be used as treatment for any form of psychological or physical disorder. The authors or publisher make no claims or take any responsibility for healing problems. When using the information provided in relation to the Tarot cards, the authors advise novice readers, Tarot professionals, and licensed practitioners of counseling or psychotherapy to work within the framework of their expertise.

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Published by Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.
4880 Lower Valley Road
Atglen, PA 19310
Phone: (610) 593-1777; Fax: (610) 593-2002
Email: info@schifferbooks.com

ISBN 978-1-5073-0054-1(EPUB)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are most grateful to Wald Amberstone, impresario of the annual New York Reader's Studio Tarot conference and the accompanying Psychology and Tarot Conference. One day at lunch during the 2013 conference we were discussing the approach we had developed for using the Tarot in psychotherapy and counseling, as well as what psychology had to offer Tarot readers, when he suddenly said, "Why don't you write a book about it?" Because Kooch already had an outline for a Tarot and psychology e-book, she was delighted with Wald's encouragement. Also, we'd like to thank his wife, Ruth Ann, a bright star in the Tarot community who with Wald invited us to address their Psychology and Tarot Conference in 2014. An oasis of Tarot and psychology enthusiasm, it brings people together to blend these two sometimes contrary approaches to studying the human mind and potential. We can't offer enough gratitude to the many people we met there who became our friends and sources of inspiration.

Wald Amberstone also was kind enough to be one of our prepublication readers of our manuscript. We thank him along with David Van Nuys, PhD, Host of *Shrink Rap Radio*, and Lila Welchel, MEd, for taking the time to read, give insightful suggestions, and encourage our

writing.

We also owe a special debt of gratitude to Therese Thalassa Porter, originator of the annual BATS, the Bay Area Tarot Symposium in Northern California. For over two decades she has blessed our local Tarot community by bringing many of the brightest and most influential thinkers in the Tarot world together under one roof. There we met a long list of contemporary Tarot scholars, authors, deck creators, and enthusiasts who encouraged us to think about our work in new ways. At BATS we were also fortunate to meet Chris McClure, marketing representative at Schiffer Publishing, and we want to especially thank him for encouraging us to send Schiffer our book proposal.

We are equally grateful to the peer review and program committees of the "Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy—An International Community" for their open minded invitations to present at their 2005 Amsterdam conference where we first started teaching "The Use of Tarot In Therapy," and later at the 2012 biannual conference in Puebla, Mexico, and the 2014 conference in Asilomar, California, where we offered workshops based on a more fully developed model of our working process. Also, we'd like to thank the Mexican Gestalt Association for inviting us to present our therapeutic approach at its very first annual conference in Guadalajara in 2013.

We are also grateful to trailblazer and pivotal thinker Art Rosengarten for his expansive influence in the twin worlds of psychotherapy and the Tarot. We owe gratitude to the many key speakers who appeared on the *Tarot Blog Talk Radio* show *Kosmic Koffee With Kooch*. We give a special round of applause to Elinor Greenburg, Mary Greer, Katrina Wynne, Thomas Caldwell, James Wells, and Jenne Perlstein, who spoke on the merits of psychology and Tarot. And Kooch especially wants to thank Dax Carlisle, founder of the Tarot Guild and host of her show for giving her the opportunity to interview so many amazing people in the Tarot and New Age community.

Our book would be words without pictures if not for the generosity of the Tarot artists and deck creators who have given us permission to use their beautiful cards. Words are not enough to thank Jude Simmons, Robert Place, Major Tom Schick, Anna Franklin, Yoav Ben-Dov, Marie White, Courtney Weber, Beth Seilonen, George Courtney, Aunia Kahn and Russell Moon, Jasmine Beckett-Griffith and J.R. Rivera, and European card publisher A.G.M-Urania for their generosity.

We especially appreciate the insightful guidance of our editor, Dinah Roseberry at Schiffer Publishing.

If we have not named you here, but you nonetheless know that you've touched us deeply by working alongside us, coming to our classes, doing readings for us, or letting us do readings or Tarot-enhanced gestalt therapy sessions for you, we graciously and gratefully thank you, too. Also, we are deeply grateful to our daughters, Tara and Lila, and our extended family and friends because our life would be empty without you. We also want to give thanks to our amazing teachers, mystic scholar Harish Johari, and India's Hugging Saint, Mata Amritanandamayi. Also, with a humble bow, we give thanks to the Divine Presence in life who offers the opportunity to walk, skip, or run the sacred, zigzagging path of "The Fool's journey."

FOREWORD

I became a Gestalt therapist because I like the "Aha!" experience, the sudden and unexpected insights that Gestalt awareness experiments can bring. I took up Tarot because I felt a mysterious pull to explore the meaning of the exotic images on the cards and understand how they might relate to me and my clients. Eventually, I joined my two worlds together, psychotherapy and Tarot, and I went looking for kindred spirits who had done the same.

I found them at a Gestalt therapy conference in Mexico in a presentation by Kooch and Victor Daniels. Now they have written the book that I wished I could have read when I first started my Gestalt therapy and Tarot journey. Like Kooch and Victor themselves, their book is fun, creative, deep, and full of usable information and ways to immediately engage with the cards to enhance self-knowledge. It is written in a way that allows both psychotherapists and Tarot readers to use its information and exercises with equal ease. With great pleasure and anticipation, I invite you now to open this book and look inside at yourself.

—Elinor Greenberg, PhD, CGP
Co-Chair of Program Committee at the New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy

ARTISTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

We are deeply indebted to the artists and publishers who generously allowed us to use cards from their decks to illustrate these pages. We thank each of the following:

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Anna Franklin, for her blessings on our extensive use of illustrations from her spectacular *Pagan Ways Tarot*.

Aunia Kahn, artist, and Russell J. Moon, author, for permission to include images from their unique *Silver Era Tarot*.

Beth Seilonen for permission to use some of her fanciful images from *Dream Raven Tarot*.

Courtney Weber for permission to reproduce the remarkable illustrations from the photographic deck *Tarot of the Boroughs* set in New York City.

Jasmine Beckett-Griffith, illustrator, and her collaborator author JR Rivera, for permission to include their delightful *Beautiful Creatures Tarot* in these pages.

Jude Simmons, illustrator in collaboration with Kooch Daniels from their wonderful *Teen Tarot* deck.

Marie White, for permission to use illustrations from the bold and powerful *Mary-El Tarot*.

Robert M. Place and Hermes Publications for permission to reproduce illustrations from his remarkable *The Tarot of the Sevenfold Mystery*, one of the first decks published in the twenty-first century.

Tom Schick, for permission to use illustrations from Major Tom Schick's *Tarot of Marseilles*, an imaginative modern takeoff on the original *Tarot de Marseilles*.

Yoav Ben-Dov's *CBD Tarot de Marseilles*, a restored reproduction of the traditional deck printed by Nicholas Conver in 1760.

And of course, we deeply appreciate the generosity of Schiffer Publishing Company, publisher of the cards by Franklin, Kahn, Seilonen, Beckett-Griffith, White, and Schick for granting permission for their use. We also thank Pete Schiffer for encouraging us to use illustrations from decks produced by other publishers as well.

Images by these artists are used as follows: Introduction, Part Headings, and Epilogue:
JR Rivera, Jasmine Becket-Griffith;
Chapter 1: Yoav Ben-Dov;
Chapter 2: Tom Schick;
Chapter 3: Gayan Winter, Jo Dosé (UGM-Urania);
Chapter 4: Marie White;
Chapter 5: Hansrudi Waescher (UGM-Urania);
Chapter 6: Aunia Kahn;
Chapter 7: Robert Place;
Chapter 8: Courtney Weber plus two cards by Jude Simmons;
Chapter 9: Beth Seilonen;
Chapter 10: One card by Hansrudi Waescher;
Chapter 11, Jude Simmons;
Chapter 12: Anna Franklin;
Chapters 13, 14, and 15: one card each by Anna Franklin; and
Chapter 13 has four cards by Hansrudi Waescher.

