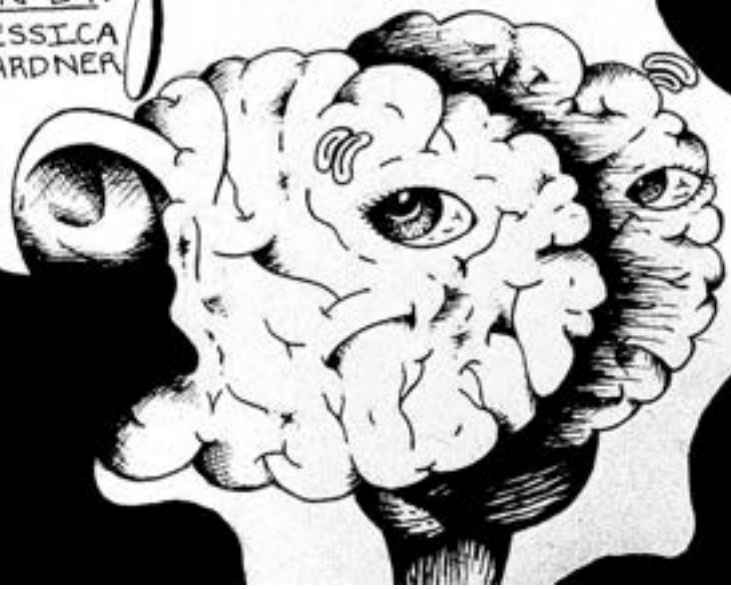
# A BOOK on PERSONALIZED Metaphor

WRITTEN BY:
JESSICA GARDNER



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## Introduction

This work, *A Book on Personalized Metaphor*, examines the way metaphor exists in the world and how metaphor has become indoctrinated into mainstream language; metaphors are used to better articulate true meaning and emotion. This book reflects upon the physical, social, spiritual, and emotional meaning behind personalized metaphors; the metaphors humans create to make sense of themselves, their emotions, and the world around them. In order to examine personalized metaphor, a personalized metaphor was created: “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly” will be discussed throughout this book to analyze the physical, social, spiritual, and emotional impact metaphors have. To do this effectively, art pieces have been created for each chapter to not only visually capture the metaphor as it applies to each section but to demonstrate how metaphor aids in the cognition of language as well as the interpretation of art and creative ventures. In all, this book demonstrates the connection of art and metaphor as well as how it applies to therapy and the healing process; personalized metaphor becomes the basis of healing in Art Therapy.

# A Book on Personalized Metaphor

## Chapter One

## Introduction, Description, and Uses of Metaphor:

## An Introduction of Metaphor Within Life

Jessica Gardner

Department of Art Therapy, Capital University

Art 226: Imagery and Metaphor

Professor Harris

April 25, 2022

## Author Note

Jessica Gardner, Department of Art Therapy, Capital University.

I have no conflicts of interest to expose.

Correspondence concerning this book should be addressed to Jessica Gardner, 2841 Chatsworth Way, Reynoldsburg OH. 43068. Email: jgardner46@capital.edu.

**Abstract**

In chapter one of this book, the world of metaphor is examined; metaphor is explained and then defined in three different ways. It demonstrates how metaphors mean different things to different individuals. Furthermore, metaphor is explained by how it exists in the world. Dead metaphors, everyday metaphors, and primary metaphors are explained; the main reason why metaphor exists is so individuals can evaluate the subconscious mind and make connections to build mental images as well as create patterns. The five different types of metaphor are then explained which goes into an introduction of the metaphor that will be examined in this book; the kind of metaphor as well as the reasoning behind said metaphor are evaluated. Lastly, the target and source domain are determined, creating the imagery of the metaphor itself.

*Key Words:* metaphor, dead metaphor, primary metaphor, key metaphor, everyday metaphor, prominent metaphor, silence, loud

**Figure 1**

*Headache*

*Note.* Artwork created by Jessica Gardner. Ink Pen and Marker on Bristol Paper, 9x12”.

## Commentary

The artwork created for this chapter is an analysis of the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” as it connects to the idea of metaphor as a whole; how metaphors exist in the world and how they become the basis for visual imagery as well as language. Figure 1 above portrays a literal image of the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly.” A brain is pictured with eyes to create the illusion of a face; this idea is pushed further by the comically large ear on the side of the brain. From the ear, a large cloud erupts representing the abundance of thoughts that fills one’s brain and creates a sensory overload of sound. This sound isn’t real; the anxious thoughts that race through an individual’s brain can become “loud” for lack of a better term. This cloud of sound forms a container around the brain, representing how these anxious thoughts can seclude and entrap an individual in their own thoughts.

Figure 1 was created with ink pen and marker. Both mediums are dark, permanent, and demonstrate a kind of depth that is important when discussing the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly.” The permanence of these mediums also demonstrates how one’s mind can trick an individual into believing that there is no light at the end of the tunnel; that they will be stuck in an anxious loop forever. The piece is black and white contributing to the idea of “black and white” thinking the metaphor can leave an individual with; that life is either completely good or it’s all bad. Black in the piece also represents the darkness of anxious thoughts and how they can completely deteriorate a person. On the other hand, the white represents hope and clarity amongst one’s own skewed thoughts that are the cause of their sensory overload.

Together, black and white represent the uneven nature of life and its ups and downs as it applies to mental health.

In order to create this piece, basic line work was laid down in pencil first in order to properly capture the subject matter. Second, ink pen was applied to the piece to create a sense of cohesion and tie in the "black and white" mental process tied to the metaphor "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly." Then, black marker was applied to the background of the piece to add some dimension and to represent the dark place that overwhelming thoughts can place an individual into. Lastly, some shading was added to the piece as well as link work which conveys the depth of anxiety and the chaotic nature of anxious thought. In all, the comic book-like image is meant to convey the chaos of the metaphor, "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly" and the anxious feelings associated with it. The rush of "sound" coming from the ear is also meant to demonstrate the overload of thoughts in one's mind that become so abundant, they "burst" out into a fit of chaos that entraps the individual.

The idea of metaphor is simple, yet very complex. Essentially, metaphors are the imaginative act of comparing dissimilar things on the basis of some underlying principle that seems to make them one and the same. Metaphors not only create connections and deepen personal narratives; they paint vivid pictures of thoughts and emotions that help humans connect to other humans on a much more profound level. Though the idea of metaphor is fairly simple, they can be rather complex in meaning; this is why there are many ways to define metaphor and what the purpose of metaphor is in everyday life.

For example, writer Tyler Tate (2020) defines metaphor as a thing that "discloses reality"; metaphors "serve as cognitive devices for 'showing' how things actually are" through creating linkages between unlike things (Tate, p.22). On the other hand, professor and author Raymond Gozzi Jr. (1999) defines metaphor as "a bridge that leads into the unknown" and that this bridge is "applied to new situations to expand the impact of language and thought" (Gozzi Jr., p.381). Jay A. Sietz defines metaphor in structured fashion; Sietz (1997) defines metaphorical thought "as the ability to link disparate perceptual, affective, and conceptual domains such as movement, color, and shape which provides the opportunity to see unity amongst variety" (Sietz, 1997). Though all of these are valid definitions of metaphor, they vary greatly as metaphors mean different things to different people. Therefore, there are a variety of ways metaphor arises and exists in the world.

