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Evocative imagery
in Tarot cards can
unlock unconscious
feelings to encourage healing



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and it's only a 16-ounce book, not a 24-ounce one (it's a bit more powerful and emits a more even light than last year's model). The TRIAline comes with a stand that supports it either in a vertical or horizontal position. It works on all household voltages around the world. It has a manual manual manual even how to use it like a Royal Delft. The TRIAline is, essentially

Pictures that Heal

Messages from the Tarot Current Research as a Guide to Clinical Practice

Anne Hendren Coulter, Ph.D.

Nurses take 10 PM vitals, blood pressures, and temperatures and then talk to doctors. Nurses are patients' advocates. Nurses are communicators but they are not often credited with cures. A few nurses, however, leave the institutions they work in and open their own medical practices.

One such nurse, Toni Gilbert, R.N., M.A., H.N.C., who works out of her home office in Jefferson, Oregon, uses only natural medicine in her practice. She administers no shots and takes no temperatures. She treats her clients, using guided imagery, energy medicine, meditation and, most recently, Tarot card readings, to put her patients in touch with their inner emotions.

This new healing tool, the Tarot deck, enables clients to "interconnect" with what psychiatrist Carl Jung referred to as deep-rooted transformational archetypes. It allows Ms. Gilbert to help clients retrieve, what her new book describes as messages from these ancient archetypes that can be used to help patients heal and grow.

Ms. Gilbert's route to the healing power of the Tarot cards was a logical one. "I'm not an institutional nurse," she said. "I was a psychiatric nurse for 13 years in Salem [Oregon]," she continued, noting: "It was limiting." Her grandmother was, she recalled, "a Christian minister who was into astrology, dream work, and other esoteric studies." Ms. Gilbert's grandmother taught Ms. Gilbert about the importance of dreams and the symbols buried deep within them. Ms. Gilbert embraced the Tarot as a credible tool for self-discovery because her grandmother's ministry incorporated symbols and rituals from many traditions.

The Tarot, she says, "is like having an awake dream," from which both she and the client can begin to understand what is going on in the preconscious and unconscious levels of the client's mind. Tarot cards are images that are translated into the thoughts of the client by the therapist or the clients themselves. These cards, she says, are "art forms like the figures in cathedrals, on cave walls that depict a preconscious being."

The Tarot is known popularly today as a "fortune telling" card deck, but serious scholars of the Tarot emphasize its use as a tool for facilitating meditation and spiritual growth.¹

Ms. Gilbert is convinced enough of the validity of Tarot healing that she has written a book to describe her success with it. The other healing modalities she uses (dream work and guided imagery) have been studied by numerous scientists. Alternatively, she wrote: "Tarot. . . [which]. . . has had little research, unfortunately conjures up images of gypsies." However, she continued, "there are important meanings behind the images and the images themselves that come from the same preconscious states of the mind. But these images are outside of the person, on a card." Her book *Messages from the Archetypes: Using Tarot for Healing and Spiritual Growth*² describes the value of the Tarot cards as a counseling tool. They are transformation archetypes, made real.

Archetypal Healing

The "archetypes of transformation" in Jungian psychology, symbolize the hero's journey from childhood to adulthood. In Jung's theory, progressing from one archetype to another, the child to the adult, for example, without interruption or deviation, produces a healthy individual. Jung believed that before an individual could understand himself or herself or find a place on the hero's journey from child to adulthood, that person must understand his or her symbolic selves, the shadow, the part of the person that is "other-than-myself."

For an individual to develop, to individuate, or accept/recognize his or her soul (*anima*), the person must go beyond the shadow to the anima. According to Jung, the anima plays a central role in development. She may be a goddess or a witch and may "seriously impair the fate of the adult. . . or spur him on to the highest flights."³

Individuals use mythologic symbols or archetypes, that they recognize in dreams and in unconscious thoughts, to understand their animas, thereby encouraging normal development. Jung described archetypes, such the child, the old man, and the mother, which are common to all people. These archetypes can be useful if they are experienced and understood; they can cause neuroses if they become obsessions of, or "possess," the individual. For example a "daughter" possessed by the mother-complex is likely to want children desperately. Her husband is of very little importance to her other than a means to an end. She is ultimately unable to let go of her children and unlikely to understand what mental capabilities she has beyond those of her maternal instincts.