With all chapters except 13-15, one card by the artist whose work illustrates the chapter is shown on its title page.
Our enormous gratitude and blessings to you all!

PREFACE

0. The Explorer

Sunlight and shadows, smooth sailing and stormy seas, challenges and opportunities—in one way or another all these are part of every person's life, of what it is to be human in this world. From time to time almost everyone runs aground on an unseen, unexpected reef—and needs a little help to navigate and to improve their chances of finding a speedy resolution. If you live in India you probably go to your spiritual teacher or guru for advice. If you live in the Western world, you might consult a counselor or psychotherapist to sort through life's lessons. Or depending on your background and beliefs, you might seek out a psychic, fortune-teller, or a personal coach. Or maybe you just tough it out by yourself, perhaps with a deck of Tarot cards in hand and the hope that they will help you find some sense of direction.

Whether your life journey involves being a healer for others, or trying to puzzle out a solution to your own dilemmas with a deck of Tarot, Lenormand, or oracular cards, we wrote this book for you. Perhaps you've studied to become a psychologist, psychotherapist, counselor, or social worker and you would like to use visual imagery in your work. Or you may be a Tarot reader seeking new perspectives on the cards. In either case, this book will lead you along paths toward unexpected destinations where unforeseen treasures are waiting to be discovered. It offers new techniques and methods that can augment the process you already use. You do not need previous Tarot experience or years of Tarot study to use the methods found here, but you do need to be willing to experience a nontraditional way of working with Tarot cards.

We wrote this book for two different primary audiences. One is Tarot readers who would like a broader psychological background and some new methods and insights to use in their readings.

The other audience is psychotherapists, counselors, and personal coaches who would like to integrate the use of visual imagery and the methods that accompany its use into their professional repertoires. (In this book we use the terms "psychotherapist" and "counselor" largely interchangeably.)

If you belong to neither of the groups just mentioned, but just enjoy using the cards for enjoyment, self-exploration, and personal growth, well, we wrote this book for you, too.

In writing for distinctly different audiences at once, we faced challenges. Some of the language used by Tarot readers and psychotherapists is different. Some of the methods described here are suitable for therapists but usually not Tarot readers, and vice-versa. We have tried to write from both mind and heart in ways that those in both the Tarot community and psychology world will find useful. We hope you enjoy the journey.

Using the Tarot in counseling or psychotherapy is fundamentally different from using it for divination, even though the underlying structure of the Tarot and its imagery lends itself well to use in both worlds. Traditionally, the Tarot, an ancient storybook of universal wisdom consisting of seventy-eight cards, has been associated with fortune-tellers, but it speaks to anyone who is interested in its pictorial vocabulary of images and symbols. In recent years it has become more widely accepted in mainstream society and the world of psychology. In response, we have been teaching psychotherapists and counselors how to use it to complement their work.

Enthusiastic responses from colleagues and students who have attended our presentations at psychotherapy conferences encouraged us to write a book for those who are intrigued by the possibilities of merging psychotherapy and the mystical. Although the Tarot is not for everyone, for those who appreciate its possibilities it holds vast potential for expanding awareness. Likewise, discussions with card readers at Tarot conferences made it clear that many would like to know how insights from psychology, psychotherapy, and counseling can improve and enrich their readings. Ruth Ann Amberstone, co-creator with her husband Wald, of New York's annual Reader's Studio and Tarot and Psychology conference, claims that we can use the Tarot to "map the true self." Her comment suggests that the Tarot can be useful to many different kinds of practitioners. Whatever your profession or trade, you can use Tarot imagery to find a pathway into the secret corridors of the self to help solve the puzzles of life and gain insight into mental, emotional, and relational problems and opportunities of many kinds.

Even though their approaches necessarily differ in basic ways, the Tarot reader and the therapist or other human services professional can learn from each other. Few psychologists know the complex meanings attached to the cards, whereas most readers go to great lengths to learn about each card's meanings and symbols. What does a specific card imply? What previously unseen avenues does it reveal?

Similarly, only a small number of readers have the professional training needed to delve deeply into people's emotional and relational issues. Someone can start reading the Tarot for the public as soon as he or she feels confident discussing the card's divinatory meanings. In most of the United States readers are required to either have a ministerial license or work as an entertainment service. In many countries and every US state, laws prohibit anyone from calling him or herself a "counselor" or "psychotherapist" and charging money for such services unless they have met specific licensing requirements. It takes specialized, accredited training to obtain such skill and such a license. But even for a person who has such professional training, the Tarot and other forms of imagery offers an additional way to uncover hidden dimensions of a client's issues.

We honor the obvious and subtle distinctions and boundaries of each of these different worlds. We are not trying to turn Tarot readers into psychologists or psychologists into Tarot readers—except for the determined few who wish to navigate through both realms.

Many who have spent years developing clinical and counseling skills are not going to spend the additional time needed to gain an in-depth knowledge of card meanings and their traditional symbolism. For instance, it can take years of study to learn to "read" cards in relation to their corresponding paths on the Kabalistic Tree of Life, their astrological correspondences, or their numerological or mythological relationships. With this in mind, if you would like to use the Tarot in your therapeutic or counseling practice, you may benefit from using the cards in a *representational* manner. You can learn this approach in the chapters that follow. It involves encouraging your clients to respond spontaneously to whatever personal meanings particular card images evoke. This contrasts with traditional methods used by Tarot readers, who use the cards in a *divinatory* manner. We also show how sometimes the Tarot can be used in both representational and divinatory ways within a single reading or therapy session, such as when you want to encourage a person's creativity.

We do not explore the history of the Tarot in great depth or discuss card interpretations at great length because you can find such information in conventional Tarot books and websites. However, in the final four chapters we do provide examples of divinatory meanings, key words, and phrases that you might use with the cards.

Please note that we are not advising you to discontinue previous Tarot studies. We offer our representational method as one path to using the cards that differs from the well-known path of learning traditional symbolic interpretation. It can supplement divinatory readings or be used in place of them.

The Deck

If you already use the Tarot, you doubtless have a deck, or even a collection of them. If you're just starting to get interested and don't already have a deck, you'll need one. A variety of decks, both modern and traditional, can be found in most bookstores, or online sites such as Schiffer Publishing (www.schifferbooks.com). You will want to look at the cards in several (or many) different decks to find one that you will enjoy using. Although styles and colors differ, we suggest getting a traditional deck with seventy-eight cards, including the twenty-two Major Arcana cards and the fifty-six Minor Arcana cards. The latter group includes each of four suits: Cups, Wands, Swords, and Pentacles. But you may notice that the names of the suits in some decks differ, such as Staves or Rods or Fire instead of Wands; Crystals or Air instead of Swords; Water or Chalices instead of Cups; and Disks or Coins or Earth instead of Pentacles.

If you don't already know the card names, you can look at a book that uses the images in the ubiquitous *Rider Waite Coleman Smith Deck* or the *Thoth Tarot Deck* by Aleister Crowley to view their long-established titles. Whatever deck you choose, as long as it follows the customary format and titles for the twenty-two Major Arcana cards and four suits you will be able to easily follow along with our Tarot discussions, and practice the techniques we offer. But that's just our suggestion, since those cards and images are keyed directly to the text of this book. If you prefer the imagery of a different kind of deck such as an oracle deck that has a different number of cards, the methods described here can work equally well for you.

When selecting a Tarot deck, be sure to choose one that is rich in imagery in all seventy-eight cards. In some decks, the cards representing the Minor Arcana have only numbers and icons for each suit, but no pictorial image. Such cards may work well for divination, but are less useful for representational card sessions.

Also, when following the methods described here, we usually recommend avoiding decks that have words other than the card titles printed on the cards to describe their import, such as "problems," "decisions," "marriage," etc. Such labels can interfere with your client's selection of personal meanings for the card's images.