**Figure 2**

*Running Out of Time*

*Note.* Artwork created by Brinton Farrand. Oil on Canvas, 60x48".

Metaphors are completely engrained in everyday language; some are automatic to humans without much thought because they have been repeatedly used over the span of many years. These types of metaphors are automatic or "dead." These figures of speech have been used so frequently that they have lost the original imagery they once illustrated

(ex. “Time is running out”, displayed in Figure 2) Then there are everyday metaphors that have also been engrained in everyday language but compare an abstract idea to a concrete, well-understood idea (ex. “Life is a big game”).

In the world, the daily metaphors people use build a bridge between emotions and insight. A lot of metaphors stem from early development and these metaphors are primary; they analyze the subconscious mind and take from experiences of early childhood which are known to have a large impact on adult metaphor. Metaphors change and adapt as a child moves through the various phases of life and grows into an adult. The experiences an individual goes through growing up have a great impact on the adult, subconscious mind; metaphor exists to reveal the subconscious mind.

There are metaphors that are expressed over time, throughout the many twists and turns of life; these are called key metaphors. Key metaphors are created through images that are in the core of consciousness which then shape an individual’s personal metaphor. For example, a person may equate going fast with success because of a childhood memory of winning a box-car race. Figure 3 displays forgotten childhood memories that have been utilized to create a visual metaphor describing their impact in one’s life. The human brain takes mental images of important events, takes note of how they are processed by the senses and then categorizes them, creating personalized metaphors. It is through key metaphors that various layers of consciousness and emotion are revealed.

**Figure 3**

*Childhood Memories*

*Note.* Artwork created by Andrea Banjac. Acrylic on Canvas, 27.5x27.5”.

In addition to key metaphors, there are four other types of metaphor. The first, which was previously discussed, is a ‘dead’ or ‘faded’ metaphor. These metaphors have been used so frequently that they have lost their original imagery; humans use them without thought as they are a big part of normalized language (ex. “Hit the lights!”). The second type is pale metaphor. Pale metaphors create a mental image, catch people’s attention, are mildly emotional, but they don’t have any true emotional affect (ex. “We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it”). The third type is integrated metaphor; the mental image created has an emotional effect. Integrated metaphors can arouse moderate to intense feelings in the observer (ex. “She is on my last nerve!”). The last type of metaphor is prominent metaphor. Prominent metaphors have the most effect on the observer; the metaphor represents a need to express an important, inner emotional experience. These types of metaphors tend to be a reflection of past experiences, tend to change behavior, and influence perception. They tend to present a schema, or a theme individuals use to organize the information they take in from the world that surrounds them (ex. “My life is spinning out of control”). Each of these metaphors increases gradually in emotional effect on the observer and any of these types of metaphor can be a key metaphor; key metaphors simply appear throughout life and aren’t dependent on a certain level of emotional affect.

**Figure 4**

*Noise Overwhelming Music Painting*

*Note.* Artwork created by George Hunter. Acrylic on Canvas, 11.8x15.7”.

The metaphor that will be discussed throughout this book is one that applies to many individuals, in many different walks of life: “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly.” Typically, when a sound is “deafening,” it is so loud that it’s impossible to take in any other sound. Figure 4 above, paints a visual metaphor for this experience; it demonstrates how sound can be chaotic and overwhelming when experienced in abundance. Silence can be deafening when there are so many thoughts racing through one’s mind;  thoughts create imaginary “noise” that feels all too real and overwhelming. This metaphor is looking at the anxiety these “loud” thoughts create and how the anxiety becomes the only thing a person can think of.

Because the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly” will be heavily discussed in this book, it is important to determine what type of metaphor it is. This metaphor is an integrated metaphor. The image that this metaphor generates has an effect on the observer; it can arouse moderate to intense emotional feelings in the topic of anxiety and feeling overwhelmed by racing thoughts. It is not a pale metaphor because this metaphor definitely has an effect on the observer whereas pale metaphors, while they can be mildly emotional, don’t have affect. The metaphor is also not a prominent metaphor, as the emotions generated aren’t extremely expressive. The metaphor does express an overwhelming inner experience, but it’s not one of overwhelming emotion. Therefore, integrated is the best way to categorize the metaphor discussed throughout this book.

The metaphor of “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” was chosen for this book for a variety of reasons. First, it has a great personal impact. Many individuals can connect to the idea of feeling overwhelmed by racing thoughts; thoughts

about work the next day, about homework, about social interactions, about life, etc. According to Benazzi (2005), “Racing/crowded thoughts are a symptom of mental overactivity” (p. 570). One’s brain becomes overactive due to an abundance of thoughts that affect one’s daily life. Sometimes it feels impossible to sleep because of constant, loud thoughts that fill a quiet room with noise. Everyone has a way that this metaphor applies to their life and how it affects their life; this is the main reason why it was chosen for this book on personalized metaphor.

Secondly, the images the metaphor arouses can be fairly interesting. In Figure 1 above, the image is of a brain with a large ear on the side of its temporal lobe. From the ear escapes a wispy and encapsulating pool of white “sound.” It is meant to demonstrate how thoughts can completely surround an individual’s life, cloud their mind, and incapacitate one’s mental processes. Essentially, the images that “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly” arouses are both interesting and impactful. Lastly, this metaphor holds great personal importance as it is something hard to work through. The loud thoughts don’t stop automatically; it takes time to work through the overwhelming thoughts and it is an everlong journey to learn how to process them.

When looking at any metaphor, it is important to identify both the target and source domain. The target domain is a term used to describe the element that the metaphor is discussing. Therefore, the target domain of “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly” is the feeling of being overwhelmed by thoughts or the anxiety that they generate. In order to express this, the metaphor uses sound or volume level which happens to be the source domain; what is being used to discuss the element that the metaphor targets.

# A Book on Personalized Metaphor

## Chapter Two

## Connection With Self Understanding:

## Giving Meaning To Metaphor Expressed In The World

Jessica Gardner

Department of Art Therapy, Capital University

Art 226: Imagery and Metaphor

Professor Harris

April 25, 2022

## Author Note

Jessica Gardner, Department of Art Therapy, Capital University.

I have no conflicts of interest to expose.

Correspondence concerning this book should be addressed to Jessica Gardner, 2841 Chatsworth Way, Reynoldsburg OH. 43068. Email: jgardner46@capital.edu.