The Tarot Deck

The Tarot deck consists of 78 cards. The first 22 pictorial cards are called the Major Arcana and are numbered from 0 to 21: The first card is unnumbered or labeled 0. There are numerous decks with different pictures and different names depicting the concepts listed below. In the deck that is most widely known, the Rider Waite deck, they are as follows in the chart below:

The Major Arcana of the Rider Waite Deck

Number	Name	Intention
0	The Fool	Possibility
1	The Magician	Will
2	The High Priestess	Insight
3	The Empress	Nurturance
4	The Emperor	Order
5	The Hierophant	Guidance
6	The Lovers	Relationship
7	The Chariot	Attainment
8	Strength	Confidence
9	The Hermit	Wisdom
10	The Wheel of Fortune	Change
11	Justice	Equanimity
12	The Hanged Man	Awareness
13	Death	Metamorphosis
14	Temperance	Transmutation
15	The Devil	Separation
16	The Tower	Destruction
17	The Star	Luminosity
18	The Moon	Psyche
19	The Sun	Consciousness
20	Judgment	Resolution
21	The World	Wholeness

Chart adapted from Rosengarten A; ref. 3, p. 151.

The other 52 cards, the Minor Arcana, correspond to the modern playing card deck and are arranged in four suits—Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles. According to Toni Gilbert, R.N., M.A., H.N.C., who uses a different deck than the Waite version, Cups, in general, refer to the emotions; Wands to energy and creativity; Swords to thoughts and plans, and Pentacles to the way we refer to the world. The court cards—Kings, Queens, Knights, and Pages—all have an archetypal correspondent; the numbered cards have various meanings depending on their suits. (See Gilbert; ref. 2, pp. 29–30.)

Many different disciplines and practices, Jung observed, describe archetypal transformation. He wrote that pictures from alchemy, from the Tantric *chakra* system, and other systems depicted the symbolic process. "It also seems," he wrote, that the "Tarot cards were distantly descended from the archetypes of transformation. . . ." ³ The archetypes might, then, appear as any one of the 78 cards in the Tarot deck.

Archetypes could be depicted in the Death card, for example, that symbolizes "metamorphosis," or as the "Wheel of Fortune," which means "change," or in other archetypes depicted on the 22 cards of the Tarot's "Major Arcana" (see box entitled The Tarot

Deck). The mother-complex, mentioned above, may emerge and be expressed in the lower levels of the Empress Tarot card or in one of the Queens.

The Tarot cards facilitate analysis based on the upper and lower levels of the archetypal images depicted on the cards. From these images, a counselor can point to the two halves: the "shadow" and the "higher self." Gilbert noted: "The shadow is the lower level of archetypes. The lower levels are what we perceive of as 'flaws' that are stumbling blocks." Once recognized as something that is simply a challenge, the shadow can then be integrated. Ms. Gilbert said: "Once you become aware of it [the shadow], I encourage you to think of it not as a shadow, but as a *divine challenge*. Just the awareness of the flaw is half the battle."

Gilbert, Jung, and The Archetypes: An Example

Ms. Gilbert's book is a collection of stories about healing with Tarot archetypes. There is, for example, the story of Jan, who felt hopeless and helpless about a degenerative condition in her eye. Her first card, "sorrow" (a dejected old man) depicted her sadness; her second card "ordinariness" (a peasant in simple dress) reminded her of her life as an art teacher; her third card was "suppression" (someone in a cramped dark space); and her fourth, and last card, was "beyond illusion" (a serene face adorned by a butterfly). ²

Moving through the reading, with Ms. Gilbert, Jan found serenity by admitting her suppressed despair. Ms. Gilbert observed that, in a discussion about the butterfly image, a "certain peacefulness came over her," as they "discussed the higher levels of this same archetypal energy operating in Jan." ¹

The Tarot session with Jan, Ms. Gilbert claims, "produced results by bridging unconscious information from the storehouse of the client's own experience to the conscious ego." ²

While Ms. Gilbert relates stories of her clients' successful journeys to health in 30-minute to 3-hour sessions of Tarot readings or guided imagery, it is important to recognize that not everyone can use the cards nor can everyone be treated with them.