When you first get your deck, find a nice-looking box or cloth bag to put it in that will help you handle the cards with loving care and protect them from damage. With your deck in hand, you'll soon be ready to experience using the methods in the following pages to open doorways to new perceptions and exciting possibilities.

PART I

Infinite Possibilities Beckon

1.

TAROT AND PSYCHOTHERAPY THEN AND NOW

XXI
LE·MONDE

Jennifer wanted to know whether she was going to find love. Could the cards tell her? Time after time, she would meet someone interesting, they would have a few dates, and then somehow the relationship would sputter and trail off. What might the future hold?

When thinking about the Tarot, most people envision fortune-tellers who can read the cards and say something about their futures. Such Tarot readings, whether in a private consulting session, given quickly by a reader at a party, or even over the phone on a "psychic hotline," are all divinatory readings. The reader is trying to enrich a person's perspectives and divine something about the other person's life or their future, whether regarding love, money, career, family, health, or some other concern.

Many readers are very good at understanding how to do this, since they study many years, attend professional Tarot conferences, and are continually trying to sharpen their skills. They consult various traditions as they develop their own methods of helping people address important questions.

In a divinatory session, some of these methods involve the reader shuffling the cards or having the other person do so. During the shuffle the reader has the option of asking the person to think silently about what is most important in their life at present. Or, he or she might ask the person why they have come for a reading. What questions might they explore that would be most valuable? If a person does intuitive Tarot readings, he or she might not want the person to verbalize their concerns, as the reader will let the cards and the client's dominant energy point to the most beneficial message. Some people sit down for a reading because the opportunity is there and they've never had a reading before. In reply to, "Do you have a specific question that you want the reading to address, or would you just like to see what story your cards tell?" many choose the last alternative.

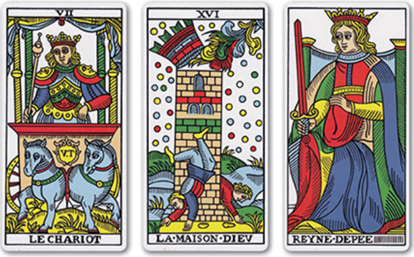
A reader has many options about which deck to use since a multitude of them exist. Even most modern decks follow the general outlines of the early hand-painted ones that date back to Renaissance Italy during the 1400s before the invention of the printing press.

The Tarot began to move toward its present form during the first half of the fifteenth century. Card decks were being developed in Italy, in Milan, Ferrara, Bologna, and perhaps other cities, too. Old records mention a hand-painted deck of playing cards called *Imperatori* in the early 1400's.[1] Another candidate for the oldest deck is the *Michelino* Deck produced between 1417 and 1425, commissioned by Filippo Maria Visconti, duke of Milano, a card lover who is also credited with designing the *Tarocchi* game playing cards. Italy is still one of the world's hotbeds of Tarot card production and activity.

A work published in 1506, written by Raphaeus Maffei or Raphaelis Volaterraini described the trump cards or *atouts* as:

The Fool	The Juggler	Pope Joan	The Pope
The Empress	The Emperor	Love	The Chariot
Courage	The Old Man	The Wheel	Justice
The Hanged Man	Death	Temperance	The Devil
Fire	The Star	The Moon	The Sun
The Angel	Justice	The World[2]	

Dr. Yoav Ben-Dov, a psychotherapist and organizational consultant, writes that in the 1700s and 1800s card makers in France, and especially Marseilles, adopted a common model for Tarot decks that became a standard that has endured until our own time. The *Tarot de Marseilles*, printed by Nicholas Conver in 1760, was the first mass-produced deck, in contrast to the decks hand-painted for wealthy patrons and the copper engravings by Andrea Mantegna that preceded it. Ben-Dov has created a faithful reproduction of Conver's deck, now widely available as the *CBD Tarot de Marseille*.[3] Shown here are three cards from the CBD recreation of the original deck: The Chariot, The Tower, and the Queen of Swords.



Psychotherapy and counseling as we know them today have more recent histories. They began to be seriously explored only near the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth. Mention the word "psychiatry" or "psychoanalysis" and a picture of Sigmund Freud sitting near a couch on which a patient is reclining is likely to pop into a person's mind. In the US, but not all countries, psychoanalysis and psychiatry have in common the requirement that the practitioner have an MD, which allows them to prescribe medication as a treatment for problems. Most psychotherapists and counselors, however, are neither psychoanalysts nor psychiatrists.[4]

Interestingly, even in Freud's day only psychoanalysts used "the couch." Other renowned practitioners such as Carl Jung and Alfred Adler sat face-to face with their clients. As time passed, the couch fell from favor among all but psychoanalysts, and by the 1950s and 1960s, even some of them began to sit facing their clients.

From Observable Behavior to the Depths of the Psyche

Some early twentieth century psychotherapists were interested in the unseen inner events that inspired a person's words and actions. Others, aspiring to be just as scientific as a physicist or chemist, confined their observations to actions that could be seen or measured. They looked askance at all actions that could not be quantified in some fashion. After several decades, however, these "behaviorists" found that people did many things that their methods and instruments simply could not address.

In the meantime, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and others continued to be interested in hidden events and messages that lurked in the subterranean chambers of the mind. These included deeply buried feelings and impulses, and unknown and underdeveloped sides of the self. They believed that only when people come to know the deep currents of their consciousness can they deal with life's problems well.

In the mid-twentieth century, new methods emerged among therapists who focused on the inner storylines of what their clients told them. Person-centered therapist Carl Rogers, psychodramatist Jacob Moreno, and gestalt therapist Fritz Perls were central figures in these new developments. They paid close attention to posture, gestures, muscular tightening, and relaxation, lines in the face, tones of voice, and modes of sitting, standing, and moving. They sought to help a client become aware of patterns of behavior that were outside their awareness. They developed ways to help clients look at mental snapshots and mind-movies that they had been keeping out of their consciousness because they seemed scary or embarrassing. Starting at the surface, such therapists gradually guided clients into the depths of their psyches, and some would even say, their souls. Meanwhile, psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reichs brought attention to the physical body into psychological work for the first time.

Early on, Carl Jung had his patients draw and use artistic media to express themselves in ways that they could not quite do in words. One of his Swiss colleagues, Dora Kalff, along with Margaret Lowenfeld in England, developed a working/playing method called sand tray therapy that gave tangible form to mental images. Still in use today, it helps both children and adults express their unspoken thoughts and emotions. The client selects tiny doll figures to represent people and events in their lives and stands them upright in a box of sand. Then the client is asked to have them talk to each other and act in ways that reflect their issues. Because such a dialogue is projected from the client's imagination, it can be called a *projective dialogue*.

Jung was not the only practitioner to use artistic media. Eventually a whole specialty of "art therapy" came into being. Other psychotherapists, taking a clue from drama and theater, set up a "stage" on which patients could act out their thoughts, feelings, and impulses. The favored term for people undergoing psychotherapy and counseling changed from "patients" to "clients" in the mind-twentieth century, thanks to Carl Rogers' widespread influence. The best known of the drama-oriented practitioners was Jacob Moreno, founder of psychodrama.

During the 1950s, Fritz Perls, a psychoanalyst with a background in theater and his wife, Laura, who had trained with experimental psychologists of the gestalt school[5] joined forces with psychologists Paul Goodman and Ralph Hefferline in New York. They developed a method that blended elements from traditional psychotherapies with elements of Moreno's psychodramatic work. A crucial difference between their approach and Moreno's is that in psychodrama the client, working in a group setting, chooses other group members to act out the roles of those involved in a problem situation, while in gestalt therapy the client acts out all the different roles. Perls placed an unoccupied chair in front of the one occupied by the client, labeled it the "empty chair," and called the one in which the client was sitting the "hot seat." However, not all gestalt therapists use these labels, or these enactive methods.

