

# Grief and the Expressive Arts

Practices for Creating Meaning

*Edited by*

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## Kinaesthetic Imagining

Ilene A. Serlin

### DESCRIPTION

Kinaesthetic imagining is an existential/depth form of dance movement therapy in which body-based images create a non-verbal narrative or text that has metaphoric, symbolic, and transformative levels of meaning (Serlin, 1996, 2010). It is compounded from the Greek word "kinesthesia" which means "sensation of movement" (Greek: *kinae*—movement; + *easthesia*—sensation). "Imagining" is an active process by which images are generated and formed. Therefore, kinaesthetic imagining is the process by which the perceptions arising from moving muscles generate and make explicit imaginative structures of consciousness. As embodied narrative or action *poiesis*, kinaesthetic imagining is a dynamic process by which people often compose themselves and form their lives. Since grief often stays stuck in the body, moving through the images and feeling the feelings in the body is crucial for healing (Serlin, 2013).

Kinaesthetic imagining has a simple three-part structure that includes (a) check-in and warm-up; (b) amplification; (c) making sense (action hermeneutics):

1. Check-in and warm-up. Use of breath, sound, stretching, and circle dance movements will warm up the body, bring body awareness and consciousness to self and others, create the container, and mobilize healing energies.
2. Amplification. Repetition and deepening the emerging themes explores images and emotions that arise from individual, dyadic, and group movements. Participants have an opportunity to develop their own personal healing images, stories, and mythologies.
3. Making meaning (action hermeneutics). This is a time to wind down, internalize the imagery, reflect on its meaning, let go, and make a transition into real life.

### CASE STUDY

Marta is a 35-year-old Israeli student who joins a course in group process through movement as part of her master's degree. The class takes place during the 2006 Lebanon War, and group members are experiencing great losses and fears as sons and husbands are called to the front. During one morning check-in, Marta reports that she has had a significant and powerful dream the night before, and offers to share it with the group. I ask the group if they would like to hear and work with the dream, using movement and imagery to amplify its images.

Check-in and warm-up. When they agree, I ask them to spread out on the mats on the floor and get into a relaxation pose on their backs or sides. I lower the lights, and spread out some props on