The Tarot Method

There is a certain way to do Tarot counseling. The clients matter and the issues matter. The success of the session, however, depends largely on the ability of the therapist. Psychologist, Arthur Rosengarten, Ph.D., who uses Tarot counseling routinely in his practice, in Encinitas, California, has suggested that there is a "Tarot method" of treatment. He observed that Tarot therapists must be capable of "suspending previous knowledge of the client, particularly during the preliminary stages of card shuffling and selection." ⁴

The timeliness of a Tarot reading for understanding a problem, he notes, is also important. In general, he suggests that, "the most favorable times for introducing Tarot come when ordinary attempts to resolve or understand a problem have been unsatisfactory." This is often, he continued, "a plateau

period that has brought stagnation" Tarot reading is possible when clients need counseling from a source that is part of but not from the therapist, "a nonmediated ego," when the Tarot cards are useful.⁴

Dr. Rosengarten also suggests that Tarot counseling is most useful for the "normal neurotic" patient. "Couples families and groups, he wrote, "will find Tarot uniquely helpful in reflecting interpersonal dynamics."⁴ He has found that the cards have been useful for working with "high level borderline and narcissistic patients, recovering addicts and alcoholics."⁴

"Even skeptics of the technique, he wrote, "make excellent candidates for divinatory experiments provided they are sincere and genuinely willing to suspend disbelief and give it a go."⁴ Clients with actively psychotic schizophrenia, paranoia, or patients with fundamentalist religious beliefs, however, are not appropriate candidates for Tarot treatment.

Ms. Gilbert observed that choosing to use the Tarot has much to do with the nature of clients and the problems that they face. She said that she decides if it is appropriate after she has questioned clients about their religious beliefs and determined if use of the cards fits into their value systems.

After about 30 minutes, she said, "I learn who they are, what issues they are facing, and how much time they have to spend. At that point I determine whether they are candidates for Tarot counseling, dream work, guided imagery, energy work, meditation, journaling, or a combination of all these." In the case of Jan, noted above, Ms. Gilbert began treatment with a Tarot reading but ended with guided imagery.

Another client, Noah, had an issue that was best made clear with images on the Tarot cards. Noah came to Ms. Gilbert, troubled about his marriage and frustrated with other therapies. The first card in his spread was entitled "the Creator," and the "King of Fire." This card, Gilbert wrote, connects to the "archetypal

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principle of intuition in concert with creative action. . . . on its upper level he is an active and creative person. On the lower level, he is. . . power-driven."²

Ms. Gilbert suggested that Noah might still be in the lower or shadow level of the emotions depicted on this card and could not, therefore, move on toward his spiritual side. Noah agreed that this interpretation described his present state. The two continued the reading passing through a "New Vision" card that encouraged developmental growth and ending with a card called "Letting Go," which reminded him of the effects that he had on others.

Noah went away having "seen" his divine challenge and that he could learn to be creative but was instead intolerant and impatient. Ms. Gilbert recommended meditation and prayer. She observed that Noah went away with "the beginner's tools and instruction to begin the inner journey towards peace and happiness."²



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Conclusions

Ms. Gilbert suggests that Tarot cards are most useful to people who want to develop themselves, those who recognize that they are flawed, and who accept they have a “shadow” side. She observes that Tarot counseling is most useful for “people, who are having trouble coping; who have stress in their situation[s]. They may be troubled because of illness, injury, difficult life situations—broken leg[s], broken back[s]. They need to be alert. Usually my best clients have read something about mind/body.”

Tarot is a counseling tool and, like any other tool, must be tailored to fit each individual. Whether it works for one person or another, however, ultimately lies with the client’s ability to integrate the insightful messages that he or she gets from the archetypal images on the cards. □

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