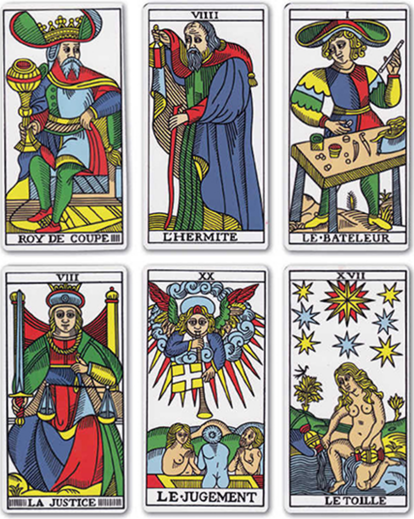
Artistic media, the sand tray with its many shelves of figurines, and the hot seat and empty chair(s) all have a limitation: They are not so easy to move around. On the other hand, a deck of cards is completely portable.

The Unexpected Meeting of Psychotherapy and the Tarot

In the past the Tarot has been used mainly as a divinatory oracle. Now, as its popularity grows and it has become more accepted by mainstream society, its usefulness as a healing tool is becoming recognized. More than a decade ago we began exploring the therapeutic potential of Tarot cards. We already knew their images could illuminate a broad spectrum of dilemmas, vices, virtues, cravings, and opportunities. We have found that pictorial imagery—especially Tarot cards—support the telling of emotionally loaded stories and memories. They can be used in a onetime session or repeatedly in ongoing sessions over a period of time.

Gradually we realized that some of the processes used in gestalt therapy can also be used with the cards. At first we worked with cards that clients pulled from a deck in a traditional divinatory manner. Eventually we found that often it makes sense to spread the deck face up in front of your client and let him or her choose cards to represent particular people, situations, or sides of himself or herself. With minor adaptations, projective dialogues like those used in sand tray work, the hot seat, and empty chair style of working, can easily be carried out by a client using Tarot cards.

Also, the use of Tarot images is at least distantly related to the Rorschach inkblot test, created by Hermann Rorschach in 1920, to diagnose personality problems. The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) devised by Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan in 1930 serves a related purpose. In a somewhat similar manner, some Tarot readers are trained to use the images on the cards to analyze their querent's perceptions and discuss their potentials. Much of most people's thinking occurs in the forms of mental pictures and mind-movies. To limit therapeutic intervention to verbal conversation neglects that vast realm of personal experience. Given the picture and mental-movie character of so much of people's thinking in both dreaming and waking states, it makes perfect sense that visual imagery is beginning to catch on in the study of the mind.



After presenting our methods at several psychotherapy conferences, we gave a talk and demonstration on using the cards for therapy at the Reader's Studio "Psychology and Tarot" Conference in New York City in April of 2014. Afterward one of the participants, Dr. Yoav Ben-Dov, told us that Tarot and other imagery cards have been used in psychotherapy in Israel for about fifteen years by Dr. Ofra Ayalon, especially for healing post-traumatic stress. He himself uses them in organizational consulting. When people in a group share their differing associations to card images, it can open up channels of communication and contact that are otherwise hard to access.

Our experience suggests that the use of evocative imagery in psychotherapy, and some of the relevant knowledge and practice by Tarot readers, can combine seamlessly to bring new understandings of how to use the cards. Beyond question this is already happening.

Doing Tarot Divination vs. Tarot Counseling and Therapy

For the most part when we place our central focus on using the cards in psychotherapy or counseling, traditional interpretation is tossed out the window. Instead of having a reading, the client undertakes a journey of self-discovery in which he or she attributes subjective meanings to the cards. Such personally assigned associations may be quite different from the meanings another client, or the counselor, or a Tarot reader would suggest. A gestalt approach also emphasizes paying attention to developing greater awareness of feelings, thoughts, and sensations in the present moment. Such direct experience of the self in "the here and now" in reaction to card images is quite different from traditional divinatory interpretation.

The lines of distinction between Tarot readers and licensed counselors and therapists can and usually should be clearly defined. Upon occasion, however, they can blur. A Tarot reader is sometimes called upon to play the role of a therapist, particularly by people who refuse to see a therapist or counselor because they think it means there "must be something wrong with them" if they do. They may, however, think it's "fun and interesting" to go to a reader to address the same issues that others would take to a counselor or therapist. And sometimes a therapist is called upon to act like a reader and offer suggestions pertaining to the future—although many therapists are wary about "giving advice." Practical training and methods used by readers, counselors, and other healers may vary, but the following list offers some perspective on this sensitive subject.

Some Differences & Similarities between Divination & Representational Use of the Tarot

DIVINATORY USE	REPRESENTATIONAL USE
Offered by Tarot reader	Offered by counselor or clinician
Tarot is an effective point of contact	Tarot is an effective point of contact
Meets needs of querent	Meets needs of client
Extensive Tarot knowledge, experience, and intuition guide readings	Therapeutic training and experience and sometimes intuition guide session(s)
Querent picks cards "blind" from a face-down deck	Client selects specific cards from a face-up deck
Emphasis is on traditional card meanings	Emphasis is on client's reactions to cards
Reader lays spreads and leads discussion	Therapist lets client spark key points

Here is a sample of the vocabulary that you're likely to hear if you listen to readers or psychologists talking:

The Spoken Word

MORE LIKELY TO HEAR DURING DIVINATION	MORE LIKELY TO HEAR IN THERAPY OR COUNSELING
Healing	Therapeutic session
Karma	Conflict
Self-discovery	Self-actualization
Thinking	Cognition
Knowing	Awareness
Spiritual	Transpersonal
Physical	Somatic
Aura	Field
Affirmations	Guided imagery
Divine Guidance	Synchronicity

Just as vocabularies differ, many people disagree about who has the better understanding of how to use the cards in a specific context. But history has seen worse. In the fourteenth century, in parts of Europe, there was actually a prohibition denying people the right to use playing cards. And believe it or not, even today in the US state of North Carolina, the "Anti-Divination Law" prohibits publicly practicing the art of Tarot reading.

There will probably always be people who argue with the merits of any system of thought, just as there are differences between (and sometimes even within) schools of psychotherapy. Differences of opinion are a normal part of life, but in the worlds of "readers" and "psychologists," both consist of people who are working to heal the hurts of humanity. Both have a right to use the best approaches they can find that will make positive differences in people's lives. The question at stake is the effectiveness and outcome of the work being done.

Connecting with Meaningful Images: Creating Your Own Tarot Card

We'd like to suggest that you take some time to notice how you personally connect with and experience visual imagery, and to reflect on which images are important in your life. You can do this in part by thinking about the impact of photos or art in advertisements, videos, or magazines that grab your attention. Look inward and notice the visual mental images that you see in your mind's eye or dreams. Which images do you see as "good" or beautiful and which do you see as "bad" or distasteful? What does your selection of art reveal about you?

Some years ago we offered a college course on the Tarot in which each student's work included making a Tarot card of his or her own choosing in a collage-like format. The results were stunning. The visual images on the cards spoke directly from the hearts of the designers.

To help you connect with the power of images, we suggest that you create your own Tarot card(s) using a collage technique. You may or may not want to start by finding words that express a meaningful message for your card. You can pick from traditional Tarot card titles or make up ones that suit your taste and present mood. Once you've decided on your card's title, the theme for your card's art will naturally reveal itself. After that, you can move into production mode. Gather interesting and meaningful clips of personal photos, art, or newspaper or magazine clippings, or free, public domain digital downloads or words. You can type or handwrite your own soul-touching messages on your card. Or you can do the same thing with a drawing or photo program on a computer screen.

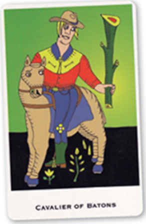
If you're using paper instead of a computer to do your art, find some glue and assemble your collage by putting together your collection of artist clips, drawings, and messages in a meaningful pattern on a piece of cardstock or canvas. The size and background color of your card is your choice.