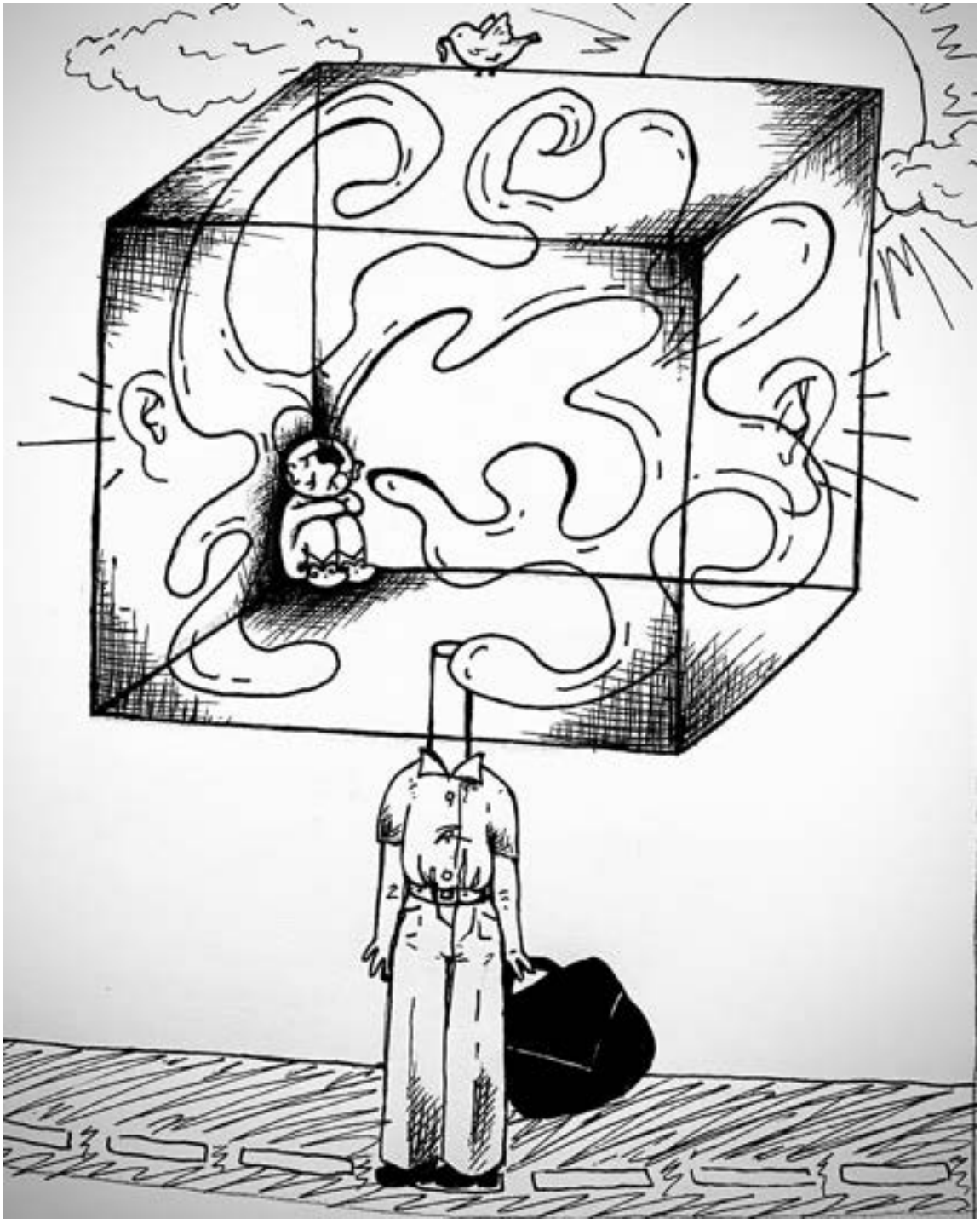
**Abstract**

In chapter two of this book, metaphor was applied to the idea of self understanding and the way one perceives the world around them. Metaphor is first explained through interpersonal relations; humans tend to use metaphors to both express affection and to categorize relationships. Furthermore, metaphor is explained through the body matrix; metaphor is used to both describe the body and to give other things body-like characteristics. From this spirituality is examined. How an individual perceives spirituality and how they incorporate spirituality into their lives will impact spiritual metaphors as well as metaphors they create for themselves in this genre. Visual metaphors will also change depending on one's spiritual beliefs; imagery for a Christian person will likely look different than that of someone who is atheist. Lastly, metaphors in relation to social systems are examined; in general, humans understand themselves through others. Visual metaphors in relation to societal systems help individuals identify with these systems, spark change, and evoke inner emotions about the world that surrounds them.

*Key Words:* metaphor, interpersonal relationships, body matrix, spirituality, societal systems, inner emotions

**Figure 5**

*Box Brain*



*Note.* Artwork created by Jessica Gardner. Ink Pen on Bristol Paper, 6x9”.

## Commentary

The artwork created for this chapter is an analysis of the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” as it connects to self-understanding; how said metaphor connects to interpersonal relations, the body matrix, and social systems humans fall into. Figure 5 above displays a character, dressed in work attire, with an abnormally large, square-shaped head. Inside the head is another smaller person, huddled in a corner with a crack in their head. From the crack escapes an abundance of flowy lines that can’t escape the square skull. This demonstrates how work or other social situations can be a trigger for the anxiety associated with the metaphor used throughout the book; the small person in the square represents the mind and how it can become a person in itself, unable to escape its chambers. It also demonstrates the metaphor’s effect on the body as these thoughts lead to a repeated cycle of anxious notions which then leads to physical symptoms such as headaches, tremors, body aches, etc.

Some of the social systems and relationships humans have can be the main cause of their anxiety. Work, for one, is especially stressful; it can be hard to turn one’s thoughts off after a long, stressful work day. Therefore, these loud overwhelming thoughts can lead to a disruption of sleep and inability to focus on the here and now. Because of the exhaustion a person may feel, their body responds in the form of physical symptoms such as headaches, irritability, body aches, nausea, shakiness; the list goes on. The large box on the character’s head is meant to demonstrate a colossal headache that seems to have no end because of the overwhelming thoughts that have no escape point. The trigger of these thoughts is the character’s work which is represented by the outfit and the large briefcase this individual is carrying; it also represents the “baggage” associated with one’s job.

Figure 5 was created all in ink pen. It is meant to demonstrate the mundane nature that work and other social systems can have when experiencing them, day in and day out without rest and rejuvenation. Ink pen also represents control, not just in the medium but in life. A large part of stress as it relates to a career is the want to control one's life, work, and outcome. Unfortunately, humans can't control everything they experience and every outcome, causing anxiety over their work. Ink pen is also very permanent and shows every slight micromovement of the hand. It mimics the lasting effects of anxiety and how anxious thoughts become a recurrent pattern in one's life.

To create this piece, basic line work in pencil was applied first to accurately depict the artistic vision. Next, line work in ink pen was applied to help the metaphor come to life. Lastly, some shading was added in pen to give the image some dimension and to help define the sharp corners of the box. The final touches on the piece were that of the sky and bird on top of the box. These represented the atmospheric perspective of the character and how to the outside viewer, they appear normal; to the character, they feel like their head is throbbing and crowded with screaming thoughts. They feel like their head is a ginormous box of loud ideas whereas everyone else thinks they are normal.

Metaphors are the basis for all understanding. According to journalist Stanley Eveling (1991), “Metaphor seems to be the means by which language is stretched to cover those cases where words fail us”(p.91). They provide a way of understanding one’s connection to others, one’s body, the spiritual self, and the social systems of the world. Metaphors not only establish a stronger connection to the inner body, they can reveal the deeper workings and meanings of everyday life; how humans connect with other humans as well as the world around them. This chapter takes a look at the impact of metaphor in understanding others, interpersonal relationships, the human body, spirituality, and society as a whole. In this way, metaphors become the way all life is understood through the use of language and imagery.

