

Exploring the Self through Photography

ACTIVITIES FOR USE IN GROUP WORK



CLAIRE CRAIG

Exploring the Self
through Photography

of related interest

**A Creative Guide to Exploring Your Life
Self-Reflection Using Photography, Art, and Writing**

Graham Gordon Ramsay and Holly Barlow Street

ISBN 978 1 84310 892 4

**Activities for Adults with Learning Disabilities
Having Fun, Meeting Needs**

Helen Sonnet and Ann Taylor

ISBN 978 1 84310 975 4

Art Therapy Exercises

Inspirational and Practical Ideas to Stimulate the Imagination

Liesl Silverstone

Foreword by Brian Thorne

ISBN 978 1 84310 695 1

Art Therapy Techniques and Applications

Susan I. Buchalter

ISBN 978 1 84905 806 3

Exploring the Self through Photography

ACTIVITIES FOR USE IN GROUP WORK

CLAIRE CRAIG



Jessica Kingsley Publishers
London and Philadelphia

First published in 2009
by Jessica Kingsley Publishers
116 Pentonville Road
London N1 9JB, UK
and
400 Market Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA

www.jkp.com

Copyright © Claire Craig 2009

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material form (including photocopying or storing it in any medium by electronic means and whether or not transiently or incidentally to some other use of this publication) without the written permission of the copyright owner except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 or under the terms of a licence issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS. Applications for the copyright owner's written permission to reproduce any part of this publication should be addressed to the publisher.

Warning: The doing of an unauthorized act in relation to a copyright work may result in both a civil claim for damages and criminal prosecution.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Craig, Claire, 1969-

Exploring the self through photography : activities for use in group work / Claire Craig.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-84310-666-1 (alk. paper)

1. Photography in psychotherapy. 2. Introspection. 3. Self-consciousness (Awareness) 4. Photography--Psychological aspects. I. Title.

RC489.P56C73 2009

616.89'165--dc22

2009010997

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 84310 666 1
ISBN pdf eBook 978 0 85700 191 7

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Athenaeum Press, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

*To Neil and Eddie who turn every day
into a wonderful adventure*

Acknowledgements

Many people have played a part in the making of this book. I would like to thank all those who have helped me to discover the language of photography: Jim, Carol and Trevor were there at the beginning, and Nicola and Paul have more recently reminded me of how precious images can be. I am indebted to all those who have taken part in the groups I have facilitated and have so readily shared their photographs and stories with me. Thanks also to those at Jessica Kingsley for their advice, support and patience, in particular to Lily Morgan for her insightful comments that helped to shape the final manuscript. Finally, to my amazing family for their continued and unfailing support and encouragement. Without you there would be no book.

Contents

PREFACE	11
INTRODUCTION	13

Part I

CHAPTER 1	Why Photography?	19
CHAPTER 2	What Photography Can Offer	27
CHAPTER 3	Establishing and Facilitating your Group	32

Part II

CHAPTER 4	Images as Starting Points	49
CHAPTER 5	Images as Gateways to the Imagination	66
CHAPTER 6	Images as Communication	89
CHAPTER 7	Images as Relationship-builders	102
CHAPTER 8	Images as Tools for Reflection	114
CHAPTER 9	Images and Self-identity	127
CHAPTER 10	Images as Agents for Change	152

CHAPTER 11	Endings	178
CHAPTER 12	Where the Personal and Professional Meet	184
	CONCLUSION: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE	190
	REFERENCES	192
	RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING	194
	APPENDIX	199
	INDEX	201

Preface

My grandfather was a photographer. Most weekends he would be busy at weddings or christenings, preserving memorable moments in family history. However, his image-making was not restricted to special occasions. Along with weddings and christenings he would photograph the familiar: objects, places, people; the first television he owned; the contents of the fridge; cars, trains, buses; the time it snowed so hard we needed to dig ourselves out of the house. These scenes created a record of everyday life and were made extraordinary by virtue of their ordinari-ness.

As a consequence I grew up surrounded by photographs. This visual language was familiar and comforting, and when I started working as an occupational therapist it seemed only natural to include photography as one of a range of meaningful activities to share with the people with whom I worked. I discovered that, as well as providing a valued leisure pursuit and interest, the photographic process offered a means for individuals to access opportunities in the wider community, to meet other like-minded people and build new relationships. When this process took place within the safety of a group these relationships assumed a greater depth and significance. The act of taking and sharing an image offered a new language that was not dependent on words, a means through which group members could talk about and make sense of their experiences. Photographs were a tangible means through which future hopes and aspirations could be identified and expressed, and long-held perceptions might be challenged. Looking at the world through a lens helped people to revisit the familiar, to gain a different perspective on events and, through this process, develop new insights about themselves and

others. Armed with these new insights, image-making offered a way to plan and implement positive change.

My career evolved, and as I moved from setting to setting, my camera came along too. Working in an adult education college I embedded image-making in short courses aimed at building confidence and self-esteem. I used digital photography as a medium in my adult literacy teaching, and used this within community outreach in my work with asylum-seekers, with young mums and with parents caring for children with disabilities. I used the same image-making process in my clinical work in hospitals with people with dementia and their carers. It formed the basis of groups for people who had depression or chronic physical conditions, for individuals with learning disabilities, and in these instances provided a means to manage physical as well as emotional pain. I was struck by the versatility of image-making as a means to both reflect and promote change. On a personal level I found it incredibly helpful to gain new insights into my own practices, and image-making became a valuable tool for use within supervision.

I wanted to find a way to share the potential of this medium with others who are already using or who are interested in using photography as a tool to promote personal reflection and self-exploration. This book describes some of the exercises I have used in my own work. Although it is written primarily from the perspective of using image-making within a group, all the activities may easily be adapted for individual or personal use. You may have chosen to read this book in relation to the groups you work with or you may be interested from the perspective of your own personal and professional development. Either way, I hope it will inspire you to explore these ideas for yourself, to experiment, seek out new insights and discover the potential of this visual language as a medium for change and growth.

Introduction

We live in an increasingly visual culture. Daily we are bombarded by images on television, in books, magazines, newspapers, by adverts on billboards and the internet. They open up our world transporting us to places where we never dreamed we would go. Sometimes they offer glimpses into different ways of being, sharing alternative lifestyles, making us increasingly satisfied or dissatisfied with what we have. They offer a means to revisit the past and to record the present. As Pink writes,

Images are everywhere. They permeate our academic work, everyday lives, conversations and dreams. They are inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies as well as with definitions of history, space and truth. (Pink 2001, p.17)

These images are far from neutral. Each time we encounter a photograph there occurs a form of engagement, either consciously or subconsciously, as we position ourselves in relation to what we see, evaluating this in the context of our own experiences and memories. We interact with images, perhaps we identify with characters contained within them or create our own version of the story the picture tells and we move on. Yet, at one level or another, the photograph has made a connection: physically, mentally or emotionally. Depending on our response, our acceptance or rejection of what we have observed, we are changed and our view of the world and who we are or have been within it is slightly different than before our encounter.

We also play a part in this visual dialogue through the photographs we take and which adorn our homes, sit on our desks at work or are carried with us in our purses and wallets or on our mobile phones. These images, too, communicate important messages about our values, our

identity; about what we want others to know about who we are and the face we want to present to the world. Our images are precious, forming a link between past and present, a tangible record of our very existence. As Berman writes: 'We want to keep our memories for all time: the very act of having of our photographs gives us a feeling that we have some control' (Berman 1993, p.4).

The opportunities we have to preserve our memories in film are readily available. The advent of the digital camera means that photography is more immediate and more accessible than ever. We download our own pictures on to a computer, manipulate their size and shape, and share them with an increasingly wider audience through the internet. A consequence of this is that the act of taking photographs is no longer confined to special occasions.

In view of the multifaceted nature of photography it seems only natural to want to harness the potential of the image-making process in a therapeutic sense. The use of photography as a medium to support people in their personal development is not new. An entire approach, called 'PhotoTherapy', has evolved in Canada and America pioneered by individuals such as Weiser (1993) and Krauss (Krauss and Fryrear 1983) based on the principles of counselling and psychotherapy. Here, image-making is used as a means to visit and revisit the past, to tap into the unconscious and make connections 'with unconscious and deeply-buried memories, thoughts and feelings that... verbal enquiry on its own had been unable to reach' (Weiser 1999, p.xiii). Parallel developments taking place in the UK have been led by Spence and Martin (1985). A list of resources and signposts to further reading for those interested in finding out more about this approach is included at the end of the book.

The ideas described in this book are not based on a psychotherapeutic tradition requiring specialist skills. The focus of the exercises contained within it are to promote self-expression, provide a vehicle for communication, and offer a means to structure thinking, to both support and record change. They provide a powerful tool for the processes of self-exploration and reflection that underpin personal growth. As such they would sit well within the toolbag of creative activities used by social workers, occupational therapists, mental health nurses, teachers, youth workers, activity co-ordinators and other helping professionals. The ideas could also form the basis of more in-depth

work by qualified counsellors and psychologists with training in specialist techniques.

All the exercises described require empathy, listening skills and careful questioning. They are not about interpreting or taking people beyond the place where they feel comfortable. The hope is that the ideas work on a number of different levels and that the exercises should be used at level fitting the skills, confidence and competencies possessed by the facilitator.

This is not a book about the technical aspects of photography or how to take beautiful photographs. To read it is to embark on a visual journey of self-discovery that you may share with those you work with. In doing so you can show others how to use the camera to look at the world differently, and may gain greater insight into who they are and take the first steps on a journey towards change.

Finding your way around the text

The photographs certainly weren't beautiful in an aesthetic sense. Picture after picture, striking only in their ordinariness. Onlookers might easily have passed over them, dismissing their significance, but when you had been there, sharing every step of the way with Harry, his complete concentration, repeating over and over again the simple instructions necessary to operate the camera, well then the photographs took on a different significance, a whole new meaning. Every detail contained in those images had been considered and deliberate. I had observed every moment with complete fascination and through this process we had developed a shared understanding about what was important to the both of us. The selection of coloured prints therefore represented much more than an end-result, a product to be admired by others, they were the embodiment of the journey we had travelled over time and the relationship that we had forged because of it. (Craig 2005, p.3)

I hope that you have chosen to read this book because the thought of using photography with the individuals you work with as a tool to promote such self-exploration and personal growth has struck a chord. It is quite possible to use the exercises in this book to establish a group focusing entirely on photography within a therapeutic context or to embed a number of the activities within pre-existing sessions. Although

it is written primarily from the perspective of using image-making within a group, all the activities may easily be adapted for individual or personal use.

Broadly, the text is divided into two parts. Part I offers an overview of the potential benefits of this approach, with a clear exploration of methods and special consideration of the range of resources required and the practicalities of setting up and facilitating a group of this nature. Weight is given to the ethics of image-making and some of the steps required to ensure that participants are kept safe within this process. Part II is organized around a series of themes containing ideas for exercises which may be used. Narratives are included throughout the text, illustrating how the ideas have been applied in practice.

Within the chapters various activities using photography are described. Again, there is a small comment about how the activity may be used and a list of the resources required in addition to a basic camera or photographic equipment. Ideas are presented in terms of a warm-up activity, which helps to focus thinking and increase receptiveness to some of the ideas explored in the main exercise. This is followed by a step-by-step description of the main activity and possible discussion questions which may be used. In some instances short narratives written by individuals using the medium have also been included.

The activities in this book act as starting points and are open to adaptation and development. This is a very necessary process if you are going to meet the complex needs of the people you are working with. The key to using this book is to make the exercises your own. You are the expert and if you are facilitating a group or working alongside individuals you will have an idea about what does or does not work. Try the exercises for yourself, seek out new insights, understand what is required to make an activity feel safe and learn about the potential of this visual language as a medium for growth.

PART I

Why Photography?

There is an emerging evidence base to support the use of photography and image-making in the context of self-exploration, communication, creative expression and personal development. It is perhaps a reflection of the flexibility of this medium that research relating to its use spans the fields of health, social care and community arts, and includes work with people across the lifespan, from children to older people, from individuals with social and emotional needs through to people with dementia. As a medium it may be equally appealing to individuals in their teens (Wilson *et al.* 2007) as to older people aged 90 and beyond (Mitchell 2005), making it well-suited for intergenerational activities (Wang *et al.* 2004).

It's fun. It's something you can do when you're bored and a really good way for me to know about photography and help our community (fifth grade girl). (Wilson et al. 2007, p.259)

It was the best day I had had for a very long time (older person with dementia). (Mitchell 2005, p.20)

Consequently it can be used by groups across a broad range of contexts, including in schools, colleges, youth groups churches and community settings, residential care, inpatient and day hospitals.

Essentially, taking a photograph may be likened to making a journey where the final image represents a meeting place that can be both a destination and a starting point. Self-exploration may occur at any point in the process. For example, at the beginning when the person is thinking

and deciding what to photograph (the reason for their choice), during the act of seeking or finding the subject of the picture, in reflecting on the content of the photograph, when sharing the image with others or discussing the circumstances and context in which it was taken. The possibilities do not end there. A photograph has the potential to yield new insights each time it is visited and revisited by the person. This is because whilst the content of the image remains the same, the person who views it does not. The meaning of the photograph is not fixed or absolute; it is shaped by the experiences and perspectives the individual who views the image brings to the encounter.