Once finished, stand back and look at your collage. What does it seem to say? Take as long as you need to reflect on what messages both its individual pieces and the whole card may hold for you. Some of its parts may speak to you in a different way than they did before they became part of the collage. After all, as Max Wertheimer, the founder of gestalt psychology said, "The whole is different from the sum of its parts."

Next we will look at some specific ways of using the cards that can be useful for the whole porridge pot of psychotherapists, counselors, personal coaches, Tarot readers, and anyone else who wants to experience more of the powerful possibilities contained within them.

2.

WHAT DOES EACH CARD SAY TO YOU?

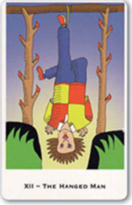


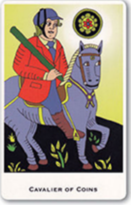
Every new student of the Tarot wonders about the best way to learn to use the cards. Although there are various ways to work and play with the Tarot, a few suggestions can help no matter how you want to use them.

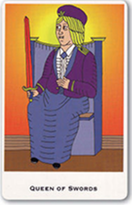
When we ask therapists whether they would like to try using the Tarot in their work, a common reply is, "Yes, but I don't know the meanings of the cards and I don't have time to study them." Of course it would be wonderful if we all had unlimited time to read and study any subject that captures our interest, but most of us have a long list of responsibilities and stacks of bills to pay. Amid the consuming job of building our careers, we seldom have enough time to develop all of our interests.

If you don't have time to learn seventy-eight card meanings as you juggle personal and professional demands, but you'd like to include the Tarot in your practice, the following suggestions can help you learn to discuss card associations without formal study. You'll need to invest some time in practicing or "playing" with your deck, but you can learn at your own pace. This course of study does not require a structured time frame. You can follow the suggestions below whenever you feel inspired to look at your cards, or even when you just need a break from your everyday concerns.

With a little effort and the wish to succeed, you will learn the art of card reading. It's important to replace most "I can't" doubts that you might have with a positive approach, like "I can do this." Building Tarot expertise results from the desire and willingness to learn from your experience with the cards. Your response to a card's image and making note of what you feel, sense, or see in its symbols is a splendid teacher. Don't expect to become a master of the cards overnight. Day by day you'll learn about them through your personal experience and reflections. You might even start right now. Take a minute or two to look at each of the three cards from Major Tom's unique *Tarot of Marseilles Deck* that follows. While you're looking at them, see if you find a message or insight that has some value for you in one or more of them. Noticing your reactions to them is a start to learning something about them.

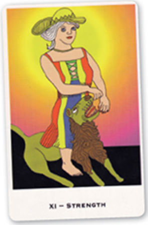






Viewing the Cards in Different Ways

To show two very different ways of working with the cards, we offer the following analysis of the Major Arcana card "Strength," comparing a traditional interpretation of this card and a representational reading. The two ways of viewing this card demonstrate some of the differences between viewing a card through its potential divinatory meanings and exploring it as a reflection of your own or your client's personal experiences and associations. At this point we're not describing methods of using the cards in therapy or counseling or divination. We're talking about getting a sense of what the card is about.



First, here is our short version of a more traditional interpretation of the Major Arcana card Strength. This card, attributed by Kabalists to *Teth*, the ninth letter of the Hebrew Alphabet connected with the mystery of the Tree of Knowledge, is numbered eight in the *Rider Waite Coleman Smith Deck* and numbered eleven in the *Tarot of Marseille*. This card has the privilege of being placed in different positions depending on the esoteric orientation of the deck creator.

Above the maiden's head is a lemniscate, the visual symbol for infinity that looks like the number eight lying on its side. In this deck, it forms the brim of her hat. Besides suggesting infinite possibilities, it also refers to the universal balance of action and reaction, giving and receiving, eternity in the now. Additionally, it tells us that this card's figure, (in most decks a maiden) has vitality and fortitude connected to transcendent, unconditional all-loving consciousness. By calming and closing the mouth of the lion, (or is she opening it?), the maiden shows discipline over untamed instincts. Her compassion and courage is the power that conquers fear.

Also, the majestic lion, symbol for the Sun sign Leo, celestial royalty of the stars, cosmically points to a connection with the fifth zodiac house and the heart, spine, creativity and children. The only astrological sign ruled by the Sun, Leo symbolizes a potent force that helps us take a winning approach to life and conquer challenges by turning them into positive experiences. This reflects a harmonious connection between dominance and submission when love is the ruling force. Common key meanings for this card are having or developing the strength to overcome obstacles, finding the courage to love or to use your creativity, and getting in touch with your personal power or will to succeed. As we will see, however, depending on the querent or client, it might mean something very different. A symbol needs to be interpreted in a way that fits a person's situation and present attitude in life.

All this may seem like a lot to digest, perhaps because the card description above requires some knowledge of both astrology and the Kabbalah. Not all Tarot readers use astrology or discuss the Kabbalah, (depending on your inclinations, you can research them or not), but as you study the cards you will surely come across interpretations that include various mystical correlations and their age-old astrological connections.

A Different Kind of Interpretation

Now by contrast, here is a sample interpretation of the Strength card viewing it through a looking glass of personal experience. We are imagining that the viewer has never seen the card and has no understanding of traditional card meanings. The comments below are an impromptu response to the question: "What do you see in the card?"

After viewing the card silently for several minutes the client replies:

> I love the word "strength." It reminds me to strive to be more confident and assertive. The woman is brave enough to straddle a lion. I wish I could be that strong instead of running away from whatever makes me nervous. I'm sure my love life would be better if I didn't panic and run because I'm afraid I'll be rejected. If I could be more like the woman in that card, I wouldn't let my vulnerability overrule my confidence and trust. I see an infinity symbol above her head that makes me think she's a spiritual being. Perhaps this card has something to do with the Hindu goddess of strength, Durga, who rides the lion. Because I see so much yellow, it makes me think of a sunny day and feel hopeful. The reddish-brown mane makes me think of being fiery and adventurous. And of Carl Jung's *Red Book*. Some of these symbols I've even seen in my dreams.

These reactions are more personal than the traditional meanings for the Strength card. When two people are asked to share their personal associations, they might have opposite, or nearly opposite, responses to the same card. In a nontraditional reading, there are no rules or "shoulds" about a card's symbolism. Its meaning comes alive in the moment that it triggers something important in the person getting the reading.

The Role of Numbers

In divinatory readings, people often ask about the meaning of the numbers on the cards. We go into that deeply in Chapter Fourteen. For now, you might reflect on how you relate to different numbers. For example: What is your lucky number? Do you have an unlucky number? Are some numbers more important to you than others? Why? You can make a list with the numbers 1 to 10. Next to each number write a few words describing your association to it. For example:

One: "I'm number one, the first!"
Two: "Me and my boyfriend make two; relationships."
Three: "My favorite number."
Four: "Four equal sides make a square."
Five: "I have five keys."
Six: "Six is sex-y."
Seven: "My winning number."
Eight: "Lucky number of good fortune for the Chinese."
Nine: "I'm taking nine classes."
Ten: "Reminds me of the month I was born, October."

Without learning numerology, you can reflect on your personal numeric associations. They will filter into your readings and card discussions.

Thinking about your associations with colors can be equally useful. What pops into your mind when you see the color blue, or for that matter any other color? Because color is on every card, unless you are using a black and white deck, it becomes one measure for how you feel in relation to viewing an image. If you are so inclined, you can make a list of colors in one column and then note your associations with each in a parallel column. Soon you will find that this simple exercise benefits your practice. Here are two examples of linking feelings with color:

- Red is often associated with blood, the life force, and heat of passion; also anger.
- Blue is frequently connected to the sky, and expansiveness, and the flow of emotions.