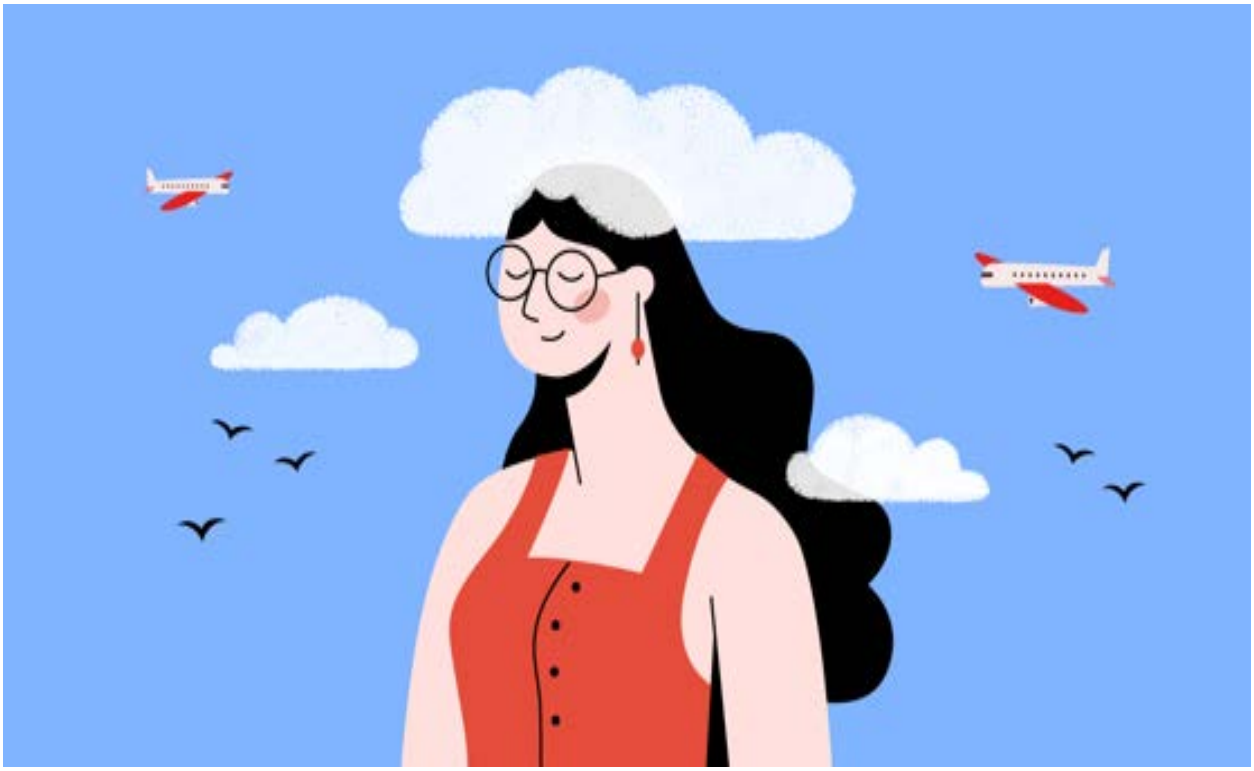
For starters, interpersonal relationships are a huge way in which humans navigate life and understand it; relationships give meaning to life. When someone is important to an individual, they tend to want to express it. People often use metaphors to express affection. For example, an individual might say that they are “in a relationship” with another person; this is a metaphor in itself. In this way, metaphor is how people build a bridge of communication with others and paint  mental pictures of innermost feelings. Of course, not all relationships are affectionate; some are much more professional in nature.

Metaphors used in professional relationships still communicate inner feelings but they tend to be more rigid; this has a lot to do with the environment people experience these professional relationships in. The same can be said for affection relationships. In fact, many metaphors having to do with interpersonal relationships have a lot to do with spatial direction and environment. This is why people feel “warm” when discussing romantic partners and describe an office as a “cold” environment; warmth is associated

with comfort, safety, and home while cold is associated with uncomfortability, judgment, and the unfamiliar. In either scenario, an individual's true feelings are expressed. The feelings of the loving relationship are compared to the comfortability of home while the feelings about the work environment are conveyed as uncomfortable which affects relationships with a boss and coworkers.

In connection with the metaphor being discussed in this book, "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly," relationships can be affected by the manifestations of the metaphor. For example, overwhelming, anxious thoughts that fill one's mind can result in seclusion; these thoughts become the only thing an individual is able to focus on. This obviously can change relationships and furthermore change the metaphors used for these interpersonal relationships. What was once positive, could turn negative because of the self-induced seclusion and anxiety this metaphor can cause. It is also in this that metaphor affects the body matrix.

**Figure 6**



*Note.* Unknown Artist, Digital Media.

In connection to interpersonal relationships, metaphors of the body can heavily relate to the orientation of the body in space. For example, where the body is located can determine how physically close a person is to something or someone as well as how mentally close they are to that said thing or person. The mind also has a large impact on how the body feels and it is through the body that humanity understands metaphor. According to Carpenter (2011), “metaphors joining body and mind reflect a central fact about the way we think: the mind uses the body to make sense of abstract concepts” (p.38). Furthermore, there can be metaphors that derive from the body and metaphors that describe the body.

Metaphors that derive from the body are source domains; they analyze what is being used to discuss the element a metaphor targets. In this case, parts of the body are used to describe other things that manifest a similar image to the body part being used. An example of a metaphor that is derived from the body is the saying "backbone of society." The "backbone" or spine is the part of the body that keeps it upright and provides strength and stability. It also plays a huge role in the ability to feel or sense touch. In other words, it is what keeps the human body upright and strong. Therefore, if something is the "backbone of society," it is sturdy and unwavering

On the other hand, metaphors that describe the body are target domains; they describe the element the metaphor is discussing. Therefore, these metaphors are describing the body. For example, if one uses the metaphor "velvet hands," they are saying that someone's hands are soft and smooth, like the texture of velvet. The hands are also something used to caress and touch others; they are usually seen as gentle and elegant. Velvet is a soft, elegant fabric. Therefore, it can easily be connected to the feel of soft, gentle hands.

Metaphors can also elicit feelings in the body and as stated before, describe the feelings of a certain body part. In Figure 6 seen above, a woman is pictured, portraying the metaphor of "head in the clouds." The head or mind of this person seems to be cloudy or in an imaginative space; the smile on the individual's face tells a positive narrative rather than a feeling of dissociation or a headache. Escaping to this imaginative realm seems to be a positive thing for this individual, rather than a negative way to escape everyday life. In the metaphor "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly," a different kind of image is provoked. In this case, it illustrates an image of a head that is

overwhelmed with “sound” coming from an overload of one’s own thoughts. Therefore, there is an inability to escape these thoughts, illustrating the image of a headache. This is seen in figure one, where the character’s head is so enlarged and filled with thoughts that are swirling around and filling up the entirety of the head.

**Figure 7**

*Landscape with Moses and the Burning Bush*

*Note.* Artwork created by Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri). Oil on Copper, 17.75x13.38”.

As metaphors are used to analyze the body matrix, they are also used to describe the inside of the body. The body is a vessel, a container that holds the spirit or spiritual side of oneself. Metaphors are used to perceive an individual’s inner spiritual workings.