This value is not confined to the photographs we take. Images taken by others may also provide a meeting place where this process can occur. Our natural response when we look at a photograph is to make sense of what we see. We gaze at the image, seeking out the story it tells and the meaning it contains. Yet we view the picture through the filter of our own lives, seeing it from our own unique perspective, superimposing our experiences, our fears, our hopes and values. Herein lies the power of the photograph as a tool for personal exploration.

The qualities inherent in photography therefore lend themselves to a range of possibilities, and the list of people who potentially could benefit from using this medium is endless. Image-making is not confined or restricted to a particular group, it is not bound by age or disability. This is perhaps best exemplified in a recent photographic exhibition 'Beyond Sight': which featured the work of artists with varying degrees of visual impairment. Where individuals experience difficulties in operating the shutter release or in holding the camera, solutions are readily available. For instance a tripod can minimize the effect of tremor, shutter releases exist to make operating a camera easier for individuals with arthritis. Finding ways to make the process accessible and grading the activity will require imagination and creativity but it is possible and the potential benefits it offers are wide-reaching.

Although it is not necessary to be an expert at photography or possess any specific technical expertise to facilitate groups based around image-making, an understanding of the inherent qualities this media possesses will enable you to temper and make the most of the exercises described. In doing so you will be able to meet the needs of the people you work with and promote real and lasting change.

The first thing to say about photography in this context is that it is an extremely accessible medium. Most people will have taken a photograph at some point in their lives and will have access to a camera. As early as 1990 the Kodacolor Gold survey found that 80 per cent of households in the UK owned a camera, whereas the Wolfman Report concluded that in the USA in 1993 alone 17.2 billion photographs were taken, almost a four-fold increase from the number taken in 1967 (Cronin 1998, pp.69–70). Given the increasing accessibility and affordability of digital media this figure is probably much higher today, and it is set to rise as a generation of young people see the recording of everyday events with their mobile phones and the sharing of video on U-Tube and other social networking sites as a norm.

As a result of this familiarity with the media, taking a photograph may feel less threatening than engaging in other creative ventures, such as painting a picture or playing a musical instrument, where the individual may feel less in control and less confident in sharing the end results, particularly if these are then judged against a set of technical and aesthetic ‘standards’. Indeed, the individuals taking part in groups that I have facilitated have described memories of arts-based activities at school and the passing of judgement ‘good art’ and ‘bad art’ as the largest and most significant inhibiting factor that has prevented them from engaging in such pursuits.

Interestingly, within these same groups photography has not held such connotations. Taking a poor photograph does not seem to carry the same emotional baggage. Various explanations have been offered for this. The age of digital photography means that it is relatively easy to erase pictures that participants are unhappy with. Painting a picture requires an investment of time as well as emotion. Whilst the act of putting together the elements of a photographic composition may be time-consuming, the physical act of taking the picture is, by comparison, very short. If the end result is unsatisfactory in the individual’s eyes the perception of ‘wasted’ time is minimal.

Yet, by the same token, photography sits quite comfortably with other art forms and may be used alongside painting, poetry, creative writing and drama, and it can offer a way for individuals to ‘dip their toe’ into arts-based activities. The freedom afforded by the image-making process, the range of choices regarding the subject matter and the

infinite number of ways of looking at a picture make it an ideal medium through which to exercise imagination and build confidence in the use of creative media. A chapter of this book is dedicated to exploring how image-making can complement other art forms, creating a gateway to the imagination.

However, for some individuals for whom the act of engaging in a creative activity is too difficult, the thought of taking a photograph seemingly becomes impossible. Yet individuals need not be precluded from taking part in a group simply because they find it difficult to use a camera or take a picture. In these instances the person may be invited to take part in directing the process, instructing others about which part of the landscape to photograph or how to arrange a particular composition. A square of backing board with a hole mirroring a viewfinder would be a perfect tool to support this. Alternatively, the process of looking through books, newspapers and magazines seeking out images, rather than taking them oneself, can be equally satisfying and self-revealing.

The key to both activities, and to those directly using the camera, lies in the sense of control it offers. When a person directs the image-making process or engages in the act of taking a photograph the locus of control sits with them. They choose which objects, views or people they will photograph, which pictures they will discard, whether they talk about an image or opt to remain silent. For individuals who may not feel very much in control over what they do generally, this is a useful starting point. Being in control can promote feelings of self-efficacy, enable the person to develop skills in decision-making so that over time this new-found confidence translates into other aspects of their life. There are numerous examples in the literature of how this may occur and ways to facilitate the process. One of the clearest acknowledgements of this relationship is in the account offered by Frith and Harcourt (2007) in work with women receiving treatment for breast cancer. They write:

At a time when women feel that they lack control over their appearance, privacy and everyday activities we believed that it was important to give women control over what pictures to take, how many to take and when to take them. (Frith and Harcourt 2007, p.1346)

The multiple levels on which photography operates and its flexibility contributes to this element as the individual is able to choose and grade the extent to which they wish to be involved within the process. It may, for instance be a fun, sociable activity or extremely introspective and reflective. Photography could form the basis of a group or individual interaction. It can occur at any time of the year and does not require a specialist room or venue, which means that it can take place in most environments both inside and out. To this end it opens up a wide range of opportunities and is able to meet the needs of the person wherever they are; they can engage in whatever way and at whatever level they feel comfortable.

The other strength that photography has in relation to its use as a tool for self-exploration is that it encapsulates both process and product. As a process it may easily be graded in terms of time spent on the task and the complexity of the exercise, making it ideal for people who may initially find it difficult to concentrate or struggle to recall and sequence information. Claire Smith, a person with an acquired brain injury sums this up when she writes:

It's nice to have something so concrete, that there's a start, middle and an end. You end up with something you can see and for me that's so nice because the rest of my life is so elusive; there's never really an end result. (Smith 2007, p.299)

In this quote Smith attaches specific importance to the tangibility of the end product. Indeed the significance of this end result should not be underestimated. It may be a record of participation, a reminder that a person was there; it could symbolize an achievement or accomplishment, be offered as a gift to family or friends, form a focus for an exhibition or be spirited away and kept only for the eyes of its creator. In my own work I have witnessed the potential of the photographs a person creates in increasing feelings of self-esteem, lead to the development of a new hobby or interest and, on one occasion, result in a change of career and in the development of a new role. For some individuals the photograph has provided a means to record change: a reminder of progress made towards the realization of goals, to capture small imperceptible shifts in appearance, feelings or behaviour that might otherwise have gone unnoticed but, once recognized, provide a huge boost to confidence and motivation. In the words of Frith and Harcourt:

The cumulative picture built up through the gradual changes documented in the photographs can reveal evidence of changes to appearance that had gone unnoticed. (Frith and Harcourt 2007, p.1345)

By the same token it may also record deeper processes and struggles, those of inner conflict and resolution that may not be as immediately apparent to strangers viewing the image but which may, nonetheless, act as a significant reminder of the degree of achievement in the challenges survived and overcome to the person who has taken the pictures. As Lemon (2007) writes:

For the teacher visual narrative can reveal inner conflict or self-revelation...yet a consistent visual metaphor that displays aspects of personal growth (Johnson 2001) can be created. (Lemon 2007, p.183)

The strength here is that the photograph is viewed outside the time-frame in which it is created, which means that images taken in the past may be 'viewed from the perspective of the present' (Frith and Harcourt 2007). This presents us with many exciting possibilities since the meaning of the image is not fixed, and it offers a medium through which the person is able to talk about issues they are currently facing, shifts in perspective, things they have accomplished, changes they have made or would like to make. The added advantage here is that a photograph offers distance and provides a means to step back and try to understand what was happening at the time, offering the opportunity to learn from these experiences. Because such feelings are not as raw and immediate it becomes easier to reflect on events. When images are then shared with others or in groups or in positive helping relationships reflection can occur and alternative perspectives may be offered leading to the development of new insights, meanings and a growing self-awareness. The focus of the exercises described in this book is not on in-depth exploration or interpretation but on the process of sharing and collective problem solving.

Where a person experiences difficulties in communicating images may provide a new language *by* and *through* which to communicate. As Berman (1993) explains:

Sometimes concepts, feelings or visual experiences can be difficult to express linguistically and we may use photographs to enhance or replace our verbal description. (Berman 1993, p.9)

In such instances photographs may offer a symbolic language where the subject matter of the picture is not taken literally but is used as a metaphor to express something else. This, again, has the advantage of offering distance from the subject matter and providing a way to get in touch with and articulate difficult feelings and emotions. At the same time this can offer the means to gain new insights as the following reflective account provided by Gloria (not her real name) illustrates.

I wanted to talk about how ugly and unattractive I felt. I was growing older quickly and just no longer felt at ease in my body. The person I was on the outside was a completely different person to the real me on the inside. The problem was I felt ashamed and so when the tutor said to find an image that represented the subject we wanted to talk about I chose the oldest, most gnarled and deformed tree in the park. I started to photograph the wrinkled bark, click, click, click...

Yet as I did I was struck by the strength of the trunk. It was huge. No one was going to move this beauty in a long time. Click, click, click. I wanted to photograph the roots to represent how I felt stuck and tied down, but as I moved in to focus I also noticed that there was still growth on some of the branches at the bottom of the tree. It might be old but it was still capable of producing new shoots. The roots went deep. It was pretty overgrown but as I photographed these they reminded me of veins pumping lifeblood into the vast trunk, seeking out hidden resources. It reminded me of me. Keeping everyone fed and watered, stretching out so far that I felt that I would break. Yet I was suddenly struck that it was this same stretching out that gave this vast tree stability. For the first time in a long while I felt quite at peace.

I returned to the group a week later with my photographs and I began to tell everyone about my discovery. I was very moved when someone asked if I felt that the image I had chosen primarily because of its age was really about strength. I kept the image and I look at this when I have the odd twinge in my back or my rheumatism plays up. It makes me feel incredibly proud.

I chose this example because it provides a clear illustration of how such an exercise can lead to the creation of new and revealing insights. There are instances where the images suffice and words are not necessary. In the words of Gillies (cited in Frith and Harcourt 2007):

Some emotions, thoughts, feelings and experiences are more easily or variously expressed in visual rather than verbal form. (Gillies, cited in Frith and Harcourt 2007, p.1342)

The potential of the image-making process to offer this is powerfully illustrated by James McKillop (2003), a person with dementia. His book *Opening Shutters – Opening Minds* has fully utilized this tacit and emotional quality of photography using image-making as a means of communicating powerful feelings. Dark skies, sunny beaches and dramatic landscapes act as metaphors to express emotions the author no longer has the words to express.

Such communication is integral if existing relationships are to be maintained and new ones formed. Photography can provide a means of ‘getting under the surface’ and finding out who a person really is, what they value, why they may act in a certain way; the photographic process lends itself to the building and development of relationships. As Berman (2003) writes:

Photographs in therapy also act as a bridge, a link between two separate people and their worlds. They connect them, span the space between, a space that can be full of creative possibilities. (Berman 2003, p.65)

This bridge may occur as a consequence of a number of processes. For example, sharing images can offer the possibility of making or reinforcing connections between group members and the development of a shared understanding in respect of who people are. It may lead to something as simple as a person discovering an interest or hobby they would then like to take up. It might be that a connection is made when a person shares a similar difficulty or challenge. Whatever the reason, the image-making process may lead to the establishment of strong foundations on which relationships can be built, breaking down isolation and offering a model in terms of how future relationships might be.

What Photography Can Offer

Photography can promote communication

Photography can offer a language to support individuals with communication needs that have resulted from physical or cognitive difficulties or as a consequence of emotional needs where a person finds it difficult to access the language necessary to express their feelings. Various images may act as a substitute for verbal communication, offering a visual language and means of conveying emotion; they may be used in a metaphorical sense, allowing the person to speak through the image or as a means of organizing and structuring what a person wants to say, offering both a framework and a focus for conversation. Within this framework the person may choose to talk about the content of the photograph, the circumstances surrounding the taking of the picture, the story behind the image or the meaning it holds.

Photography can aid memory

Photography and image-making are frequently used with people who have memory problems as a means to aid recall and promote reminiscence. Pictures can trigger memories and enable the person to place these in 'a visual context' (Berman 1993, p.146) thereby aiding the

construction and reconstruction of stories (Lemon 2007, p.179). Photography used in this way is most commonly associated with reminiscence activities with people who have dementia where it provides a means of tapping into the past, promoting conversation, building relationships and improving self-image. Berman also points to the value of this medium for people experiencing amnesia where ‘photographs can help restore a vanished sense of self. Where there is no memory of the past the images can help show patients their own life and build up a picture of themselves’ (Berman 1993, p.148).

Photography can promote feelings of self-esteem

We are tidying the last remnants of the exhibition away. It has been a great success, the first of its kind at the hospital and a chance for people to share their images and poems. As I place things neatly in the box I am aware that a few people have come down from the ward to see if they can help. I smile as I hear one person, Pat, proudly introduce her father to a friend with the words, ‘This is my father, he is a photographer and artist.’ (Craig 2005, p.11)

The image-making process can be incredibly affirming and, just as other creative activities may foster feelings of accomplishment, photography can promote confidence and enhance self-esteem. This may occur on a number of levels. For instance, feelings of achievement may stem from the quality of the final image, or it may result from pleasure in learning a new skill. As previously highlighted, taking a basic photograph is not dependent upon the complex technical expertise associated with painting a picture or playing a musical instrument, which makes it perfect for people who lack confidence in using arts-based media.