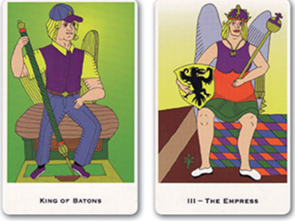
When the time seems right, you can continue thinking about how you associate each color with feelings and ideas.

Three Essential Keys to Learning the Tarot

- Be patient with your progress.
- Invoke your inner optimist.
- Practice, and have fun!

Learning Each Card's Meaning

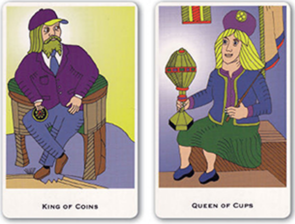
When some people who want to use the cards for divination begin to learn the Tarot, they start solely with the twenty-two Major cards. There are so many Minor Arcana cards that learning all fifty-six of them can be daunting. However, if you intend to do representational counseling, therapy, or readings as described in the coming chapters, you don't need to memorize the card's meanings and it will help your work to use your entire deck.



It's useful to have your cards nearby when you read this section so that you can practice with them as you consider the following ideas. The suggested activities offer ways to obtain personal insights into the cards without referring to any customary "How to Read the Tarot" manual. Letting your thoughts be your guide, you'll learn about the cards through your own associations to them.

Twelve Activities to Help You Design Your Tarot Environment

1. Make a daily or weekly practice of placing a card on your dresser and causally glance at it as you walk by. You might even dialogue with it. What does it say to you? What is most interesting about it or most important to you at that moment?
2. Free-associate any meanings that you connect with each card. Does the image remind you of anyone you know, or any event or situation? Does anything seem unusual or contradictory in a way that might point to hidden currents of thought or feeling? You might even try this suggestion with either the King of Batons or the Empress from Major Tom's deck right now!
3. Find the symbols and colors in each card that stand out to you. Also look at what forms leap out from a card's background. What do you associate with these images?
4. Does any other aspect of a card, such as title or gender, offer clues to possible meanings for you?
5. What message does each card personally send to you?
6. Reflect on the moods evoked in you as you view a card. Do you find anything amusing, distressing, confusing, or perplexing?
7. Embody the statement you find in the card in your posture, gestures, movements, voice, or all of the above. Imagine that you are that statement. What does your body tell you? What do you discover or uncover about yourself and/or the card?
8. Place two cards side-by-side and look at their differences and similarities. Do the figures look at one another or do they look away? What might they be looking at? How do they relate or "speak" to one another? Again, here are two more cards so you can try this now:



9. Notice when you find the same symbol in more than one card. Are the cards that share the same symbol linked in any way? If so, how? (Anything that seems to you to be a symbol can be one for you.)
10. Do you recognize any legend, universal meaning, archetype, or dream that might be connected with an image on the card?
11. Meditate on one card at a time. What do you feel or observe emotionally or mentally?
12. Keep a Tarot journal (see section that follows).

Your Personal Experience of the Cards

Perhaps viewing a card brings up memories that make you want to dance or go outside for a walk. Maybe a card gives you a feeling that suggests putting your cards away for now. Be open-minded and flexible about your reactions. No one else is an authority about how an image makes you feel. No reaction to a card is wrong. Let your own voice, whether it be confident or shaky, tell the unique story of how you personally relate to each card's imagery, symbolism, and possible implications.

Keeping a Tarot Journal

In a Tarot journal, if it pleases you to keep one, you can make note of your spontaneous experiences and associations with each card. Does a card inspire you, puzzle you, or make you feel anxious? Write down your reactions and reflections. Perhaps you'd like to write a poem about the images on a card or explain why you like or dislike a certain one. If you enjoy crafting, you can cut words, phrases, or pictures out of a magazine or newspaper that embody your responses and paste them into your journal.

Don't imagine that a journal entry has to be long. It might be, if you feel so inclined. Or you might have a passing thought that takes only a few words or lines to record. Sometimes just one sentence can capture the essence of an idea or insight. Give each entry a brief title that will stand out when you look back through the journal. In the future, just scanning through the titles may be useful to you.

There are many possible items to include in your journal. If you record your first reactions to a card or its title, you are almost guaranteed to be surprised when in the future you look back and read them. Your feelings evoked by the images are likely to develop and change once you have more experience with the cards. When you include your personal reactions in your journal, you'll be witnessing how your life evolves in time. The overall theme of your writing will be colored by the moods of your internal dialogues. Tarot images or symbols that appear in your dreams capture subconscious insights that you may want to remember. You can journal about any of your thoughts concerning emotional, psychic, spiritual, or other connections you notice or think are important. If you wish, you can make notations about:

- What your intuition tells you about each card.
- What your logic tells you about a card.
- The ways a card speaks to your heart.
- How an image inspires a past memory, future hope, or a spiritual or magical feeling.
- How a card helps you cultivate a relationship with your inner self.
- Whatever else occurs to you.

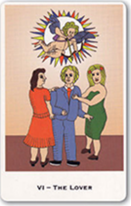
There isn't any "must include" list. Instead of writing with a pen, you can use colored pencils, paints, stamp art, or a keyboard or keypad. Instead of writing in prose, you can write in outline form. You can include what you wish and organize your ideas in any way that makes sense. You don't have to follow the organization of ideas that we present here. Your journal is your own creation and it lets you review your unique journey with the Tarot. You will be expanding your awareness each time you write and read what you've written.

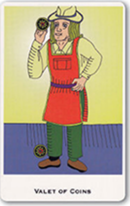
Also, when you are beyond the initial stage of learning about each card and are doing readings or counseling for yourself or others, you can follow the guidelines we've suggested and take notes about what was most significant during a session. You might want to draw a picture, or take notes that describe your reaction to a card. What stood out? What evoked the strongest energy? What unique life experiences were discussed? Your journal can become a treasure house of personal history, your secret diary, and unique slant on life that you may enjoy looking at for years to come.

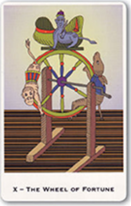
The following example illustrates a weekly entry for Jennifer, whom we met at the beginning of Chapter One:

Journal Notes

Date and time of reading: *2/3/15 @ 11:30 a.m.*
Place: *New Age Fair*
Name of person getting reading: *Jennifer Robins*
Age: *42*
Divinatory or Representational Session: *Div*
What cards were drawn? *The Lover, Valet of Coins, Wheel of Fortune*
How were they placed on the table? *In a straight row.*
What topics were discussed? *Stressful communications with boyfriend as another woman tries to lure him away.*






X – The Wheel of Fortune

Noteworthy Information: *Jennifer seemed to open up and discuss her emotions when we began to compare her relationship to the images of the male and females on the Lover card. She especially liked the image of the Valet of Coins. She left the reading wanting to strengthen and heal their communications and open up a richer relational world instead of feeling hopeless about her connection with a man she described as "looks hot, but feels cool to the touch."*

My reaction: *Jen's story evolved quickly once we started discussing what the cards meant to her in relation to her love life.*

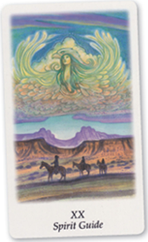
You might want to photocopy blank copies of the journal template found in Appendix 1, or electronically cut and paste them, or create your own journal template and then make copies. Create the journal that will be most useful to you.

If you don't want to journal, don't worry. It's not a "have to do." Follow your Tarot journey wherever it takes you. Be confident that you are gaining something each time you explore the meaning of a card. Your personal path evolves as you follow your passion and your own inclinations about how to proceed.

Now we move to looking at the character of the relationship between a querent or client and a reader or counselor. Whether in a brief reading or long-term therapeutic work, noticing the character of this relationship can have great value. When a person transfers thoughts and feelings from a past relationship onto a present one, it can interfere with an accurate perception of reality. What are some specific dimensions of this? Turn the page to see how cards can become springboards for discussing emotional perceptions.

3.

TRANSFERENCE: WHO IS THERE WITH YOU?