There are multiple ways to define spirit. First is the nonphysical aspect of a person that contains emotion, character, and beliefs; this is often referred to as the soul of a person. The second definition ties strongly to religious beliefs; this defines spirit or a spirit as an energy that transcends the body into an afterlife or a new life. Lastly, spirituality deals with the human spirit in itself; the belief in something greater than oneself, whether that be a spiritual being, way of life, or destination after death.

The difference in how one perceives spirituality will change the metaphors associated with it. For example, a person who is religious may perceive fire in an image as something transformative and powerful. It might elicit the image of the burning bush from the Bible, as seen in Figure 7, or the flame from a lit candle. Figure 7 demonstrates the fear of the power the burning bush holds; the look on Moses' face demonstrates both fear and understanding, as he is then called to lead others into foreign land. On the other hand, a spiritual person may perceive fire as something that both gives off light and as something that takes light away through destruction; the image that arises might be a burning house or the glow around a bonfire. In either scenario, one thing can be agreed upon; fire gives off light and warmth. Though either side has different ways of expressing spirituality, neither are wrong and tend to have many similarities. It is in this that metaphor connects people on a spiritual level.

**Figure 8**

*Note.* Unknown Artist, Digital Media

As spirituality is something that can both bring people together and divide and it plays a major role in society, it is important to analyze how one's relationship to the rest of the world impacts the structure of the metaphors people create. In general, humans understand other humans through themselves. People are mirrors. Therefore, individuals understand themselves through others and understand others through themselves. This can be seen a lot in family systems. Parents tend to be a mirror for their children, so their children grow up to behave and believe in similar ways to their parents. Younger siblings tend to mirror their older siblings so they gain a better understanding of the world and how to exist in it. If people understand themselves through others, then the social systems people are a part of influence the metaphors people have and create.

Politically speaking, metaphors influence perspectives on candidates and political systems (ex. "Shake the rust off of American Foreign Policy"). Politics specifically makes use of metaphorical embellishment to aid in persuasion. According to writer Neil Lunt (2005), "Western political thought and analysis has a long tradition of eschewing metaphorical embellishment that goes back to Plato and includes Locke, Hobbes, Bentham and John Stuart Mill" (p.73). In the schooling system, metaphors influence learning, relationships, feelings of stress, and knowledge (ex. "School is the vaccine for ignorance"). When discussing race, metaphors typically depict the division of race in the world or the coming together of all races as one (ex. "I'm colorblind, I don't see color"). Furthermore, when discussing gender, metaphors often depict inequalities between different genders and characterize individuals into certain groups (ex. "She was like a delicate flower"). Therefore, metaphors having to do with various social systems not only

help people to identify with these social systems, but they also spark change, question societal standards, and evoke inner emotions.

Visual metaphors associated with societal systems do the same as well as create identity, organize the disorganized, and either unify people or disenfranchise them. This can be seen in Figure 8 above; the unity of a woman from a different religion and culture is paired with the imagery and color of the American flag. It conveys how this individual can be of this religion and still be an American citizen with the same rights as anyone else. The image provokes emotion, sparks change, and inspires deep thought; the purpose of society driven, visual metaphor.

In connection to the metaphor used throughout this book, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly”, Figure 5 conveys the pressures a stressful work environment can have on an individual. The pressures of work can lead to overwhelming thoughts and the inability to think about anything else or process any other type of sensory information. In figure one, the character sports an outfit fit for work and holds onto a briefcase as they cross the street, approaching the work building. Their head is square and enlarged, filled with an abundance of swirling thoughts coming from their inner consciousness (what the small person crouched in the corner represents). This visual metaphor takes a deeper look at the impact a societal system such as work has on the human mind and how this transcends into interpersonal relationships, the impact on one’s body, spirituality, and other social systems they are a part of. If the only thoughts an individual can think about are the ones clouding their mind with anxiety, they can’t possibly give their all in other parts of their life.

# A Book on Personalized Metaphor

## Chapter Three

## Illness and Symptoms:

## Recognizing the Symptoms of the Metaphor Within One's Life

Jessica Gardner

Department of Art Therapy, Capital University

Art 226: Imagery and Metaphor

Professor Harris

April 25, 2022

## Author Note

Jessica Gardner, Department of Art Therapy, Capital University.

I have no conflicts of interest to expose.

Correspondence concerning this book should be addressed to Jessica Gardner, 2841 Chatsworth Way, Reynoldsburg OH. 43068. Email: jgardner46@capital.edu.

**Abstract**

In chapter 3 of this book, metaphor is first applied to symptoms and illness; how humans experience and understand suffering through metaphor when other words don't suffice. Next, metaphor is examined through the defense mechanisms used to combat pain and struggle caused by illness. Lastly, an examination is done on how metaphor arises and changes from life experiences like that of illness; how these changes in metaphor also alter one's personality. Through each of these main ideas, the metaphor of "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly" is looked at closely in connection to generalized anxiety disorder. Visual metaphors and artwork are then used to solidify the ideas shared; that visual and general metaphor can be applied to illness and defense mechanisms but these metaphors can change and alter an individual's life experience and personality.

*Key Words:* metaphor, symptoms, illness, personality, anxiety, defense mechanisms, dissociate, silence

**Figure 9**

*Dissociate*

*Note.* Artwork created by Jessica Gardner. Ink Pen and Marker on Bristol Paper, 5x5”.

## Commentary

The artwork created for this chapter is an analysis of the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” as it connects to illness; how said metaphor connects to anxiety as well as the defense mechanisms associated with it. Figure 9 above displays a face, looking very distraught, even pained. Above her are clouds and wispy lines. This represents the dissociation that aligns with anxiety; the illness strongly connected to the metaphor being discussed. In a sense the mental illness of anxiety is the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly”.

Even in times when rest is necessary, it can seem impossible to turn off one’s thoughts, making silence very chaotic and loud. In order to deal with these thoughts, a common coping mechanism is dissociation. According to psychologists Wieder and Tehune (2019), “dissociation is defined as the disruption of awareness, memory, and identity; all of which are normally integrated”. It can trigger “heightened suggestibility” and can cause an individual to experience “involuntary shifts in consciousness and behavior due to the disruption of metacognition or cognitive function” (p.191). Figure 9 demonstrates how dissociation can both feel euphoric, as it shifts one’s consciousness, and how it can harm an individual in the long run; it provides a way for an individual to escape their mental illness rather than find ways to alleviate the pain.

Figure 9 was created with ink pen and marker; two very permanent mediums. This is meant to demonstrate how mental illness can feel very permanent and inescapable. Dissociation makes the inescapable, escapable but only for a short time as it is only a coping mechanism. It is not a treatment or an answer to anxious thought. The discomfort seen on the individual’s face mirrors this tug of war; the escape of dissociation

feels pleasant but the individual has to prepare themselves for the return of the overwhelming thoughts that cloud their mind. This only exacerbates their anxiety further and triggers a detrimental cycle. The black and white color scheme mimics this push and pull relationship; the black demonstrates the dark hole anxiety can push an individual into and the white demonstrates not only the euphoria or dissociation, but hope for future healing as well.