Improved self-esteem may therefore result from mastery of the photographic technique. It could also be the consequence of exploring a theme linked to the revisiting of past achievements or the recording of present accomplishments, offering the means to celebrate progress made towards reaching a valued goal. A range of exercises contained in Part II of this book look at this dimension of the image-making process.

Photography can provide cohesion and promote the development of positive relationships

The act of sharing and talking about a photograph is an act of sharing something about who you are or what is important to you, and as a way of letting others in. Berman describes this process within the therapeutic relationship in the following way.

Photographs very much aid the establishment of this relationship as they are shared, the beginning of a dialogue is encouraged, one that emerges from seeing into a patient's world as well as a bearing of their story. (Berman 1993, p.58)

Within a group this sharing relationship is intensified as participants learn about each other through the act of looking at and talking about the photographs they have taken. These images may offer glimpses into different facets of personalities, establish commonalities, make links between groups members, provide a means to record a shared journey within a climate of reciprocity, mutual trust and understanding.

Beyond the group setting photography can provide a means to connect and reconnect with friends and family, offering a shared activity and meeting place where new images and memories may be created.

Photography can offer a means to communicate what is important

At its most fundamental level, the content of the image offers a valuable insight into what the photographer feels to be important, perhaps communicating particular likes and dislikes, messages about who is important in their life or something about places they value. Much may be gleaned in terms of looking through a person's existing photographic collection, although such images will, to some degree, present an 'idealized' picture. In order to capture what is important in the 'here and now' it is preferable to offer the individual a camera and invite them to seek out images that are significant, offering complete control over the process.

This can be very powerful as it moves away from some of the 'idealized' pictures contained in albums and gives the individual permission to

tell the real story and identify and express negative as well as positive values. This has been the focus of much of my work in residential care homes where I have worked with residents who have very little verbal communication to create individual 'preference' books or photographic collages as a way of helping them to indicate likes and dislikes to carers and other members of staff. However, this work need not be confined to people living in care. The work of Percy (1995) with homeless children and the use of image-making with siblings of children with Down syndrome by Rampton *et al.* (2007) are two striking examples of what may be achieved when individuals are offered the opportunity to communicate what is important in their lives through this process.

Photography can support process of change

Images can simultaneously reflect and promote change. They offer a starting point in the process by the identification of goals and a means to create a concrete representation of what the person or group is seeking to achieve. Milestones along the way may also be presented visually providing tangible steps to work towards, aiding planning and offering a means to measure progress. As outlined previously, the image-making process has the added advantage of being able to record change which, in turn, offers a source of motivation, demonstrating the full extent of the distance travelled.

Photography is therefore a perfect medium to use with groups of people who wish to effect some form of positive change in their lives. The results of this can be powerful on an individual level and also at a community level, as has been shown by the work of Wilson *et al.* (2007). Their work with young people in an after-school club highlighted the developments that could occur when photography is used as a catalyst for social change.

Photography can offer a hobby or interest

The value of photography extends far beyond the boundaries of the group intervention. It may offer a link to the community, providing participants with the means to develop and engage in a valued interest or leisure pursuit. If photography is used as part of a formalized group

intervention or programme its benefits do not end with the closure of the group. Indeed, it may form a springboard to other community-based groups that people who focus on photography as a hobby or leisure pursuit may be signposted towards as a way of building further social networks and continuing on their own creative journey.

Reflection and professional development

Lemon (2007) writes:

The camera can be seen as a tool that ignites enquiry into our own practice... promoting self-awareness, self-monitoring, reflective and reflexive practice. (Lemon 2007, p.183)

Photography offers a means to step outside a situation and gain additional perspectives that may otherwise be difficult to achieve. This makes it a perfect tool to aid reflection and engage in the reflective practices required for professional development. The level of engagement with the media, and the multi-dimensional nature of the image-making process, offers a depth of understanding that does not occur within many traditional models of reflection. The highly imaginative process of seeking out and finding images can permit the reviewing of situations from multiple viewpoints, feeding directly into deeper reflective processes, supporting action planning, providing the means to explore alternative solutions and to consider different ways of responding and behaving within a situation. In the words of Lemon:

Photos can assist us in exploring reoccurring stories (Spence 1986, Bach 2001). Each time we look at a photograph we have the opportunity to view it through maturing eyes, to see ourselves differently where we give ourselves the opportunity to learn and grow. (Lemon 2007, p.183)

Establishing and Facilitating your Group

Skills required by the facilitator

Having described the potential of photography to offer such a range of possibilities for self-exploration and growth it is useful to briefly consider the skills required by the facilitator to promote such benefits. As previously stated, this book is not about the business of taking beautiful photographs, and the primary requirement of the facilitator therefore is not necessarily to be an expert in photography. In fact, to be an expert potentially could hinder the process as the temptation would be to focus too much on the technical accuracy of the final product rather than on the process of creation and this could be extremely inhibiting to individuals and group members. The real skill of the facilitator lies in the ability to establish and sustain a positive atmosphere within which individuals can thrive, whether in a one-to-one relationship or group setting.

Creativity flourishes in an atmosphere of trust and unconditional positive regard. Your role is to act as a guide and a support to help the people you work with to use image-making as a vehicle for self-exploration and change while doing your utmost to ensure that everyone is kept 'safe' within this. At no point should anyone be left alone in a state of vulnerability to cope with unresolved emotions raised by the process. Your role is not to 'interpret', force or cajole but to offer a place where individuals can engage with photography to gain new insights.

When a group-work approach is adopted, the facilitator must be careful to establish a delicate balance between ensuring the safety of the group, imparting information, supporting the discussion so that everyone's voice is heard and making sure that the locus of control lies within the group where members can contribute their own expertise. The facilitator should therefore encourage participants to use their own resourcefulness and to develop an appreciation of the resources of others. The techniques of reflection and gentle questioning can be useful in promoting the growing insight and self-awareness that is at the heart of change within the approach.

Getting started

Once you have established the potential role photography can play as a medium for self-exploration in the lives of the people you work with the next step is to make a number of practical decisions in terms of how you will enable individuals to access these opportunities.

As has already been highlighted in the Introduction, the activities described in this book may easily be adapted to meet both individual and group needs, although the text focuses predominantly on the latter with emphasis placed on the potential of photography to foster group problem-solving and collective decision-making.

This focus seems entirely appropriate given that groups form a natural place for individuals wishing to embark on a journey of self-discovery in order to look at who they are, since they provide the means to examine issues through multiple perspectives. Yalom (1975) has written about the restorative and healing properties of groups, emphasizing their role in imparting information, instilling hope and developing self-awareness through group cohesion. The process of sharing images within a supportive atmosphere offered by a group can validate the person, enable identification with the experiences of others and thereby break down isolation. Groups provide an opportunity for building relationships, managing conflict, expressing feelings and having fun. At various times members will take the role of confidante, critical viewer, listener, problem-solver, comforter, helper and friend. Over time this process can build confidence and self-esteem. The great advantage of offering a group intervention focusing on photography is that it very

much draws on the skills and experiences of the collective. When groups work well members recognize that they can give and take in equal measure, and this in turn increases self-efficacy as well as reducing an over-reliance or dependence on any one individual.

However, if during group facilitation you find that the individual needs of members are not being met then you may wish to consider a combined approach with a few well-chosen individual sessions running alongside and complimenting group work. This offers participants a means of reflecting on the group process, identifying issues that require further exploration and as a means of tailoring sessions to meet particular needs.

Models of delivery

The next stage of the process of establishing the group is to examine how and where this approach might fit into the existing programme of activities offered. This book has been designed in such a way that the exercises could slip very easily into a range of creative groups that you may already be involved in facilitating. In such instances the activities contained in specific chapters would easily provide a focus for themes. Examples of this could include: 'photography and self-expression', 'photography as a means of self-discovery', 'words and pictures: photography and creative writing'.

It is also possible to select individual exercises for use within pre-existing groups which do not have a creative focus. For example, activities described in Chapter 6 would be well suited for use with groups focusing on helping members to develop their social skills. Similarly, all the ideas described in Chapter 4 could easily be used as warm-up exercises within any session. It may be helpful to use these if you want to 'test the water' before developing a more substantive programme focusing on photography and image-making. Indeed, a group of this nature is not appropriate for everyone and clarity is required in terms of how the group will help individuals achieve their personal goals.

If you do decide to set up a group entirely based around photography you will find that this book is structured in such a way that the ideas it contains can easily form the basis of such a programme. Chapters are arranged sequentially, with practical ideas of how to develop themes.

The breadth of activities is intended to meet a range of needs and the skill of the facilitator is in the selection and customization of exercises to ensure that these are tailored to individual and group members' requirements.

Printed information with examples of the types of exercises group members may take part in may be helpful if potential participants are concerned about the photographic media, or feel camera-shy with concerns about appearing in other people's pictures. It should be emphasized that technical skills or abilities are not a prerequisite for taking part in the group. A pre-group interview can offer the opportunity for questions and clarify expectations on both sides.

Group composition and membership

With regard to establishing the group you will need to decide at quite an early point something about its composition and membership. In terms of organizing sessions, an open group with a more fluid membership has the advantage of including individuals who would find it difficult to commit to attending for a fixed length of time. This offers variety as new people come along with different skills and ideas and the dynamic changes constantly. This can add interest, although it can also make planning a challenging process. Many of the community-based groups I have facilitated have been based on this format as they have offered individuals the opportunity to gain a flavour of the media without feeling pressured to make a more substantive commitment.

Although a closed group with a fixed membership does not offer such flexibility it allows participants to work closely together, and allows time for the development of relationships. This format facilitates trust building and role formation. As a consequence, group members are able to explore themes, ideas and feelings in more depth as there is no requirement to continually establish or re-establish their position within the group each time they meet. Because the group may look at issues in greater depth you will need to set clear ground rules. A pre-group interview will help in the setting of clear boundaries and begin to create the necessary conditions required to permit participants to flourish.

Staffing

Group membership will have a significant bearing on the number of participants you will invite to the session, as will the composition of the group, the needs of individuals and the resources available. It can be a fine balance between ensuring that the group is large enough to sustain a positive dynamic in which individuals do not feel overexposed yet small enough to enable everyone to have the space and time to speak. In light of this eight to ten members would be an optimum number and a two-hour session would offer a good timeframe with enough space for the sharing of images and discussion of issues as they arise. Ideally for a group of this size two facilitators should be present. This ensures continuity and reduces the possibility of disruption when illness or holidays occur. An added advantage is that both facilitators will bring their own perspective and ideas to sessions as well as offering each other support throughout the process. Before working together facilitators will need to spend time familiarizing themselves with the exercises, the underpinning principles of the approach and ways of working together to deliver this.

Equipment

If staffing is one key consideration in terms of resources, technical equipment is the other, and concerns about the costs of this are often raised. However, the range of cameras available and the options in terms of printing can keep production costs to a minimum. It is not necessary to purchase cameras for group members unless it is in the scope of your project to do so. Most people own a camera and, since the hope is that they will generalize the activities explored within the group to everyday life, it is an advantage to encourage individuals to use their own photographic equipment. Alternatively, a small selection of cameras (throw-away cameras, a single-lens reflex (SLR) camera, a mobile phone with built-in-camera and a digital camera) will allow group members to experiment and build confidence in the use of different photographic media. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the range of technical equipment available offering a summary of the strengths and limitations of the different types of camera you may decide to include.

Choosing a camera

When considering the aims of the session it is necessary to consider the type of camera that the person may wish to use. Essentially there is no such thing as an 'ideal camera' as this will be completely dependent upon the person and their preferences, priorities or previous experiences, on the effects they wish to achieve, and on the resources available.

As Table 3.1 highlights, particular cameras will serve different purposes and the skill is to fit the camera to the person and the task. For instance, some of the exercises require more instant photographic results and on these occasions it is advantageous to use a Polaroid or digital camera. Where emphasis is placed on playfulness and experimentation a throwaway camera would be better-suited since group members may feel more able to take risks without the concerns associated with more expensive equipment. The descriptions accompanying the exercises contained in Part II of this book indicate where specific photographic equipment is required. If your group becomes established, it would be worth investing in a portable computer, printer and scanner for a wider programme of activities. This will offer you complete flexibility, ensure that images may be viewed almost instantaneously and enable participants to manipulate their pictures, whilst retaining control over this process.

Location, time and timing

Lastly, you will need to give some thought as to where the group will meet and to matters concerning the time of meetings and timing of sessions. Photography groups can take place in most settings and I have facilitated groups in pubs, community centres, church halls, at schools and in colleges, in health centres and within hospital settings to name but a few. The venue will, to a large degree, dictate the information that individuals feel comfortable to share. A medium-sized room with an assortment of chairs and a door that shuts ensures privacy and means that group members are able to discuss issues without feeling concerned about being overheard by others. A flip-chart and a marker pen allow for the physical recording of ideas and information, and may act as an aide-memoire from week to week.