Martha and Al, who just celebrated their first anniversary, are having relationship problems. Martha acts toward Al in some of the ways she used to act toward her first husband Jim, and she thinks that some of Al's mannerisms and expressions mean the same thing Jim meant by them. When Jim said, "I'm going to town this afternoon," it meant "I'm going out by myself and I don't care for company." When Al says, "I'm going out," she assumes that he means the same thing and she feels uncared for, even though he usually means, "and I'd be glad to have you come along, too." A couple's reading or counseling session with Al and Martha that uses card imagery in a representational manner can be a starting point with such misunderstandings.

On occasion when we meet someone, consciously or unconsciously, they remind us of someone we knew in an earlier period of our life—or maybe even last week. As a result, we may feel and act toward them as we felt and acted toward the person in our past. We imagine that they think and feel as that old acquaintance (or boss or spouse or lover) would have thought or felt. A similar dynamic can actually be a valuable, and sometimes even essential, part of a reading or therapeutic session. Close attention to how a person makes contact, watching and hearing whether the person responds to "others" as they really are instead of partly confusing their perceptions of them with figures ("ghosts") from their past is a useful tactic.

There is a saying that when a couple comes in for counseling, there are at least six people in the room: the couple and both of each partner's parents. Add the counselor or reader and that makes seven. Depending on the person's life history, in single-parent families or those with multiple parental figures, there may be fewer people, or more.

Sigmund Freud made such observations a central focus of his approach. His concept of "transference" assumed that each patient transfers their mental and emotional responses to one or more important people from their past or present life onto the psychoanalyst. As the relationship between client and analyst evolves, gradually the person learns to respond to the analyst in realistic ways and then take those new ways of relating into interactions with others. You might not have the luxury of the time that such a process sometimes takes. Nonetheless, a person's responses to you, and yours to him or her, can profoundly affect the character, quality, and success of your work.

In traditional psychoanalysis, the term "transference" refers just to the patient's projections and actions in regard to the analyst. But actually, almost everyone engages in transference toward a spectrum of people in their lives. As you saw with Martha and Al, this is often an issue in marriage and many other relationships.

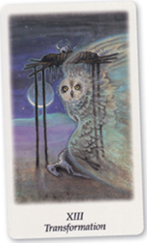
When a person walks into your consulting room or up to your table, note your first impressions. Right from the start of your first encounter pay attention to how the person relates to you from that moment until the end of the session: warmly and openly, or as an all-knowing authority, or in a guarded and suspicious way, or a tightly controlled manner? Is his or her manner importuning, seductive, authoritarian, skeptical, obsequious, cool, or warm? What does that suggest about the implications of the cards you pull? What strengths or deficiencies in communication and other social skills do you feel in the connection between you that occurs during your time together? That probably offers clues to his or her way of being with other people, too. Shyness, or fear of looking directly into your eyes, is information that can help you expand the insights that come from his or her comments. It also gives you clues about this person's likely issues and strengths in relationships with others. It offers guidance about how you might best guide your work together.

There is, of course, the delicate matter of what lies hidden inside the mind. Some of what you see and hear on the outside will be different from a person's interior reality. Carl Jung called our facial expressions and behavioral patterns that we display to others "the persona." Many people never really learn that what others wear on their face for the public eye to see may hide very different feelings, emotions, and motives that lie lurking in their depths, but reactions to the card imagery will often help reveal the underlying realities.

Also it's important to take a few moments to check inwardly with yourself. What thoughts and feelings are stirred in you by this person's manner? Do you feel drawn to help a needy soul, inclined to be reserved and distant, or what? In psychological language, this is the *counter-transference*. Every reader, counselor, or psychotherapist has his or her own interests, inclinations, beliefs, attitudes, and even prejudices. All these affect what happens in a session.

The responses that a person triggers in you may be much like those that he or she tends to trigger in others. With due discretion on your part, sharing how you respond, or mentioning what you see or feel in this person's behavior, may make a valuable contribution to your discussion. Conversely, if a person is overly sensitive, he or she might be alarmed by such straightforwardness, and become guarded. Your in-the-now intuition about how to best communicate with someone is often your most trustworthy guide.

You can also learn from the way a person communicates. The particular words being shared and how they are being used can be a treasure chest of useful information. For instance, when you notice that someone makes a comment, and then quickly moves away from it, that can be a signal that points to a crucial "What happened?" question. Here's a real life example. The client, Anita, had selected the "Transformation" card from a face-up *Vision Quest Deck* (in most decks the equivalent card is called "Death") and was speaking of the hard time she had discussing deep feeling with her father. She moved to a brief comment about her sister, and then returned to her father.



Therapist: "You mentioned a few words about your sister and then quickly jumped back to talking about your father. What happened with your sister?"

Client: [Hesitation ... then] "She ... she overdosed on drugs and died last year. She was my best friend."

This comment was a signal for the central work of the session to begin. The discussion we had been having about the woman's insensitive father vanished in a cloud of smoke and the rest of our time dealt with the client's relationship with her sister.

Listening to hear the quality and character of any comment, especially unusual ones, is also helpful. It may alter the tone of the discussion about what the cards mean to that person. Often it's important to encourage even a simple response, "Yes, that fits," or even, "and it reminds me of ..." Or alternatively, "No, that's off the mark for me, but what your comment does point to is ..." In either case, any personal response, whether framed as an observation, a guess, a hypothesis, or an imagined scenario, opens up a broad channel of communication and awareness that goes beyond a simple answer.

The Querent or Client and You

What signs do you usually look for in others that tell you something about the attitude exhibited toward life, you, and probably at least some others as well? The following brief activity can make the above question more concrete. If you're willing, try this right now.

Think about the conscious and unconscious signs and signals people offer to give you information about them. You can do this from memory, but don't use vague generalities like "reading their energy," "body language" or "paralanguage." ("*Paralanguage* is a term that includes tone of voice, choice of language, and patterns of movement"). Be specific.

Here are two examples:

- She sticks out her chest, pulls her shoulders upward into a high, rigid position, and in a parody of exaggerated power, peppers her comments with profanity.
- He looks downward, avoiding eye contact, speaks in a low voice that sounds almost choked, and repeatedly gestures with open palms

facing upward that seem to say, "but I've no idea what I could do about it."

Take pen and paper or open your Tarot journal or a note-taking file, and jot down two or more examples of your own. Base these on your own remembered observations and experiences. Or go out for a walk and observe people. What nonverbal signals alerted—or alert—you to each person's state of mind?

Now, what are at least two signals you notice in yourself that may tell you something about your own reactions to someone who sits down at your table or walks into your office? Do you have trigger points that affect your reactions? If so, how do you react, and how do these reactions tend to affect the way your querent or client responds to you?

Again, take time to think and then jot down several examples. If examples don't come easily, then start to notice your own internal and external behavior with others more attentively. That will give you clues about your way of being in the world and how you sometimes tend to interact with some of your clients.

How the Cards and the Client or Querent Connect

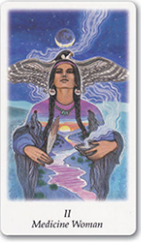
Many books and websites explain the meanings of every one of the seventy-eight Tarot cards. The authors who describe them tend to be mostly consistent with each other, but some go off on their own unique tangents. When you've read a few books (including this one) you'll have a pretty good idea of meanings universally ascribed to the cards, and how they connect with each other. For the daring, this can enable a person to be on their path to becoming a reader.

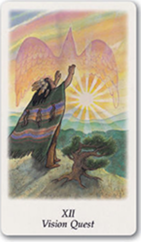
Here's something to consider: Are you going to be strictly a reader of the cards, or use your cards to read people? A friend recalls, "The worst reading I ever received was from a very bright young man who knew his deck intimately. He laid down a complex spread and told me everything he imagined I'd ever need to know about the meaning of each card. I genuinely admired his deep knowledge of the cards and their diverse meanings. Too bad not much of what he said had anything to do with me."