To start the artistic process, basic line work was put down first. This piece relies heavily on the line work that aids in creating the facial expression on the individual's face and furthermore, displays their anguish and discomfort. Second, an outline was drawn around the character, blocking out areas of black and white. Lastly, black marker was added to the background demonstrating the severity of the pain anxiety has inflicted on this person. The black marker also creates a frame or container around this individual, yet again displaying how overwhelming, anxious thoughts entrap people and seclude them.

Black is also seen as the color of death; from death comes rejuvenation and new growth, thus tying in the aspect of hope alongside the addition of white. The person depicted in this piece longs for ways to drown out the noise of the loud, anxious thoughts filling their head. The placement of the clouds and whimsical swirls is also symbolical as they only surround the character's head. This places more importance on what's going on in their mind as well as delves into the headaches caused by anxiety. Quite literally, thoughts and stress can be so loud that they generate a headache. Therefore, this individual isn't only suffering from mental pain; bodily pain can occur from anxious thoughts in addition to the crushing impact they have on the mind. In all, this piece takes a look at how metaphor is connected to illness, both mental and physical. It also

visualizes how the specific metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly”, connects to generalized anxiety disorder and overall anxious thought patterns.

Metaphors are often used to describe the pain people feel; they allow individuals to describe the symptoms and illnesses they experience when other words fail to accurately depict one’s suffering. In a way metaphor can become an illness, leaving specifically mental illnesses out in the cold; in the past, they have been viewed as being solely metaphorical though medical professionals now know mental illness is a very real thing. For example, in an article discussing various 19th century physicians’ opinions on mental illness, Pies (2014) shares Dr. Thomas Szasz’s opinion that mental illness is merely metaphorical. Pies quotes Szasz: “...if I say that mental illness is a metaphorical illness, I’m not saying that it’s a different kind of illness; I am saying that it’s not an illness at all” (Pies, p. 1). Because of this thinking, writer Tyler Tate declared that “some metaphors are problematic for medical practice” (Tate, p. 20). Obviously, the view of mental illness as well as understanding has evolved and progressed as years have passed and metaphors do provide better ways to describe symptoms and illnesses, physical or mental; metaphor can limit the understanding of illness in the same respect.

Therefore, this chapter analyzes the application of metaphor when discussing symptoms and illnesses as well as the defense mechanisms used to help cope with the anguish stemming from illness. Furthermore, the transformation of illness into symbolic imagery and artwork will be acknowledged. Lastly, the connection of metaphor to certain experiences like illness and how they can affect one’s personality will be examined. The metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” will be explored through each section to connect the metaphor to illness, specifically generalized anxiety disorder

as well as symptoms, defense mechanisms, and how it translates into artwork and self-understanding.

**Figure 10**

*Anxiety*

*Note.* Artwork created by Edvard Munch. Lithograph, 22.5x 16.94".

Metaphors provide explanations of how illnesses are experienced. When other words fail to describe symptoms, metaphors can describe the onset of an illness, its

symptoms, and the healing that occurs in order to get better or gain acceptance of a negative diagnosis. For example, when an individual is trying to discuss the onset of an illness, they might say that it “crept in” without notice. This metaphor is comparing a person quietly walking up to scare another to the sudden beginning of an illness; either way the experience is unexpected and scary because the metaphor deals with the unknown. When discussing one’s symptoms, they might say that they feel “shooting pain” in a body part. This compares the pain of a bullet puncturing the skin to the pain of an illness; in either situation, the pain is overwhelming and intense. Then, when discussing the healing process, an individual might say that they are on the “road to recovery.” This metaphor compares a journey with an end destination to recovery. Both can be long and arduous, but there is a final destination to look forward to. These are just a few ways that people attach metaphors to symptoms and illnesses.

At the same time, symptoms and illnesses can be metaphors of one’s psychological world. For example, the metaphor used throughout this book, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly” directly relates to generalized anxiety disorder and the symptoms associated with it: seclusion, anxious thoughts, inability to rest, anxiety attacks, micromovements of the body, etc. Not only does the metaphor describe anxiety, it provides a glimpse into one’s psychological world; it demonstrates how the abundance of thoughts that fill an individual’s head overwhelm them and feel “loud”, causing the lack of sleep, seclusion, and headaches. The cause is anxiety, but the metaphor describes anxiety so it can be better understood literally and in action.

Visual metaphor also plays a role in how humans disassemble illness and understand it better. For example, Figure 10 demonstrates the feeling of anxiety; *Anxiety*

is the title of the piece. The characters harbor harrowed faces and appear uneasy. The individuals appear to be very perturbed, standing in front of a chaotic background filled with red and black lines. Without knowing the title, it might be harder to analyze the piece. With the title, it allows the viewer to start building a metaphor for the work and anxiety in general. It becomes easier to pair the feeling of anxiety to this piece of work when a metaphor is established. The colors also play a role in understanding the mood; red and black are very intense colors that hold a lot of emotion and symbolism. In the same way that visual metaphors display the effects, emotion, and feeling of illness, they can also demonstrate the ways people cope with their suffering.

**Figure 11**

*Dissociation III*

*Note.* Artwork created by Zack Zdrale. Oil on canvas, 18x24”.

Defense mechanisms are ways people protect themselves from pain or unpleasant feelings, emotional or physical. When presented with a metaphor dealing with illness, if

one works “within” the metaphor and learns how to heal, defensiveness is minimized. The defense mechanism disappears because the pain dissipates. On the other hand, over using the metaphor and falling into a negative cycle, prolongs the use of the defense mechanism. The interesting thing is that defense mechanisms can arise from illness but they can also trigger it.

For example, a person struggling from anxiety may dissociate or revert to a split off part of themself to escape from reality and their anxious thoughts. In connection to the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” an individual may dissociate to escape their stressful thoughts and enter into a numb but euphoric state. They may even utilize another coping mechanism like withdrawal, where they remove themselves from events, stimuli, interactions; anxious thoughts make it much harder to leave one’s comfort zone. Though defense mechanisms temporarily alleviate the pain an individual is experiencing, they also have negative consequences on the individual. As said previously, if one overuses a metaphor or defense mechanism, it prolongs the use of the defense mechanism. Additionally, the pain becomes worse, the individual can become detached from reality, they can experience decreased energy so it becomes harder to heal, and it makes the individual more anxious and avoidant. This is exactly what makes anxiety so hard to escape; the overuse of defense mechanisms makes a person even more anxious in the long run.

Defense mechanisms also show up in visual metaphors just like the illness a defense mechanism seeks to alleviate. Figure 11 above depicts the feeling of dissociation. The character is painted with their “head in the clouds”; a common visual and descriptive metaphor of dissociation. While the piece appears calm and euphoric, there is still an

ache about it. The brightest color on the piece is in the clouds, representing how good it feels to escape reality. The rest of the piece displays dark and muted colors, demonstrating how the coping mechanism isn't as beneficial as it seems.

**Figure 12**

*Self Portrait with the Spanish Flu*

*Note.* Artwork created by Edvard Munch. Oil on canvas, 59.06x 51.60".

As to be expected, life experiences play a role in the human response; trials and tribulations can affect one's personality and life outlook for the positive and the negative.