Table 3.1 Strengths and weaknesses of different equipment

Type of camera	Strengths	Limitations
Person's own camera	<p>The person may be familiar with using this and consequently this can provide continuity</p> <p>Can provide a sense of recognition in terms of something being familiar – an older camera used by the person would reinforce this</p> <p>Can help the person to feel comfortable in taking pictures</p> <p>Often can accommodate different types of film, such as slide transparencies, black and white prints, colour</p>	<p>Depending on the model the camera may be awkward to operate, i.e. small shutter release</p> <p>Can raise anxiety of carers, particularly if the camera is used by another family member and is expensive</p>
Camera owned by the group	<p>May be purchased with particular needs in mind</p> <p>Less worry in terms of sentimental value</p> <p>May purchase additional resources, i.e. strap/tripod/shutter release, which are important if the person has difficulty in holding the camera or has a tremor</p>	<p>Loss of spontaneity if more than one person needs to use it at any one time</p> <p>Cost to the group</p> <p>Person will require time to become familiar with the equipment, particularly if this is new</p>
Throwaway camera	<p>Very cheap</p> <p>Light to hold</p> <p>Good size shutter release button</p> <p>Some have instructions printed on the back</p> <p>Can purchase packages where cost of developing film is included in the price</p>	<p>Variable quality of images</p> <p>Sometimes can be awkward if it is necessary to operate the flash at the same time as the shutter release</p> <p>To be cost effective all images need to be taken before developing</p>

Type of camera	Strengths	Limitations
Older camera, e.g. Box Brownie	Wonderful reminiscence quality	Films and processing can be expensive Can be expensive to repair
Polaroid camera	Instant images producing an immediate result	Can be quite awkward to hold Heavy Films are expensive Again, tends to be limited to colour prints
Digital camera	<p>Produces results that can be seen instantaneously using either the viewing facility – an LCD monitor on camera itself or by plugging the camera into the television</p> <p>Very flexible, which means that it is possible to produce multiple copies of prints easily and cheaply</p> <p>Can produce transparencies by printing on acetate</p> <p>Good-quality images in a range of styles, including black and white, sepia and colour</p> <p>Many digital cameras also have facility for taking short video clips</p>	<p>Initial outlay is expensive, although long-term usage is much cheaper</p> <p>Requires a computer and a printer to operate effectively</p> <p>With some of the earlier models the person may not recognize the camera as a camera</p> <p>Cost may raise anxiety in using the equipment</p> <p>May be ethical considerations if photographs are stored on a computer; important to look at how these are accessed in order to ensure that confidentiality is observed at all times</p>
Video	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Includes sound as well as pictures</p> <p>Person can be in control of when to pause, play back the images</p>	<p>Cost of the equipment – again the initial outlay can be expensive</p> <p>Can be awkward to operate</p> <p>Need to consider who will watch the tapes and where they will be stored</p>

With regard to the duration of the group, two approaches exist. In the first the timeframe is not specified and the group runs for an indefinite length of time ending when participants tire of the process or cease to gain something from it. Group members therefore have a degree of control, although if the group is part of a wider programme of activities offered within a hospital or community setting, group membership could also terminate on discharge. This type of approach works best for groups with an open membership and with individuals who find it difficult to make a time commitment.

The second approach is more structured. Here the group is offered within a definite timeframe that is set by the facilitator with clear beginning, middle and end points. This approach is more rigid and less flexible than the first but has the advantage of offering a pre-determined exit strategy and useful boundaries as to the depth of discussion and exploration that may safely take place. In this instance the group members need to be gently reminded and supported to work towards this end point in order to make the necessary transition. Emphasis is placed on the ending of the group as a time for the celebration of a new beginning where individuals move forwards armed with the additional insights and techniques that photography can offer.

Organization of sessions

Once you have met individual members and made decisions relating to the aims of the group, where sessions will be held and who will facilitate these, the next step is to consider how individual sessions should be organized.

Generally most sessions will comprise an initial period of time where participants come together and engage in social interaction (usually over a cup of tea or coffee), sharing news and developing relationships. This is informal, untimetabled and an integral part of the meeting; it is during these moments that confidence is built, ideas are shared and learning from previous sessions is generalized.

Such general discussion is usually followed by an exercise to orientate the group members to the wider theme of the session. This is frequently described as a 'warm-up' and is a precursor to a more in-depth activity which follows. In a two-hour session you should allow approxi-

mately 20 minutes for this activity. A carefully planned warm-up will permit a deeper exploration of the issues as group members will be tuned into the broader picture and will already have started the process of peeling back the layers. The exercises described in Part II offer a range of ideas for potential warm-up activities which have been tried and tested with a number of groups.

The main body of the meeting then offers participants time to use photography to explore a theme or issue in greater depth. Some exercises incorporate image-making and discussion within the session whilst others invite participants to take photographs outside the group and use subsequent sessions for exploration. This process of sharing images, reflecting on the experience and the insights gained is central to the overall process of developing increased self-awareness and understanding.

Finally the session ends with a period where group members reflect on their learning and talk about their experiences before looking to ways to build on this theme in subsequent meetings. The importance of allocating time for group members to share their images, and to explore the meanings and feelings associated with these and the stories behind their creation, should not be underestimated. The process of talking about the photographs can yield additional insights and offer participants the confidence and impetus to take significant steps which can lead to change. The images may form vehicles through which group members express strong emotions or structure thinking, and in these moments the wider group may offer validation, encouragement or engage with the person in joint problem-solving. This can break down barriers and underpin the formation of strong relationships between individuals.

Keeping the process safe

In order for the group to engage with this overall process it is necessary to create an environment where participants feel safe and valued. Ground rules offer one way of establishing a set of principles and agreed behaviours to which the group commonly subscribes, providing clear boundaries and a means of containing the information shared. Because these are developed by group members the group retains a sense of ownership and the overall process communicates the important

message that collectively they are in control. A description of how to develop these creatively is included in Chapter 4.

Ground rules will contribute to the process of establishing a positive atmosphere. However, as a facilitator you will also need to give special consideration to how you will support individuals at the point when they share their personal photographs, given that this is an act of trust and can make the person feel incredibly vulnerable and exposed. Indeed, for some people this may be the first time they have been given space to talk about these feelings or had the opportunity to be listened to, and the size of the step they take to do this should not be underestimated. Therefore, whilst the group should be encouraged and given space at no point should anyone feel under pressure to do so. Here are a few suggestions of how to facilitate and grade this.

- In the first instance invite group members to share and talk about their photographs in pairs rather than sharing with the whole group. This provides an opportunity for rehearsal and the building of confidence.
- Add in short time-limited exercises where group members feedback concrete information that does not relate to feelings or emotions.
- Boundaries and guidelines relating to the types of things individuals may want to share may be useful in the initial stages.
- Offer space for participants to comment on the group or the process of taking photographs.
- Ensure that the group is clear in terms of a set of commonly agreed behaviours and ways of working to which they have subscribed. Make sure that everyone understands the difference between comments and responses that are positive and helpful and those that are unhelpful.
- Be clear in terms of how long people have to discuss their images, and ensure that you build in time for everyone who wants to, to have the opportunity to speak.

Above all, help participants to find their own comfort zone. Use sessions to offer the person time to experiment and explore their feelings in relation to the process; spend time at the end of the meeting to check

how people are feeling and support and encourage discussion, validating the contributions made by individuals taking part.

Respecting privacy

On the surface photographs provide a concrete, visual record of events, objects, people, places or situations. From the perspective of image-making as a tool for self-exploration, the interest in such pictures lies in the multiple meanings and associations they carry. Indeed, three people could view the same picture but each leave with a different interpretation of what it represents based on their own personal associations as they project their own perspective on to the photograph. When a group member takes a particular photograph the interest often lies in the story behind the image, the motivation for recording that collection of objects or scene at that particular moment in time.

However, whilst such multiple perspectives may exist the fact still remains that a photograph is still a photograph and will portray real people in authentic situations which may be identified by others. This raises a whole set of questions that you as the facilitator need to address, the most important of which relate to ways to protect the privacy of group members and questions relating to ownership.

The first point to make is that if members of the group do not want to be photographed their wishes should be respected without question and at no point should anyone feel under pressure to appear in a picture. The group focuses on building self-esteem and encouraging choice and decision-making, and the act of placing individuals in situations where they feel uncomfortable or powerless would seem completely contrary to the overall ethos of the book and the approach. To this end, many of the exercises described focus on the use of visual metaphors where participants choose to photograph an object to symbolize themselves, a person or a feeling. The process of deciding how to represent these in a more abstract way can itself be an integral part of the process of self-discovery. Where tasks invite group members to find images from outside the group it is again recommended that photographs of people are not included, and you will note that with the exception of a few exercises these are not a requirement of any of the activities described in the book.

The second question, of whom the photograph belongs to, is in my mind quite a straightforward one. Is the photograph owned by the photographer, the facilitator or the group? As a rule I would argue that the photograph is the property of the photographer. The image records the moment when a connection was made, and this then becomes a tangible reminder of the beginning of the reflective process to which the person may return again and again to yield new insights. In much the same way that a person attending an art group will take their paintings with them, the person who has taken the photograph should look on the image as belonging to them.

The challenge arises when a photograph has been taken within the context of the group and includes other participants within its composition or subject matter. Much will depend on the nature of the group and the feelings of group members. If the ground rules have stated that participants wish information to remain confidential then it would be unethical for these images to be shared with other people outside the group setting, as this could breach any notions of anonymity. This has particularly been the case in health or social care settings where confidentiality has been a key consideration and in these instances groups tend to make an album to 'hold' the photographs, and this has been retained by the facilitator in a safe place within that environment. However, where group meetings have taken place in community settings and members have wanted to share these pictures, arrangements have been made to provide multiple copies of prints or, in one instance, the group took the decision to enlarge the photograph and then trim it into pieces, with each person taking a 'fragment' of the group away with them. Even in these circumstances, depending on the setting in which you are working, there may be documents that group members need to complete, agreeing to the sharing of photographs of group members outside of the group.

Lastly...

It would be wonderful to be able to state that photography and the act of exploring visual media always results in positive experiences, feelings of well-being and pleasure for the person, but sadly this is not so. As with other creative media, when used with sensitivity and respect photogra-

phy and visual imagery can prove to be a source of great enjoyment, delight, discovery and growth. The real danger, however, occurs when images are used without sensitivity and respect for the person or when a blanket approach is adopted with the assumption that everyone will react in the same way to a set task or series of pictures. Images will always have the potential to tap into memories that carry negative associations and thus they should be treated with absolute respect at all times. Berman (1993) writes:

When photographs are used in therapy their possible forceful effects on the patient should never be underestimated, they need to be treated with care and caution. (Berman 1993, p.29)

Weiser (1999) adds:

If readers anticipate that any major difficulties might arise while involved with these exercises I strongly suggest that you do not attempt them. (Weiser 1999, p.40)

Of course, the challenge lies in the highly subjective nature of the photograph and the way images are read and interpreted. Consequently a photograph taken by one person to represent a very positive experience or attribute might represent quite the opposite to another. It is impossible to cover all eventualities – sometimes the most innocuous image may result in a completely unexpected response, and it would be impossible and unhelpful to censor images and limit the process to the degree where it becomes restricting and inhibiting. However, if a person does become distressed during a group or individual interaction the important thing is not to ignore this but to acknowledge and respect these feelings and, again, offer the necessary reassurance and support.

Part I has provided a brief overview of the potential use of photography as a tool for self-exploration and personal growth, and it has highlighted just a few of the benefits of this approach. It has also offered some guidance concerning the practicalities of setting up and facilitating a group of this nature. Part II now builds on these ideas to provide detailed descriptions of the exercises which may be used within sessions, including narratives by facilitators and participants who have taken part in this process.

PART II

Images as Starting Points

This book challenges you to think about photography and the image-making process in a different way. Rather than photography simply being a way to record memorable occasions, individuals or places, the camera becomes a tool to:

- promote self-expression
- communicate in a way that is not dependent on words
- look at situations from different perspectives
- gain increased self-awareness
- achieve positive change.

Given that this may be a very different way of thinking about photography, the activities in this chapter provide structures to help group participants to move away from their current perceptions of what taking pictures is about and to feel more confident both in using a camera and in being part of a group.

The overall aim is to establish a positive atmosphere so that the group becomes a safe place where people want to be. Emphasis is placed on exercises to build trust, encourage fun, playfulness, sharing and creative expression. In this way the image-making process becomes a means through which individuals are able to learn more about each

other and to begin to develop the positive relationships necessary for group cohesion, mutual support and meaningful change.

Broadly, the chapter is divided into four parts:

- exercises to foster group cohesion
- exercises to build confidence in using the camera
- exercises to promote fun and enjoyment
- presenting photographs.

The shift away from taking photographs of special occasions, holidays, friends and family to using images as a way of reflecting, thinking, communicating and experiencing change is a big step and this can be challenging for some people. The length of time dedicated to these activities will be determined by the group. You may, for example, decide to focus on these elements when the group is first established or when new members join the session. Alternatively, they are useful activities to use when reviewing progress or revisiting basic principles.

Exercises to foster group cohesion

Choose a picture

INTRODUCTION

You can tell a lot about a person from the types of images they select. This exercise gives group members the opportunity to introduce themselves in a non-threatening way and to exercise simple choice and decision-making skills.

REQUIREMENTS

A selection of images, including photographs, pictures from magazines, newspaper and the internet. Include black and white as well as colour prints.

WARM-UP

Individuals are invited to select one picture from a range of images and to say a little about why they have chosen it. This may relate to the content of the picture or it could be about a technical feature of the pho-

tographic media, for example a black and white photograph compared to a colour print, or a Polaroid image compared to a print from a digital camera. This also offers group members the chance to share a little about who they are, to express what is important as well as demonstrating the highly personal meanings that photographs have.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Building on the first activity, invite participants to work in pairs or threes and choose a further image or a series of images, giving these a title. Then invite each group to then say a little about how they arrived at their particular title. Other group members then respond. You may choose to structure this around a series of questions. For example:

- Are group members surprised by the title?
- Does it make the group look at the image in a different way or offer an alternative view?
- What other title might it have?