Why? Because he left out four of the five major elements of an effective reading. These essentials are:

1. Knowledge of the cards and the structure of the deck.
2. Awareness of the querent's reactions to the cards.
3. Watching and hearing the querent's posture, gestures, movements, manner of speaking, and general attitudes.
4. Alertness to perceptions and intuitions or guesses about the querent, based on observations, sensitivities, aptitudes, and knowledge of human nature; and
5. Crafting a beneficial querent and reader relationship from the moment of initiating interaction to the conclusion of the reading.

Let's look more closely at the reading mentioned just prior. "After the young man asked if I wanted a reading and I accepted the invitation," continues the recipient, "he laid out the cards in a spread. From that moment on, he never looked up from his cards. He did not look at my facial expressions or body reactions. He did not ask how a card did or did not fit with what was happening in my life. In short, the reading was a monologue about the meanings of the cards."


II
Medicine Woman


XII
Vision Quest

Unless they are improbably brilliant, monologues can be deadly. Dialogues are often more helpful, especially when they include all five components listed here, and bear useful messages on the wings of the Tarot. Now let's examine them more closely as we return to the relationship between client and facilitator. The Native American cards remind us that the facilitator might be not just a reader or psychologist, but also a shaman, medicine woman, or grandmother, guru, or pastoral counselor.

> A medicine woman, her eyes staring into the soul of her client, lets him discuss the card he has chosen, the Vision Quest.
>
> "You know," he says, "I'm looking for something to give my life greater meaning. For me, it isn't getting rich. I make a good living. But I feel somehow empty inside."
>
> "Perhaps you can't find what you're looking for because you don't know what it is?"
>
> "Exactly. I'm looking for clarity and inner peace, But I don't know where or how to find them."

Their exploration continued. As he was preparing to leave, the medicine woman said, "Of course I can't tell you where your quest will lead you. Only you can discover that. But these may help."

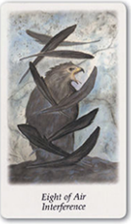
She thumbed through her deck and handed him three cards.

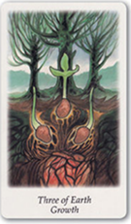
"Look carefully at these cards and memorize them. Then keep them in your mind and heart as companions and reminders."

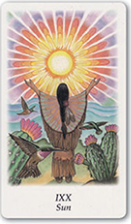
"How is this Eight of Air, Interference, supposed to help me?"

"It is to remind you that there will always be people and situations and demands trying to pull you off your path, even after you see your vision clearly. You will feel it in your body. When you do, draw away and return to your quest. The second card, the Three of Earth, Growth, tells you to remember that discovering your quest and realizing it takes time. Diligently water the seeds you will plant, care for yourself and others, and follow your quest without fail once you know what it is. The third card, the Sun, prompts you to hold the sun in your heart. Find things to appreciate in everyone, and all beings, and in yourself."

He thanked her and left. As their encounter shows, a reading is likely to be useful only if the cards are discussed in a manner that's relevant for the person. Had the medicine woman only told him the meanings of the cards without exploring his feelings about them, he would have walked away with nothing. At some point in either a divinatory reading or a counseling session, you can invite the person to share his or her thoughts about the cards, telling how one fits or doesn't, or whether it's necessary to pick another card for clarification.







Also, because everyone is unique, the very same cards can have radically different meanings for different people. A central part of the reader's job is to assess *how* a given card relates to a given person. Suppose that a young woman with hunched shoulders speaks in a barely audible voice and shoots furtive glances right and left as she pulls the Major Arcana card titled Strength. In her case, discussing this card can involve looking at how she gives away her power and submits to others' wishes when she doesn't want to. It might also involve focusing on ways she could develop her potential strengths. Looking at the rest of her cards and noticing her ways of interacting with you and the images will provide clues about what those potential strengths are and what she can do to develop them.

By contrast, the next person to sit down may be confident and brash to the point of being overbearing. If he pulls the same card, it may mean that he ought to pay more attention to reducing his domineering manner that causes others to challenge him or close communications with him.

When explaining the traditional meanings of a card, its messages come alive when they are read in relation to the person's presence, (body language, voice tones, clothing style—such as a surfer or banking executive), his or her apparent emotional and relational dynamics, and way of thinking.

Also, each reader or therapist does well to draw on his or her own constellation of abilities. For example, if you're a psychic and you can close your eyes and intuitively "see" or "feel" places and events in someone's life, or if you've been trained as a nurse, and have a strong foundation of knowledge about good health and healing, you can draw on your skills to enliven your readings. Part of your task lies in assessing your own strengths and aptitudes, and intuiting or thinking about how you can use them to enrich your work.

Chances are that you are already attentive to some or all the elements of a good reading and may or may not realize it. Keeping them in mind can make your sessions more effective whether you are doing a divinatory or representational session, and whether you are working with an individual, a couple or a family.

From Accurate to Useful

An *accurate* session is one that identifies and articulates real events in a person's life and consciousness. A *useful* session is one that communicates insights in such a way that the person finds them relevant and helpful. Even if an observation is accurate, if it triggers someone's defensiveness so that he or she refuses to hear, it's not very helpful.

Just as therapists go through psychotherapy as part of their training, a reader can go to other readers to experience varied approaches to getting their cards read. Receiving readings from others provides immediate feedback about how different readers handle the cards and interact. You can also do readings for yourself and contemplate your own cards to increase your understanding. How do you use images to gain access into your own depths? What questions might you ask yourself that make you more reflective or receptive in the moment? Can you find new avenues of insight to guide yourself in understanding the "why," "what," or "how" of your situation and reactions? Can the Four of Air enhance and enrich your understanding of the Two of Water—or vice versa?

Two of Water
Love

Four of Air
Contemplation

Your work is likely to be most effective when you allow your knowledge, intuition, and awareness of what is occurring to be totally focused in the moment on what you see, hear, and feel from the other; what's happening in you, and your sense of the relationship among you, the other person (if you are working with another), and the cards. Spontaneity is likely to naturally come into play to inspire an authentic and meaningful experience. Your table or office, however, is just one tiny bit of the other person's world.

The Field and the Life-Space

Jungian analyst James Hillman speaks of his frustration sitting in his Dallas office, spending an hour a week trying to help a client, then sending her back out into a culture that has 167 hours a week to drive her crazy. We must "re-place" the person in the world, says Hillman. "The 'bad place I am in' may refer not only to a depressed mood or an anxious state of mind; it may refer to a sealed-up office tower where I work, a set-apart suburban subdivision where I sleep, or the jammed freeway on which I commute between the two."

The first psychologist to move from taking the classical individual gestalt psychology of learning and perception into the broader spheres of personality and social life was Kurt Lewin, who taught at the University of Berlin and later in America.[1] One of his concepts was the "field." That means the physical, interpersonal, and emotional space in which a person's life takes place. Although different practitioners define the field in different ways, Lewin offered one central defining principle: "A person's interest organizes the field."

Lewin also had a more inclusive concept that he called the *life-space*. So far as we know he never explicitly defined the difference between the field and the life-space. Here is our distinction: The life-space includes all the places and people that are part of your present life, all the places where you have lived and been in the past, and even places that are part of your consciousness as a result of reading or seeing pictures or watching movies or hearing others tell stories about them. For a dedicated reader of novels, or a TV and movie buff, the vicarious life-space may be as significant as the physical one. In brief, the life-space is the entire physical and mental world within which a person's existence takes place. Of course some aspects of a person's life-space will be salient at the time of a given session and others will not. This opens the door to asking the person to select one or more cards from a face-up deck that represent elements in his or her larger life-space that limit it, expand it, or in some other way feel relevant to present concerns. Where a person's mind spends much of its time may differ from where that person's body spends most of its time.

When two college students talked about their daily physical life-spaces to each other, one chose the six of cups to describe a neat small mental map centered on her campus and the part of town near it.