Illness is a primary example of a life experience that can affect one's personality. For example, if an individual is diagnosed with cancer, this can both change their metaphor and life outlook. They may begin to prioritize spending time with family and friends; their metaphor for life becomes associated with fragility. Additionally, a person may begin to construct metaphors that take on human personality traits. According to Nicholas (2013), "The simplest metaphorical constructions apply human personality traits to cancer." Nicholas expands on this further by sharing some examples such as "cancer is cruel", "cancer is sneaky", and "cancer is remorseless" (p. 608). Therefore, life experience like the ailment from an illness can affect one's personality, metaphor, and personality traits.

Another example is an individual experiencing anxiety; the mental illness primarily discussed in this chapter. Anxiety and the symptoms associated with anxiety might cause a once bubbly individual to turn inward and pull away from social support. The chaotic thoughts that fill this individual's head might be so loud that silence is unbearable; at the same time seclusion is more approachable, leading to a negative cycle. Therefore, their personality changes with their metaphor for life; "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly", is an example of what their metaphor could transform into. These thoughts make silence unbearable but opening up to others about one's struggle is also frightening.

Visual metaphors can also demonstrate the impact life events such as illness can have on one's personality. In Figure 12 titled *Self Portrait with the Spanish Flu,* Edvard Munch paints himself looking forlorn. The character is suffering from the deadly Spanish flu. The illness seems to not only have affected Munch's mood; the colors and facial

expression tell the narrative of a change in understanding and perspective. Additionally, the painting is a self-portrait. Edvard Munch wanted to capture the reality of life as well as the impact of the illness. The portrait provides a glimpse into a time period of Munch's life that was bound to have an impact on the future and furthermore, his personality.

In all, metaphors provide an explanation of how illnesses and their symptoms are experienced. Metaphors can also help to describe and identify the defense mechanisms used to both help an individual feel better, all while causing more destruction. Through these ideas, visual metaphors and art provide a glimpse into the impact of illness and express the changing of metaphor. Furthermore, changing metaphor triggered by illness can alter an individual's personality and expression of self.

# A Book on Personalized Metaphor

## Chapter Four

## Resolution and Healing Metaphor:

## Using Metaphor to Achieve Resolution For Oneself and Others

Jessica Gardner

Department of Art Therapy, Capital University

Art 226: Imagery and Metaphor

Professor Harris

April 25, 2022

## Author Note

Jessica Gardner, Department of Art Therapy, Capital University.

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Correspondence concerning this book should be addressed to Jessica Gardner, 2841 Chatsworth Way, Reynoldsburg OH. 43068. Email: jgardner46@capital.edu.

**Abstract**

In chapter 4 of this book, metaphor is first explained through its impact in therapy; how metaphor helps people to connect in therapy and reveal their innermost thoughts. Next, how metaphor can be used to transform a client's understanding of themselves in life problems and mental illness is examined. Metaphor can become the way a person understands how their body feels and reacts to the trials of life. Furthermore, the limitations of metaphor are discussed to demonstrate that they aren't perfect in the therapy process but they can be very useful when implemented appropriately and efficiently. The metaphor, "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly," is explored through each of these concepts. It is also examined in the therapy process; the metaphor is used in varying therapy techniques a therapist might use to combat against the anxiety paired with this metaphor. The goal with these techniques are to examine life's imperfections while healing the ailing parts of a client.

*Key Words:* metaphor, therapist, client, healing, therapy, anxiety, limitations, connect, techniques

**Figure 13**

*Healing*

*Note.* Artwork created by Jessica Gardner. Ink Pen and Marker on Bristol Paper, 7x10”.

## Commentary

The artwork created for this chapter is an analysis of the metaphor, “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” as it connects to healing and the therapy process; how the metaphor can be used to transform a client’s self-understanding in different situations. Figure 13 above displays an individual who appears to be at peace. Above her are different shapes, topics, and objects that can help throughout the therapy process: music, family, friends, being out in nature, animals, creating art, etc. In this case, these are things that can be used to curb the effects of the metaphor itself; the effects are anxious, overwhelming thoughts that can make life hard to live. In order to find solace and healing, the artwork demonstrates the beauty in finding things that calm one's anxious thoughts and bring them back down to earth from their dissociated head space.

The metaphor “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly,” in itself can be the reason for seeking out therapy as it describes feelings connected to generalized anxiety disorder. The artwork for this chapter displays ways a person might combat anxiety; these activities or interactions can help one’s emotional state or emotional “flexibility.” According to Hinton and Kirmayer (2017):

> “Healing practices may induce states of cognitive and emotional flexibility through specific symbolic intervention including images, metaphors, music, and other media. The flexibility hypothesis suggests that cognitive and emotional flexibility is represented, elicited, and enacted through multiple modalities in healing rituals” (Hinton & Kirmayer, p. 3).

In other words, using images, metaphors, music, art, and other media as healing

practices can increase both cognitive and emotional flexibility. In connection to the artwork and metaphor discussed throughout this book, both the use of the metaphor to describe an individual's struggle with anxiety and the images surrounding the character's head representing healing connections and activities help in the healing process; they make room for personal growth as well as mental flexibility to heal from the trauma and emotion described through the metaphor, "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly."

Figure 13 was created with ink pen and marker, two very dark and permanent mediums. The juxtaposition between the lighthearted, calm imagery and the black permanence of the pen and marker is meant to demonstrate how there is still struggle throughout the healing process; even in light, there are still moments of darkness. The placement of the symbols around the character's head are meant to mimic the "head in the clouds" feeling of dissociation, except the symbols represent positive thoughts and healing practices that fill one's mind with pleasant thoughts rather than anxious ones. The pleasant thoughts are not constant as healing is not constant; the black and white color palette represents this dynamic as does the permanency of the mediums; the effects of anxiety will always be there, one just has to learn how to properly heal the triggers of their anxiety and combat against the anxious thoughts as they progress in life.

To begin the artistic process, basic line work was established first; this piece relies heavily on the line work of the pen as it aids in depicting the calm emotion of the character as well as the symbols surrounding their head. Second, an outline was drawn around the character and the symbols to block out pieces of black and white to tie in the aspect of having hard days during the healing process. Lastly, black marker was added to

the background to demonstrate the “dark” days. This piece also displays the growth an individual must go through to understand that bad days don’t equal failure in healing. Though there is darkness, there is also the reminder that good things exist, demonstrating how this individual had to alter their thought process in order to change their metaphor of life from a negative one, to a realistic one.

Metaphor has become one of the biggest ways humans describe the many aspects of life and connect to other individuals. This is why metaphor is so vastly used in therapy; it helps people disclose their inner world to others as well as influence change in not only themselves, but the world around them. Not only does metaphor help disclose one’s innermost thoughts, it allows humans to first assess their thoughts, then understand them, and finally express them to others which can inspire change and transform other’s lives in addition to their own. Not only does metaphor aid in the therapeutic process, metaphors can be used to describe both the roles of therapist and client as well as that relationship, course of therapy, and the outcome.

For example, a therapist may be described as a “helper” or “healer.” A client may be labeled as “sick,” “lost,” or “broken.” Furthermore, the therapist-client relationship can be seen as “teamwork” or “ministerly.” The course of therapy is typically paired with the idea of forward movement; “traveling” or “advancing” are common terms to describe an individual’s progress. As for the outcome, the client could say that they are “healed” or “fixed.” In general, using metaphors in art therapy allows clients to move beyond their pain and imagine a positive future as well as trigger insight into oneself. A therapist might also use metaphors to describe a client’s current issue. According to Kopp (1998), “therapists can elicit an early recollection that could be a metaphor for the client’s current

problem or dilemma" (Kopp, p. 482). For example, a life event or past experience could be the grounds of a metaphor that could provide a source of healing for a client.