End the group by inviting individuals to find an image to sum up the session.

Photographic ground rules

Groups flourish in climates of safety and unconditional positive regard. When a group is formed we need to establish what will make it a place where individuals feel comfortable to share personal information, thoughts and ideas. One way of helping group members to feel safe is to set a series of parameters, sometimes called 'ground rules'. The ground rules are essentially a code of conduct outlining an agreed list of behaviours and ways of working, to which group members subscribe. They frequently relate to confidentiality, ways of responding to one another and things that groups will find acceptable or unacceptable. Generally, a good set of ground rules will contain the following ingredients.

- Direction about what happens to the information once it has been shared (for example, rules about confidentiality, talking outside the group).

- Expectations regarding attitudes (importance of being non-judgemental, respect, recognising personal belief systems, equality).
- Guidance relating to actions or behaviours (arriving on time, letting others know if unable to attend, contributing to discussion, interrupting).
- Ground rules relating to communication (ways of giving or receiving feedback, listening to others, not interrupting).

REQUIREMENTS

Squares of paper, pens, container, photographic equipment, images from books and magazines.

WARM-UP

Working individually, or in pairs, group members write down three words that they associate with feeling safe or being comfortable. These are recorded on small squares of paper which are folded in two, collected by the facilitator and placed in a container. The facilitator then draws each square of paper from the container and reads it aloud. The group discusses the word and together group members think of an image that could convey or represent this. For instance, for the word 'privacy' the group may choose an image of a padlock or a closed door. 'Comfort' may be conveyed by a picture of a comfy chair or a deep sofa; 'safety' by a large net underneath a tightrope.

MAIN ACTIVITY

As a group discuss how to make the group a safe place to be. In keeping with the theme of visual metaphors work together to develop a series of images to express these ideas. Group members may decide to create or find images around the following themes.

- 'I would like this group to be a place where the following happens...'
- 'I would like the group to be a place where the following does not happen...'

- Group etiquette.
- ‘Always...’ ‘Never...’

Find a way to present the images so that they are accessible to the group and may be used in future meetings. Periodically revisit the visual ground rules so that members review the images, discarding those that are no longer relevant and creating new pictures to reflect how the group has evolved.

NAMING THE GROUP

Groups provide individuals with the opportunity to develop roles and to experience a sense of belonging. Group names are therefore important as they can help to create a focus for a shared identity. When members take responsibility for deciding the name of their group this has the added advantage of creating a sense of ownership.

REQUIREMENTS

Printouts or leaflets containing logos from a range of organizations, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Invite the group to look at logos for a range of organizations. UNICEF, Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund are all good examples. Discuss what the images or symbols convey about the organizations.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Work together and decide on the following.

- What is our group about?
- What image or images could express this?
- What should the name of the group be?

Build on these ideas to create a group logo. Record this logo using the camera.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I had been working with a group of young people from Uganda. They had come to England as part of a project supporting young people in an area of high social deprivation and wanted to find a way of capturing this. We had great fun finding a way to express the freedom they wanted to show it was possible to achieve, and at the same time bring a little of Africa to a northern town. The final image was vibrant, fun, full of energy. Its title was *Ubuntu* meaning humanity to others 'I am what I am because of who we all are.'

Exercises to build confidence in using the camera

Getting to grips with using a camera can be challenging. The following exercises all look at ways of building confidence in taking photographs.

Pass the camera

This is a useful ice-breaker and can help groups to feel at ease in using the photographic equipment.

REQUIREMENTS

A selection of throwaway cameras, images from books and magazines, a cassette or CD player, music.

WARM-UP

Group members begin by sitting in a circle. The facilitator describes the activity, likening it to the game 'pass the parcel'. The only difference is that when the music stops whoever is holding the camera takes a photograph. This may be of anything and the only rule is that the person is unable to leave their seat in the circle. The person is able to ask for help from the group for possible ideas. When the music begins the activity starts.

To add an element of fun the facilitator can change the pace of the activity by adding certain instructions and conditions. For example, 'change direction', 'stand up', 'walk around', 'next picture must include something blue, etc.'. The facilitator can bring additional cameras depending on the size of the group.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Divide participants into two groups (four to five people is an optimum number). Invite the group to look through a selection of images either taken as part of a group or from books and magazines.

Each group must choose an image from the selection. Working together within their group individuals identify one aspect of the image and take a photograph that either mirrors or develops this aspect. For example, the photograph might contain a vase of flowers. The group may decide to develop this theme of nature. Once they have taken a second photograph they must choose something from this composition to build on. Say, for instance, this same group takes a photograph of a magnolia tree. The group may then decide that the follow-on image must contain something that picks up the white of the magnolia's petals. The group may continue to repeat this process for as long as they wish. Once the images have been processed assemble them into a frieze.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Develop photographs taken during the warm-up activity and use these as the basis of a discussion around how it felt to use the camera.

Taking a camera for a walk

This activity works well as an individual or paired exercise as well as a group activity. If you decide to include it as a group exercise you will need to plan this in advance and carry out a risk assessment. You could choose to dedicate a full session to planning, inviting group members to talk about their favourite walks or walks of particular significance.

When you are out on the walk and people are taking pictures you would be well advised to remember Alfred Wainwright's¹ famous saying, 'Always stop and look.' Do not try to take photographs at the same time as you are walking, it is a sure way to increase the possibility of slips and trips.

1 Alfred Wainwright (1907–1991) will always be known for his seven-volume *Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*, which he compiled between 1952 and 1966.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart pen, and paper, selection of photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

As a group talk about things that you enjoy about walking and things you hope to photograph. Discuss safety and decide which roles particular group members may wish to take. Establish whether group members wish to take photographs on their own or to work in pairs with others. This is a good point to set parameters, identifying possible themes or to agree a set number of photographs to take.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Provide the group with cameras and together create a visual record of the walk. You will need to offer ideas about possible themes individuals could focus on. Subjects could include:

- each other
- magic moments on the walk
- unusual views
- images based around colour
- texture
- elements: water, earth, air
- an A–Z of things seen on the walk.

When the group returns compare the photographs and explore similarities or differences. Consider ways to exhibit or display the images.

EXTENSION

It is possible to use these photographs in a number of ways, as follows.

- Arrange the images to form a chronological record and use these to create a visual map or a three-dimensional account of the walk.
- Spend time arranging the photographs so that they tell a story of what happened.

- Invite group members to choose one photograph that reflects a memorable moment on the walk. Use this as a stimulus to create either a written description about why they have chosen the photograph and what it meant to them.
- Invite the person to select an image and use this as the starting point of a poem.
- If you are working with a person with memory problems use this activity to explore how photography can act as an aid to memory.

An illustration of the power of the experience

A final possibility is to explore the relationship between photography and memory. This works particularly well if the group includes individuals who have mild cognitive impairment or memory difficulties. The following illustration describes the experiences of people with dementia attending a photography group.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

At first, his memory of the sequence of events held more truth for him than the numbers on the back of the photographs. Later, he used the latter to aid his memory and it became like a mini detective story. Yes, he must have gone back for that second cup of coffee. An aerial map of new Lanark was used to identify the different places on the photographs and the position he had been in when taking the photograph. (Mitchell 2005, p.19)

Exercises to promote fun and enjoyment

Moving pictures

This exercise shows the versatility of the image-making process. It illustrates how to transform a series of static pictures into a short animation. ‘Flick-books’ have the potential to appeal to all ages and across different generations.

REQUIREMENTS

A series of flick-books, photographic equipment, small pieces of card.

WARM-UP

Look at a range of flick-books. If you are sharing these as part of a group use them to stimulate discussion around childhood games and entertainment. Decide what the ingredients of a flick-book are. For example, small movements, repetition, a simple story.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Thinking about these ‘ingredients’ as a group, choose a theme and take a series of photographs to make a flick-book of your own.

Themes I have found to be particularly successful are:

- facial expressions
- ball games
- jumping jacks
- arm signals
- waving
- hand clapping.

There is an element of technical accuracy in making a flick-book. These books work because even the tiniest of movements are magnified. When photographing images for the book both the photographer and subject must take care to keep all movements other than those required for the flick-book animation to an absolute minimum.

Dedicate a session to producing the images. Process these and mount them on pieces of card to assemble the book. Celebrate the work and share the end results.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I had a marvellous afternoon using this activity with a group of people in the early stages of dementia and their families. We wanted to find something that everyone could take part in, and which would be good fun. I had managed to find a series of flick-books by Schadenfreude. Just sharing these generated a huge amount of fun

as grandparents showed grandchildren how to use them. It was an excellent reminiscence activity. The group chose ‘facial expressions’ as a theme. Children and grandparents took it in turns to pull faces and to photograph each other’s expressions using a digital camera. We printed these on to card and assembled them into the book. The activity lasted for the whole afternoon, there was so much laughter and fun that our faces ached. It was a really good day.

Red feels...

This exercise explores some of the more abstract elements of photography and taps into image-making as a vehicle for the imagination. It operates on a slightly deeper level than some of the previous activities, making it a good introduction to a more imaginative use of photography and offering a simple structure to frame creative work. Chapter 5 offers the group a chance to explore further opportunities to work in this way.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper, pens, sheets of paper, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Invite the person or people you are working with to choose a colour. For a few moments consider what this colour would smell like, what it would taste like, how it would feel, what it would sound like. For a few more moments imagine the colour as part of a view. The ideas are then recorded on a sheet of paper.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The challenge now is to find or take photographs of objects or scenes that convey and capture these different elements. For example, a person may decide that the colour red smells like a bunch of roses, tastes of hot chilli peppers, feels warm to touch and appears as a dramatic sunset, a promise of tomorrow. Once the images are printed, find ways to frame or display them.

IMAGE CHALLENGE

When group members are new to the image-making process and are trying to build confidence in using the camera it may be helpful to focus on a theme so that the emphasis moves away from the technical aspects of taking a photograph the challenge of finding a particular object or subject to photograph. The following exercise could be used as a single group activity or as the basis of a series of related sessions over a number of weeks.

REQUIREMENTS

Selection of photography books, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Look through a range of photography books or picture books. The library is a good place to start, although I have also picked up lots of excellent books in charity shops and at car boot sales. For this particular activity I like to use the book, *The Earth from the Air*, or to look through *National Geographic* magazines, as they contain a range of striking pictures and landscapes taken from unusual angles. Invite group members to identify particular themes or make connections between images. Share these ideas as a group.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Choose a theme on which to focus the image-making process. Examples of themes include:

- images that create lines, show structures, curves or textures
- images that take colour as their theme
- images taken from unusual angles
- numbers in images
- images that convey or represent strength, beauty, age or wisdom.

Use the final prints to generate discussion about the process of finding the subject matter and taking the images. It may be useful to compare images, explore sources of inspiration and look at the different ways group members have interpreted the themes. To add a fun component

turn the activity around so that group members have to ‘guess the theme’ from the images presented.

Presenting photographs

This book does not look at the technical aspects of the image-making process. Nonetheless, in the initial stages of a photography group it may be helpful to consider ways of framing and displaying photographs and to look generally at the different effects a range of cameras offer.

Size matters

The size of the image can have a significant impact in terms of how it is viewed. Smaller photographs may offer the viewer a more intimate relationship with the picture as they will usually have to cradle it in the hand in order to gain a good look, whereas larger images are more imposing but lack the intimacy of the smaller picture because they tend to be viewed from a distance. Manipulating the dimensions of the photograph, making it smaller or larger, can achieve different effects.

REQUIREMENTS

For this activity you will require a selection of photographs of different sizes and a range of photographic equipment. A digital camera will be useful as it provides you with the option of printing images in different in dimensions.

WARM-UP

Look at a series of photographs of different sizes. Talk about the effect that the size of the image has in terms of how you interact with it. If you are doing this as part of a group activity, talk about your preferences.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Individual or group members choose something they would like to photograph. It can be nice to choose something with quite a lot of detail, for example a highly patterned object.

- Take a picture of this.
- Repeat this process, asking members to photograph something that is big: a tree, a house; an elephant at the zoo would be perfect.
- They should now photograph something that is small: again, a flower, a leaf, a thimble would be good examples.
- Process the images. If you are using an SLR you can select the size of the prints when you take your film to be developed. A digital camera offers more possibilities as you can easily manipulate the size of the image. Print multiple copies of the same picture but in different sizes.

Arrange the prints according to their size: small, smaller, smallest; large, larger, largest.

Talk about the effect that the size of the image has on the person's relationship with it and which they prefer. You can develop this theme to explore the effect of using a camera to 'shrink things to size', as a means of containing experiences and as a way to present different perspectives.

Extension

This exercise is a useful way to explore the effects gained with different types of film or photographic equipment. A good example of this is a digital camera. When uploading pictures on to the computer many packages have facilities to allow you to achieve a range of effects through manipulating the image. These are often easy to use. So, for example, at the touch of a button you can turn a colour image into a black and white photograph, a sepia picture or an impressionist painting.

Images of very modern buildings or technology, presented in black and white or sepia, can present a particularly interesting effect.

In the frame

The previous activities have explored how it is possible to achieve different effects during the photographic process. The following exercises look at the impact that presenting and framing can have in terms of the way images are viewed.

Catching a glimpse

This exercise looks at the effect of frames and framing on how images are viewed.

REQUIREMENTS

Different-sized frames made from pieces of backing board, paint, a selection of pens.