For the metaphor "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly," it could help a therapist understand the sensory problems that coexist with their client's anxiety. On the other hand, it could help the client understand their own mental processes and begin to find ways to heal with their therapist's guidance. A big way to release the thoughts attributed to the metaphors created in therapy is to create visual metaphors. Not only does artmaking provide a way to release one's thoughts and emotions, it plays into the relationship metaphors of therapy; how the therapist and client become a "team" to both create art and analyze it to trigger the healing process.

**Figure 14**

*Self-Portraits*

*Note.* Collage of self-portraits created by seniors living with dementia at the Devonshire Care Center.

Figure 14 above displays self-portraits completed by senior citizens struggling with dementia in a senior living facility. Not only did the activity provide the seniors with a creative outlet to release their innermost thoughts and opinions of themselves, it created a metaphor connecting art and dementia. One of the main parts of the disease is forgetting what others look like. By providing them with an activity involving their own face, it created a sense of grounding and acknowledgement of one's autonomy. It was a beautiful way to keep the patient's minds stimulated and active; it helped them mentally and physically.

Though the use of metaphor in therapy can be extremely beneficial in order to transform oneself whilst going through life's many problems, metaphor does have some limitations in therapy. First, it is possible to become overly reliant on one's metaphor and overuse it to stray away from other problems in their life. Therefore, one's metaphor can be used as a defense mechanism. For example, a person with the metaphor, "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly" could use it as a crutch; claiming that the overwhelming thoughts that fill their brain make it impossible for them to heal or that it's impossible to focus on anything but the bad thoughts. It can make a client stagnant in a sense. Additionally, a metaphor that is comfortable to some may be repulsive to others which, in turn, slows down the healing process. According to Gray and Hopkins (2019):

> "Metaphors may operate well beyond an initial association, and evoke a wide range of related correspondences; this multifariousness of correspondence has been labeled discursive resonance. Furthermore, a metaphor is polysemous, meaning it may yield multiple different meanings; for example, metaphor can also

'move' readers in an emotional sense, whether drawing/compelling them or repelling them" (p. 752).

Establishing a metaphor can also feel forced as it doesn't apply to every aspect of an individual's life and struggles; it may apply to the biggest source of their strife but that doesn't mean it holds importance in all aspects of a client's life. At the same time, a common theme or metaphor can be overlooked. The danger with this is that the overlooked metaphor could be a great course of transformation in a person; overlooking a metaphor could potentially mean overlooking a key factor in someone's story that could be beneficial in the healing process. Finally, metaphor can easily be literalized; this is particularly easy when pairing art and therapy together as the image can take on the literal image tied to a metaphor which might not be particularly helpful if a client wants to escape it.

**Figure 15**

*Key to Knowledge*

*Note.* Artwork created by Vladimir Kush. Giclee on Canvas, 12x20".

For example, an individual could look at the visual metaphor represented in Figure 15 and literalize it. When analyzing the picture, they might say that there's a book, a key, and a feather, sitting on a table. In actuality, the picture takes on a much deeper meaning; books and writing are the key to knowledge. This is expressed as the key becomes the spine of the book and a bright light shines on it, expressing its importance. If one literalizes the metaphor, they lose the true impact and meaning of said metaphor and the art stemming from it.

Although metaphors have limitations in therapy, they still provide a great deal of insight into the mind of the client when used appropriately. When thinking about what art therapy techniques a therapist should use when with a client, metaphor is highly considered. For example, using the metaphor for this book, "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly," therapy techniques could be created off of the ideas of this metaphor and healing practices common in individuals suffering from generalized anxiety disorder. First, a therapist working with a client presenting with this metaphor could have them go on a walk outside and take some notes on things they can feel, hear, taste, see, smell, and touch. This could target the dissociation connected to anxiety; fresh air can clear one's mind and using grounding techniques can bring a client "back down to earth." After the client takes some notes, the therapist could have them create some art about the feeling of being outdoors or draw out the things that they sensed using a tactile tool, like a pen or pencil to aid in the grounding aspect of this exercise; giving the client control over their medium. The goal would be to put emphasis on the here and now and to bring the client out of their head space crowded with overwhelming thoughts, back to the world in front of them.

Another art therapy technique a therapist could use is to advise the client to spend time with some important people in their life; family, friends, significant others, or other important individuals the client has a strong connection with. The therapist could then advise the client to take some time to first, think about these individual's characteristics and second, their impact in the client's life. Then the client could create a collage representing the characteristics of one person who is particularly close to them. The act of collage can help take one's mind off of negative thought patterns as focus is required when cutting and pasting; spending time with loved ones can also help with anxious thought. After the collage is complete, the therapist could instruct the client to draw or paint a face over their collage in marker or acrylic paint that represents how they view the person and their impact. This technique would target the seclusion that coexists with anxiety by providing a space for the client to spend time with their loved ones who both offer social interaction and support. The interaction as well as the exercise could also help take the client's mind off of the thoughts causing their anxiety.

**Figure 16**

*Ceramic Piece Created for 'Art in the Age of Anxiety' Exhibit*

*Note.* Artwork created by Nancy Richards. Ceramic Sculpture.

Lastly, in order to target the physical effects, twitches, and micromovements of anxiety, a therapist could have their client work in play dough or clay. While moving the clay around, have the client think about how their body feels when anxious and how their body reacts to it. The therapist can have them imagine how anxious twitches feel and have the client imagine they are imprinting them into the clay; the clay absorbs the anxious feelings and thoughts while the clay becomes a representation of the client's

innermost thoughts as they apply to “Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly.” This exercise doesn’t only help with releasing anxiety; the clay takes note of every micromovement of the hands, creating a beautiful representation of the struggles of anxiety as well as the healing process (as seen in Figure 16 above); two main goals of art therapy.

## Closing Summary

In all, *A Book on Personalized Metaphor*, examines the way metaphor exists in the world and how metaphor has become indoctrinated into mainstream language; metaphors are used to better articulate true meaning and emotion. This book reflects upon the physical, social, spiritual, and emotional meaning behind personalized metaphors. Each chapter analyzes a different set of topics that apply to personalized metaphor; specifically the metaphor "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly." Chapter one provides an introduction to metaphor with life; how metaphor is used and how it changes one's narrative. Next, chapter two examines metaphor as it applies to self-understanding and the creation of meaning in one's life. Personalized metaphor was applied to interpersonal relations, the body matrix, spiritual ideas, and affiliation with social systems.

Chapter three then analyzes metaphor as it connects to illness, symptoms, and defense mechanisms; specifically, how the main metaphor connects to generalized anxiety disorder and what defense mechanisms are used to try to combat anxious thoughts. Lastly, chapter four connects metaphor to the therapy process. It discusses how metaphor can be used to transform a client's self-understanding and provides some art therapy techniques that apply to the metaphor, "Silence is deafening when the mind talks loudly." The end result is an analysis of personalized metaphor as it applies to art therapy; how it provides a client with a larger narrative to both change their own life and share their experiences with others.

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