WARM-UP

Each person chooses an image. Using frames made from different sizes of backing board individuals focus in on different part of the picture. Within the group explore how framing an image changes the way the picture is viewed and how it offers a way for the photographer to emphasize what they consider to be important.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Ask group members to select one of their photographs and work together to create a frame, using the backing board and art materials to complement the image, focusing on a particular element of the work. For example participants may choose to pick up a particular colour or texture contained within the photograph.

End the session by inviting the group members to say why they have chosen to present their image in the way they have.

EXTENSION

‘Reframing the situation’ is a good exercise to use with individual group members. Invite the person to find an image that reflects in some way a particular challenge they are currently facing. Using a piece of backing board explore with the person ways of focusing on and isolating aspects of the image and use this as the basis to talk about ways of looking at the situation that it represents. Think of ways to rename or reframe the situation.

3-d

This exercise invites group members to transform a flat two-dimensional picture into a three-dimensional object. It offers individuals an opportunity to explore how presenting images in different ways highlights their different qualities. It is also an excellent exercise to promote group cohesion through collective problem-solving.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment, cardboard boxes, glue, basic craft materials.

WARM-UP

The group takes a few moments to walk around the space they are working in. Standing in different parts of the room participants consider its layout from a number of angles. Depending on the physical abilities of individual members, people could choose to lie on the floor to look at the ceiling, sit, stand or crouch in order to view the room from as many different perspectives as possible.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The challenge is to use photographs to create a three-dimensional representation of the room where the group is working. Participants have access to a small cardboard box to offer some strength and shape to the images as they mount the photos. They can capture and present the inside space, but they also need to give some thought to the outside space too: the outer walls, the window frames.

Once the activity is complete as a group, talk about the end result and the process of taking the images. How does it feel to see something that is usually represented in a two-dimensional way as a three-dimensional object?

EXTENSION

Invite the group to work together to create a three-dimensional sculpture using photographs. Use card to create a framework and add structure. Spend time reflecting on the effect that presenting images in this way has on how they are viewed and handled.

Suspension!

This fun activity takes framing to the extreme. The exercise is aimed at groups and works particularly well with young people. Set group members the task of photographing items of clothing they might hang out to dry.

REQUIREMENTS

Washing line, pegs, a range of images, photographic equipment (this works most effectively if you use cameras that can provide instant results).

WARM-UP

Bring in a washing line and a number of pegs. As each person brings their image of an item of clothing they might hang out to dry, use a peg to secure this to the line.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group imagines that the washing line has now been transformed into a rope bridge across a ravine. Participants take it in turns to pose and photograph each other as though they are holding on to the rope as they move, hand over hand, to get to the other side. Develop the photographs and secure the results to a piece of tape for an action-packed result.

Images as Gateways to the Imagination

'When I hold a camera I hold the key to a world of creative possibilities.'
(Group participant)

This chapter explores ways of using photography alongside other arts media, including creative writing, painting, drawing and music. Photography is seen as a starting point to stimulate creativity and imagination, and also as a way to capture and record the creative process as it unfolds. The exercises offer participants:

- an outlet for expression
- an opportunity to exercise simple choice and decision-making skills
- a chance to explore a range of creative media
- a tangible end product
- a medium for play
- a way to build and exercise the imagination.

Potential benefits of this approach include: increased self-esteem, an increased sense of well-being, flexible thinking and creative problem-solving skills. Through combining photography with other arts media

participants have permission to explore, experiment and, most importantly, to make mistakes. Once a person is confident to explore their creativity in this way they can gradually translate this into other areas that go beyond the group. Emphasis is therefore placed on the use of the camera within creative play in recognition that imagination is released when group members are able to cast off inhibitions and have fun.

The great advantage of using photography is that it is extremely accessible. Many people are used to taking photographs, and, consequently, for some individuals the image-making process can feel less threatening than painting a picture or playing a musical instrument. The advantage of beginning with photography is that it offers a way in, a means of tapping into the creative process. As group members become more confident in engaging in this process it may be the case that they feel more able to take part in other creative ventures using additional artistic media.

In view of this some facilitators have used these activities as their starting points from which to develop groups based on the theme of photography as a tool for self-exploration. Others have embedded the ideas within pre-existing groups or used the exercises as a focus for community development or intergenerational work.

Art work

Finding what is to be found

This is a good exercise to use when encouraging group members to exercise their imagination and use their camera more creatively.

REQUIREMENTS

For this activity you will require copies of images of works by Escher,¹ or optical illusions, and photographic equipment.

1 Maurits Cornelis Escher (1898–1972), a Dutch graphic artist known for his often mathematically inspired woodcuts, lithographs and mezzotints.

WARM-UP

Take the opportunity to share a series of optical illusions or ‘impossible pictures’ with the group. Works by Escher offer a good starting point as they challenge you to revisit images or to find pictures within pictures.

MAIN ACTIVITY

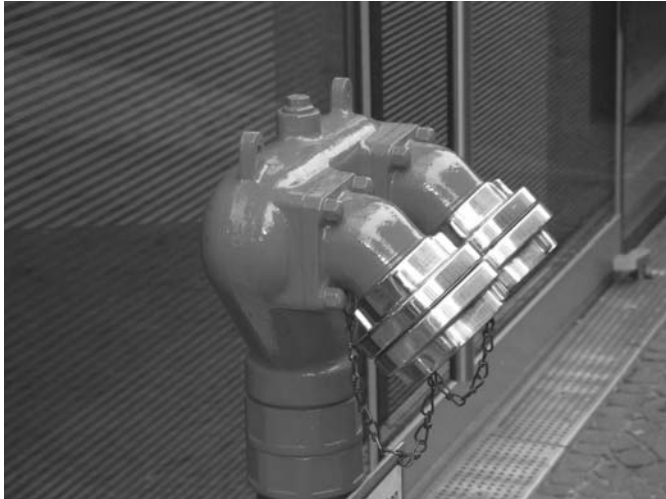
The group go on a walk or an outing. Begin the walk by finding a place where everyone can see the clouds and try to identify particular cloud shapes resembling faces or objects. Challenge participants to use their imagination, to photograph the clouds and make a note of what they resemble. Continue your walk and as you do look for additional images within images. For example, roots of trees resembling feet, rocks that look like animals, twisted trees that resemble dancing figures. The group records these using a camera.



► Figure 5.1 Ostrich legs.



► Figure 5.2 Dancing women.



► Figure 5.3 We went on a walk together looking for ways to exercise our imagination. We came across this fantastic fire hydrant. It looked just like two horses grazing from a nose bag.

After the walk, or during a subsequent session, group members share their images. Facilitate discussion, exploring how participants found the exercise, what they learnt about imagination and how the camera offers a different way of looking.

Images as mosaic

Photomosaic has recently gained a great deal of popularity. It is a technique where disparate photographs are put together and the result is the formation of additional patterns or a different image.

REQUIREMENTS

Internet access, images or examples of mosaic and photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group look at examples of mosaics. There are many excellent websites to look at or you may be fortunate and live near enough to visit one of the many galleries, churches and buildings where there are examples of mosaics spanning the centuries. As you explore these examples note the various patterns and the effects achieved by placing tiles of different colours next to each other or using different colours of grout. Talk about individual preferences and possible designs you would like to experiment with.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Create a picture mosaic. The most straightforward and effective way to do this is for the group to design an overall pattern based on colour. Group members are given the task of finding or photographing pictures within a particular colour spectrum. At the simplest level these could focus on black and white pictures compared with colour. For more subtle effects seek out particular hues of colour.

The group collect the images together, arrange them and mount the photographs on card.

If you have access to a digital camera and a computer, fewer images are needed as the group will be able to copy and paste their photographs

or scanned images and use one of the many graphics packages available to manipulate these into some form of design.

Once completed, the group explores how this exercise felt. Discussion could focus on the effect of placing different colours side by side. This might be translated to relationships. For example, being in the presence of certain individuals may bring out particular qualities (positive and negative) in a person.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I was using photography with a church group which included participants ranging in age from 8 to 80. We had been looking at symbols of hope and it seemed only natural to create a rainbow as the banner to form the centrepiece of this work.

I had sketched out the shape on sheets of backing board, which we then secured to the wall, and group members spent the weekend finding and photographing images to correspond with the colour spectra. The detail and subtlety was astounding. So, for example, for the orange segment group members collected images combining the colours of red and orange at the beginning of the colour banding, moving through to pictures of pure orange and then blending images of orange and yellow together in preparation for the next segment. The end result was breathtaking with everyone participating to the full. The group reflected that in working together in such a way participants had felt hopeful about the future and felt that relationships and a sense of community were central elements within this.

Impermanent art

Impermanent art offers a safe, introductory activity to the use of creative media, and offers a good starting point for individuals who may lack confidence in using more permanent arts media such as ink or paint. Photography adds a further dimension to this, providing a non-stressful, non-invasive means to capture and record the end result thereby turning impermanent art into a more lasting piece of work.

REQUIREMENTS

An assortment of random items, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group takes a range of random items. Anything will do: string, washing-up sponges, paper-clips, rolls of sticky-tape, cotton wool, straws, whatever is at hand. Working within a set timeframe participants see how many different pictures they can make by arranging the items.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members choose a theme. The following may offer some ideas:

- self-portrait
- birthday
- animal magic
- nature.

Using the random objects or items individuals create an image that reflects the theme. The more objects they have the more detailed the picture can be. If this is undertaken as part of a larger group participants could work together to create a group image. Once they are happy with the image, photograph the end result.

VARIATION

Approach this activity from the opposite angle so that you use a photograph as a stimulus or as inspiration for the impermanent art work.

Drawing beyond the image

An image is only ever a snapshot of a much wider picture bound by the edges of the photograph. This exercise encourages individuals to move beyond the picture to explore what lies beyond the edges.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographs taken by group members, sheets of paper, pencils, paints, art materials.

WARM-UP

Group members look through a family album or find a photograph that they have taken recently. Placing the photograph on a sheet of paper they imagine that the scene extends beyond the edges, trying to visualize what was outside of the photograph.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Individuals take the image or a copy of the image and secure this to a sheet of A3 paper. Using the photograph as the central focus they select an art medium to extend the image so that it fills the page. Participants could choose to recreate the scene as it was or they may decide to let their imagination run wild and have fun: dinosaurs, mythical creatures, foreign climes; the sky really is the limit.

Take a classic painting and give it an up-to-date feel

In many ways photographs sit outside time so that images of the past may be viewed in the present. This activity takes a range of well-known paintings and gives them an up-to-date feel.

REQUIREMENTS

A range of adverts, postcards of paintings and art work, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

A number of marketing campaigns have taken well-known classical paintings and, using actors and clever filming techniques, given these an up-to-date feel. Find examples of these to share with the group. Consider the effect this process has on the image. Identify techniques used by the marketing companies and the effects they have achieved.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group members look through a selection of art books and choose an image that they would like to replicate. Once they have chosen this they spend time planning how they could recreate this. Decide who will play the different characters and whether they need any props, costumes

or additional materials. Charity shops can be a good source of clothing. The group works together and recreates the scene. The final stage is to photograph the end result and frame it alongside a picture of the original painting.

CREATIVE WRITING

Images can both inspire and illustrate poems and pieces of creative writing.

Photographing poetry

This is a very simple but effective exercise and works well with all ages.

REQUIREMENTS

A selection of poetry books or printouts of particular poems (see ‘Main activity’ for specific suggestions), photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group members look through a series of poetry books identifying their favourite pieces of writing. Spend time discussing memorable verses and saying a little about their significance.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The challenge is to select one poem or piece of writing and use this as the focus of the image-making process, taking photographs to illustrate each verse. This may require some planning and participants may need to divide the poem into sections, finding an image or a number of images to illustrate each verse. They may decide to take each verse literally and photograph objects, people for scenes that are very representative of the subject matter, or they may decide to adopt a more abstract approach and take images that create a sense, impression or an emotional response to the words.

The following poems may form useful starting points.

- *Warning*, Jenny Joseph.
- *Daffodils*, William Wordsworth.

- *Jabberwocky*, Lewis Carroll.
- *The Road Not Taken*, Robert Frost.

If you are using this activity with a younger group of people turn it into a game so that each person or group presents their images and the rest of the participants then have to name the poem.

EXTENSION

Use a session to support participants to create and illustrate their own poems in this way. If the participants have access to a computer then look at ways of using the image as a backdrop or as a means to frame the words. Alternatively use an image to inspire a poem or a piece of writing.



► Figure 5.4 The monster. I use this photograph as the stimulus for creative writing. A person brought it to a session because the rocks on the left seemed to contain lots of faces. It has led to some really interesting stories.

Six-picture storymaking

This activity is an adaptation of six-picture story-making (Lahad 1992). However, its primary function is not to act as an assessment tool but rather to offer a structure for writing. Use this as a group activity or on a one-to-one basis.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographs or images (taken from books and magazines) of images of the following:

- places
- characters (these could be people, animals or objects)
- dreams, targets, hopes, ambitions (holiday photos, beaches, success, graduation)
- obstacles or barriers that hold people back
- helpers who could offer support (bank manager, friend).

Obtaining these images could be an activity in itself. You will also need photographic equipment, sheets of paper and pens.

WARM-UP

Think about the ‘ingredients’ of a good story. Can the group members identify any structures that particular stories or genres of stories follow (hero, heroine, goal, obstacle, solution)?

A useful exercise to stimulate discussion around this is the game of ‘consequences’. Each participant takes a sheet of paper. At the top of the paper they write down the name of a male character and one sentence to describe this person. At a given time determined by the facilitator they then fold the paper over and pass this to the person sitting to the right of them. This process is repeated with the following themes being taken in turn.

- A male character with a brief sentence describing him
- A female character with a brief sentence describing her.
- The name of a setting where they met.
- The time of year and a time of day or night.
- What the man says to the woman.
- What the woman says to the man.
- The ending.

On completing the final theme the sheets of paper are unfolded and the stories are shared. This can be a useful way to look at the ingredients of a simple narrative (character, place, time, dialogue, ending).

MAIN ACTIVITY

There are a number of ways you might choose to use this activity. You could use the images listed above in the 'Requirements' as a starting point for the development of photographic themes by the group.

Alternatively, if you are sharing these as part of a group activity the images could be already assembled for participants

Either way, once you have photographs under each of these themes sort them into piles, face-down so that participants are unable to see the images.

Group members take a picture from each pile at random. These are arranged according to the grid below.

Image of place	Image of character	Image of a dream or hope
Image of a barrier	Image of a helper	Blank

The challenge is to create a story using the images as framework. The final square is the ending. Once participants have decided on the ending the final stage is to take a photograph that expresses this in some way. Again group members could choose to create a literal representation of the ending or use something more abstract and imaginative.

Combine the words and images to create an illustrated story. These could be shared within a subsequent session or could form the basis of a small exhibition: 'words and pictures'.

Finding the untold story: story-making from photographs

Most people are familiar with certain 'iconic' photographs: the sailor embracing his sweetheart at the end of the Second World War; the Vietnamese child running towards the camera fleeing from gunfire. This exercise challenges participants to seek out the story behind the image.

REQUIREMENTS

A selection of photography books, photography equipment.

WARM-UP

Look at a series of 'iconic pictures'. A range of photography books from the local library can support this process or you could use the internet as a starting point. The group members reflect on their responses to the images and any associations that they have with them.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants choose one image. They then respond to the following questions.

- Who took the photograph?
- What was their name, how did they come to be there?
- What were their motivations behind taking the photograph?
- Was this planned or a spontaneous act?
- How did they feel after they had pressed the shutter release?
- What message did they want to give to the world through the image?
- Why did they want to give this message to the world?
- Where is the photographer now?

Using these responses group members develop a story focusing on the image as told by the photographer. Spend time sharing the stories at the end of the session. Consider how there could be multiple stories depending on the perspective taken and reflect on whether a photograph is ever a real reflection of the 'truth'.

EXTENSION

Participants imagine they are able to have a conversation with the subject or subjects of their image.

- What is their story?
- What happened next?

Alternatively, they imagine that the image is either the end-point or the starting point for a story and develop a piece of creative writing around this.

Again, an effective way to present the end result is to superimpose the words over the image. If you do not have access to a computer write the words on to acetate and secure this over the image.

Images as character studies

Photographs provide a rich source of inspiration for writing, particularly when creating and developing characters. The concrete nature of the image offers a useful point of reference and a focus for writing.

REQUIREMENTS

Magazines, books of images, postcards with images of people or portraits.

WARM-UP

As a group, look through a magazine or a book of photographs. Invite participants to choose an image of a person who is not well known or in the public eye. Based on the image alone they must give the person a name and write three sentences about them. When everyone has done this come together and share these ideas.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Choose one image. Begin by making notes. Decide on the following:

- The name of the person.
- The era they lived in.
- The name of their best friend.
- Their favourite food.
- What they had for breakfast.
- Their dreams or hopes and wishes.

Now develop a story based around this character.

EXTENSION

For an added dimension include photographs of people taken from different time periods. Using multiple images, have characters speaking from one era to those in another. Alternatively, take a picture of a person in one setting and transport them into another, just to see how they might react.

Group storytelling

This light-hearted activity encourages interaction between group members. The exercise invites group members to exercise their imagination and to engage in a group storytelling task. It can be particularly useful to encourage teamwork and creative problem-solving. Prior to the activity group members are asked to bring along three random photographs of different subjects.

REQUIREMENTS

Group members bring three random photographs of different subjects to the session.

WARM-UP

Begin with a group storytelling activity. Everyone sits in a circle. The facilitator begins with the first line of a story. The person next to them follows this on with a second line that describes something good that happens and the person next to them adds a line but this time describes something that goes wrong. The story progresses, each person takes it in turn to add a line, one positive, one negative, as the story moves around the group. See how long you can keep this going until the group runs out of steam.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members place their images in a pile and these are shuffled and placed face-down. Participants must then each choose one picture. The challenge of the activity is for the group to develop a story that incorporates all of the images.

EXTENSION

For an added dimension bring along a series of cards with words relating to different genres of writing. For example: Western, Romance, Comedy, Drama, Superhero, Disney. The group picks one of these at random and their story must then follow this genre.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

The strength of collective storytelling is that it is a shared task and is not dependent on any one person. This can work well with all ages and with a range of different groups. I have used this exercise with young people, people with dementia, older adults and people with mental health problems. I have also used this exercise with staff and carers.

On one memorable occasion I was working with one group of paid carers from an inpatient hospital setting. We started with the exercise and the story began to unfold but the group found it very difficult to think of positive statements. The staff came from the same ward and reflected that morale had been low for so long that they found it hard to think of anything good or positive. They were really shocked by this. For the next session I therefore asked the group to bring in images that evoked good memories: photographs of smiling faces, sunrises, good weather, and for the introductory activity to the session we used a group storytelling task using these photographs. Again this was challenging initially but the more the group engaged with the task the more easily the story came. One of the group members suggested that they used this exercise as part of handover as a staff development exercise and I encouraged them to do this.

Several months later I encountered a member of staff from one of the wards as part of another group. She told me that when they first told their colleagues about the collective storytelling activity they had initially been met with resistance. However, they had persevered. Initially they had used photographs or themes and latterly they had focused on patients but, rather than describing them in fictional terms, they had tried to focus on positive statements relating to changes they had observed. The results she said were transforming. It was as though staff had learnt a new way to look at situations

and, although pockets of negativity and low morale still existed, there was generally a far more positive atmosphere on the ward, making it a good place to work.

Performance in pictures

Group storytelling may also form the basis of activities in drama. I have used the following exercise with individuals with dementia and with groups of people with learning disabilities as a means of engaging individuals and building concentration.

REQUIREMENTS AND PREPARATION

Find a story or a poem that lends itself to illustration through images (this could be an extension of a previous activity). It should not be too long and if you are using a poem it may help to have an element of repetition. The twelve days of Christmas would be an ideal one to begin with. Photocopy the images and enlarge these to A3 size. Mount the images on cardboard or stiff paper and use a piece of tightly rolled newspaper to create a handle so that it is possible to wave the mounted photograph in the air. This preparatory activity could form the basis of a session.

WARM-UP

Begin by looking at the different images. Talk about people's perceptions of the pictures. For example, whom characters might be or where places are. Invite each group member to choose a picture and to say a little about why they have selected this particular image.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Read through the story or poem once and identify where the different images might come in. During the second reading group members need to listen for their cue and wave their image at the given moment. The aim is to help each other. It does not matter if individuals come in at the wrong moment – it can add to the fun. To develop the activity use improvisation so, instead of just waving the image in the air group members also have to contribute dialogue or add a phrase or a word to illustrate their picture.

Superpowers...

This exercise encourages participants to exercise their imagination and transform a series of everyday objects into equipment fitting for a twenty-first century superhero. This then forms the basis for writing. Again the activity sits well with a number of groups and is particularly effective for use with young people and children.

REQUIREMENTS

Cartoons from comic books, images of superheroes, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group looks at a series of pictures of superheroes. Characters from the Marvel comic strip would be a good starting point, for example Superman, Wonder Woman, Spiderman and the Fantastic Four. Group members choose a superhero they would like to be and say a little about the reasons for their choice. Talk about the superpowers that particular character had and the objects they had to help them, for example the truth lasso, special flying cape, invisibility cloak.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The challenge is for participants to find and photograph a series of objects a twenty-first century superhero would have, to describe the powers they would possess and why they might need these. They must then build on this theme and write about a character. Alternatively, the group creates their own comic strip using the objects as part of the storyline. When I have used this as a group activity participants have placed their images in the centre of the room without saying what is special about the objects and other group members have suggested their ideas about what superpower quality it could hold.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

We were using photography as part of an activity with a group of young people attending an inner-city youth club. The young people had chosen to explore the issue of bullying as a number of the group were being victimized at school. Conversation initially

focused on what kind of a superhero could come into the school to help them overcome some of the bullying that was occurring. The children described what this superhero would look like and photographed each other in typical ‘superhero’ poses. The exercise then turned to the types of objects a superhero would possess. One of the children came up with the idea of a bad language neutralizer. As a group we brainstormed what this might look like: the shape it could take and what it could resemble. The children decided that the best design was a pair of ‘ear-muffs’ that neutralized the language. We spent time making these, photographing the end result. For the final part of the activity each child took a picture away with them. During a later session a number shared how they developed additional objects with superpowers and had drawn strength from the pictures they had carried with them, which had played a key role in helping them to cope with very difficult situations.

Photography and music

This exercise enables participants to explore the close association between art and music. Group members discover how in the same way that it is possible to find the story within an image, it is also possible to discover the narrative within a musical score and use the image-making process as a means to make this visible.

REQUIREMENTS

An assortment of music, for example, *Carnival of the Animals* (Saint Saens), *Dans Macabre* (Saint Saens), *Scherezade* (Rimsky Korsakoff), *Toxic* (Britney Spears), *Feelin’ Good* (Anthony Newley, Leslie Bricusse), *Fingal’s Cave* (Mendelssohn), *Lady Madonna* (The Beatles), *Eleanor Rigby* (The Beatles); photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group listens to a piece of music: *Eleanor Rigby* or *Lady Madonna* by The Beatles would be good pieces of music to begin with. Think about the story the music tells and the mental pictures it paints. Make space to share ideas and to compare the images.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Choose another piece of music (see the list of suggested titles). Participants listen to this twice, once to gain a feel for the overall piece and then once with their eyes closed. As they do this they make a mental note of the images that spring to mind.

If the group struggles with this, use a series of questions to create a focus. For example:

- Do any particular colours come to mind?
- Does the music evoke a particular time of year or a scent or aroma?
- Does it remind the person of a place?
- Does it tell a story?

Participants open their eyes and begin to capture on paper some of their thoughts and impressions. The aim of this exercise is for group members to use their camera to capture a series of images that somehow illustrate the music or their response to the music. They will need to think of how best to present these. For example, will they use a slide show or embed these within a computer presentation? Would the pictures work well as a frieze that tells the narrative or do they lend themselves to another format?

The session ends with everyone sharing their individual stories and pictures.

VARIATION

This also works well as a shared group piece with the focus on ‘finding the story together’.

Soundscape

This is a reversal of the previous exercise where the images provide the stimulus for the development of a sound-scape. This could also form the basis for an activity in drama.

REQUIREMENTS

Access to a video or DVD recorder and video/DVD, selection of images, audiotape.

WARM-UP

The group members watch a short piece of video without the sound. They create a story, including dialogue based only on the moving pictures. Replay the video and invite the group to share the video commentary that runs alongside this. As the final touch play the video to the group and compare the original with their finished pieces. Are they surprised? Is their story very different?

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants choose an image from a selection. For a few moments they transport themselves into the scene. They must decide on the following:

- Where they are in the picture?
- Who are they standing by?
- What can they see?
- What are they thinking?
- Are they aware of any scents and aromas?
- Any textures?
- What can they hear?
- Are there background sounds?
- Can they hear any music, laughter, voices?
- If they can hear any voices what are they saying?

The final stage is for group members to bring their ideas and images to life by creating a sensory landscape based around the photograph. Participants should think of how to add sound, dialogue and music. Record these onto an audiotape so that the image becomes a piece of performance art.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I was once privy to a piece of performance poetry that had been created by people with dementia with the support of an art therapist. The group had been photographed taking part in a creative activity and words that had been spoken during this time had, with everyone's permission, been recorded. The group and the art therapist had then worked together to put the photographs and words together, and members of the group had chosen a piece of music. The final result was remarkable. The photographs were projected onto a wall and people took turns to read out words. The most moving aspect, though, was the final section where the music was played and photographs were projected one by one on to the screen almost in response to the subtle melodies within the piece, with the effect that the images appeared as though a dance.

Combining music and photography in this way is very powerful because it provides a new way of seeing and responding to images, engaging the senses. The most powerful use of music in this way is when the person has chosen the piece, which perhaps captures a mood or a memory and adds a further, emotional dimension to the process.

Further ideas: using images and textiles

Technological developments over recent years have meant that if you have access to a computer, a scanner and a printer it is now a relatively easy process to transfer photographs onto fabric. Sheets of transfer paper may be purchased relatively cheaply from most computer stores and these may be used in the same way that you would ordinarily print out an image after scanning it into your computer, or if you are using a digital camera, after downloading it onto your machine. Once the image has been printed onto the transfer paper it is then just a case of ironing it onto the fabric or textile chosen for decoration. The results are immediate and can present a completely different dimension to a photograph. Whilst a photograph is usually flat and stiff, when used in this way it takes on the tactile quality of the fabric onto which it is printed. This in turn opens up possibilities for making textile items.

- Wall hangings comprising individual images taken by group members, either sewn together or printed onto one large sheet

of fabric. This may be based on a theme, for instance seasons of the year, colour, textures, views, treasured possessions or aspects of a walk.

- An image quilt which could adorn a person's bed.
- Cushion covers with a favourite picture forming a centrepiece, making it easily identifiable.
- Reminiscence blankets.
- Images printed onto fabric may form the start of further activities, for instance sewing or embroidery.

Images as Communication

Evelyn

Evelyn approached me on the ward clutching the pictures: *'This is how it feels. This is how it feels.'*

For Evelyn the images had provided an outlet, a means of expression that did not necessitate words. In expressing how awful she felt there was no longer a need to do this through cutting or self-abuse. I had never been in any doubt about Evelyn's personal anguish but she was not clear in her own mind that she had articulated it clearly enough. We had tried using art but the challenge of using the media had only served to increase her frustration. With the images she had made her level of pain was very clear. She was in no doubt that I was now completely aware of how dreadful she felt and with this there was suddenly a sense that we could move on together.

Jack

Jack had hung back after the rest of the group had raced out of the door ready to spend their money at the tuck shop. It was Friday and the evening had been particularly challenging. Issues between some of the rival groups at the club had been developing for some time and the dynamic in the youth group had been difficult to manage. Jack was one

of the worst perpetrators so it was not a surprise to see him looking so sheepish. ‘What’s the problem?’ I snapped. He hesitated and then gave me the screwed-up image, ripped from a magazine. I was a little taken aback by the picture of the barbed wire fence from a cigarette advert. ‘What’s this?’ I asked. ‘That’s it’ he said. ‘That’s what you told us to do, Miss, to find an image to show how it is. Well that is how it is when I hold a pen.’

These two examples, one from a clinical setting and one from an inner city youth club, both illustrate the role photography can play in communication and in the expression of deeply held emotions. On one level images may act as metaphors through which a person can speak. For Jack, with his dyslexia, the image of the barbed wire captured exactly the physical and mental anguish he experienced every time he held a pen. In such cases words are not necessary as the images speak a language that transcends words. For Evelyn the images not only offered a means of communicating how she felt, but in subsequent interactions they provided a way that she could talk about these experiences while gaining distance so that she effectively spoke through the images, sharing her feelings in the third person, ‘the person in this picture feels sad and frightened’. As Berman writes, photography offers a ‘vivid method of communication. Sometimes concepts, feelings or visual experiences can be difficult to express linguistically and we may use photos to enhance or replace our verbal description’ (Berman 1993, p.9).

Beyond this photographs can also provide a means to structure conversation, offering tangible, concrete prompts for individuals who find this difficult because of specific communication needs. They can give people ‘permission’ to talk about difficult subjects and offer a voice to marginalized groups and communities to raise awareness of issues.

Ways to tap into photography

This chapter begins to touch on some of ways to tap into photography as a tool for communication. At one end of the continuum the exercises it contains look at how it can provide an outlet for the expression of strong emotions, offering release and catharsis. At the other end there are examples of ways to use the image-making process to develop more

concrete communication tools for people who have difficulties in expressing themselves verbally.

These activities carry a health warning. Although the process of taking and using images as an aid to communication can be incredibly powerful and healing, it should be treated with respect. If a person has not expressed themselves in this way before, such emotions may be difficult to contain. As a facilitator you need to think about ways to make the group a safe place to be, and to set parameters so that group members will not be compromised or feel vulnerable because they share more than it feels safe to share. If you can create these parameters so that participants are able to articulate their feelings and experiences the confidence they develop in this setting can then be transferred to environments and relationships beyond the group.

When a picture speaks a thousand words

Using photography as a way to capture and express emotion can be new for some people and may feel alien to them. This exercise provides a means of easing group members into the process, offering the opportunity to explore how it feels to use images in this way.

REQUIREMENTS

Selection of books, magazines, newspapers, photographs from family albums, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Look through a series of photographs or pictures that evoke or convey particular emotions. Try to select images that are more metaphorical as opposed to pictures of faces or of individuals expressing an emotion. It can be useful when group members bring examples from their own albums or collections. Reflecting on the images the group members imagine how the person who took the photograph was feeling at the time and what they were trying to express through the image. Here are some examples taken from groups I have facilitated.



▶ Figure 6.1



▶ Figure 6.2 These pictures are about feeling under pressure. Pressure to conform, pressure from work, from family. I wanted to show people how it felt to be squashed into a tight space so that you lose any semblance of being an individual and become absorbed into something else. You are no longer a stone you are a wall. You are no longer a tree you are a log pile.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Now think about colours or images that are associated with particular emotions. For instance a dark and overcast sky might represent anger or a field of daffodils may convey joy and hope. Facilitate group discussion around a theme. Using their camera each person creates a number of images exploring an emotion of their choice. They are not allowed to tell anyone what this emotion is and at no point may they photograph facial expressions or gestures.

The group members share their pictures and talk about the image-making process. Discussion could focus on:

- the reasons for their choice of subject matter
- the emotion behind the image
- how it felt to take part in the activity
- the significance of the emotions explored
- how it feels to talk about the images
- what emotions the images represent to group members.

EXTENSION

Build on this experience and invite participants to explore other feelings. In order to keep this safe focus on positive emotions initially:

- joy
- excitement
- happiness
- hope.

Look at possible uses for this technique as a means of self-expression or as a way to get in touch with particular feelings. Overleaf is a good example of how photography may be used in this way.

It makes me want to shout!

Anger is a necessary and healthy emotion when it is expressed in an appropriate way. Problems occur when a person finds it difficult to either express or contain their feelings. This exercise needs to be treated with



► Figure 6.3 Calm after the storm.

sensitivity, but if used appropriately it can offer a way to talk about situations that make people feel annoyed and to develop ways to enable individuals to express themselves and articulate these feelings.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper and pens, appropriate music, photographic equipment, books magazines.

WARM-UP

Participants list situations that make them cross. These might relate to specific situations and behaviours, for example:

- not squeezing the toothpaste tube from the bottom
- dirty clothes left by the side of the bed
- someone not saying ‘thank-you’.

Or, to wider, more global issues:

- poverty
- injustice

- crime
- cheating.

Depending on the group it can be fun to list these on a sheet of flip-chart paper and to then use the song by Lulu, 'Shout', so that at the given moments, individuals to call out the particular thing that makes them cross.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members find images that represent how they experience and express anger. They may decide to act out gestures, to look for images in the inside or outside environment or find photographs in magazines, newspapers or books. Some of my groups have taken pictures of:

- water swirling around a sink
- an exploding tap
- a pressure cooker
- folded arms
- a silent scream.

And have found images in magazines of:

- an erupting volcano
- a simmering geezer
- a firework
- a tornado.

Take the opportunity to share these images and look at what they represent. Invite the group members to replace their image with one that reflects how they would rather experience and express their feelings. Use this as the basis of a discussion about anger, including how to express emotions and the importance of recognizing situations that provoke this response. The following narrative is a description of a group.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I was working with a group of young mums looking at challenges of coping with a new baby. The sessions had been quite slow and laboured, and there was a reluctance to talk about some of the issues. I used a very similar activity based on the above exercise, bringing in images that reflected my own experience as a starting point. The result was instantaneous. It was as if I had flicked a switch giving people permission to talk about the real issues that no one ever mentioned. The exercise ran over a number of weeks so that building on the first session a number of the mums brought in pictures from glossy magazines which reflected this 'idealized' picture of parenthood along with photographs of their own reality. Fears about being seen as 'not coping' dominated discussion and concerns about ways of managing feelings: depression, frustration, anger were explored. Finally, group members used their cameras to find metaphors for these feelings and were able to fasten these on to fridge doors using magnets as a tangible reminder of the experience they had shared.

(Tracey, health visitor)

Inside–outside

The face we present to the world can be very different from the inner self for lots of very good reasons. However, for some individuals the gulf between the two is too great and the inability to express feelings can be a source of personal anguish. This exercise provides an opportunity for group members to explore the difference between the images they project compared with how they feel. This can be a very powerful activity and should be treated with sensitivity ensuring the group members are not placed in a situation where they do not feel overexposed or vulnerable. Set clear ground rules and establish guidelines to support participants. The suggested photographic medium is one that provides an instant result as this can facilitate discussion and ensures that issues may be dealt with if they should arise within the group.

REQUIREMENTS

CD player, music, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Begin by listening to a recording of the CD track ‘Strong’ by Robbie Williams. After listening to the words invite the group to reflect on the personal masks they wear and the images they project to the outside world.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Ask group members to think of a situation where they would like to express how they really feel. For example, in the boss’s office when you are asked to work over a weekend and you smile and say this is fine when inside you feel disappointed and angry, or the time when you feel completely exhausted but to the rest of the world you appear to have unlimited energies. Participants are then invited to take two photographs:

- The first is an image that reflects how the rest of the world sees them, the persona they project to the rest of the world.
- The second image is how they feel inside.

Group members may approach this in a number of ways. For example, they could choose to express feelings through particular facial expressions or gestures, inviting others in the group to photograph such poses. Alternatively, individuals may choose to use more subtle metaphors. For example, an image of a sunflower compared to a thorny briar, or highly regimented brickwork compared with random crazy paving, a bright vibrant colour contrasted with one that is dark or sombre.

Spend time discussing these contrasting images and what might happen if they were reversed and the inner becomes the outer. If this is too difficult or challenging for group members a useful extension activity is to find images that represent an in-between point.

Road signs

Wouldn’t it be nice if communication contained a set of straightforward road signs indicating a mood, a danger or what lies ahead (Ortberg 2003)? So, for example, after a horrible day at the office you could wave a sign that said ‘proceed with caution’ or ‘danger’. It would make situations so much easier to read and you would know just when to ask your boss for that well-deserved pay-rise. I have used this exercise with young

people when exploring boundaries, with individuals with emotional problems and with groups struggling with managing anger.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper and pens, images of road signs taken from books and the internet.

WARM-UP

As a group see how many road signs you can remember. You could try a 'quick draw' on a flip-chart and invite other group members to guess or you could use images from the internet and make the exercise into a quiz.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The challenge is for the group to use their camera to create a series of road signs that capture their various moods. Individuals may choose to photograph existing road signs (for example, 'look both ways', 'proceed with caution', 'hazard ahead'). Alternatively group members may take a more creative approach, as has often happened within my own groups, where individuals have produced images of cacti, delicate porcelain, roses with thorns, dark skies, steaming pressure cookers, barbed wire, and have made signs by cutting images from magazines of charging bulls, volcanoes and calm ponds among other things.

Compare images and share instances where they may be useful. As a group look at ways of communicating feelings to others and examine how to articulate different emotions.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

A variation of this activity is to develop a communication board. As the previous exercise has highlighted, communication is very individual and the images we associate with particular emotions are unique to the person. Increasingly there are a number of communication boards on the market to support people with specific needs, for instance people with dementia or with learning disabilities. The limitation of these is that they make an assumption that everyone associates the same images with the same emotions. On a number of occasions I have worked with individuals with complex commu-

nication needs collecting images they identify with particular feelings and assembling these to make individualized communication tools which may be shared with family members and loved ones. Once the images are assembled the person needs only to point to a particular picture in order to share how they feel with others. This can be a first step to a much deeper level of communication.

Exploring emotions through photography

The ability to ‘read situations’ and recognize how others are feeling is a highly complex skill. It is easy to experience difficulties in picking up subtle non-verbal cues which may lead to conflict as potentially volatile situations can spiral out of control. We all experience this at one time or another. However, some individuals generally struggle to read emotions and consequently this can be particularly problematic. This exercise looks at ways to identify, recognize and express different feelings. I have used this activity with many groups, including people who have learning disabilities and individuals who have chronic mental health needs.

REQUIREMENTS

A selection of magazines, photographic equipment, pieces of card, glue.

WARM-UP

There are two warm-up activities that work well. First, look through magazines and identify images that express a particular emotion. For example, fear, worry, sadness, anger, disappointment. As a group explore whether there are particular emotions that are hard to distinguish.

Second, play ‘Guess the emotion’. One group member leaves the room and the remaining participants choose an emotion. The person returns and asks group members to mime an activity using this emotion. For example ‘sew on a button’ (angrily, joyfully, passionately). The aim of the game is for the person to guess the emotion.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The focus of this exercise is to create a series of emotion cards. Group members take it in turns to mime or express different emotions whilst

other group members photograph them. Print the images and create another set of word cards describing the emotions. For example:

- anger
- boredom
- excitement
- impatience
- worry
- tiredness
- anxiety
- fear
- happiness
- confusion.

Look through the different images and explore ways to identify these. Share some of the challenges of reading how people are feeling, picking out emotions which may easily be mistaken. Look in more depth at situations people find particularly difficult and explore possible strategies and coping mechanisms.

EXTENSION

Reinforce these skills by working as a group to create the game of 'emotion snap'. This is quite easy to do. Write the different emotions on separate pieces of small card making sure that you have images that convey these emotions. Shuffle the cards and deal these to the players. Each player takes it in turn to play their card. When two consecutive cards are played where the image of the emotion matches the word, the first person to shout 'snap' wins the cards that have been played. Keep playing until one player has all the cards and is the overall winner.

An alternative extension activity is to create an 'emotion book'. Pages from one book created by Sarah K. Bond using a similar exercise are shown opposite. These were made as part of an online class (shimelle.com).



► Figure 6.4

Images as Relationship-builders

Photography has helped me to re-discover who she is and put me in touch with who I am. It has taught me a new way to look and make sense of the world.
(June, carer)

When I first came to the group I've got to admit I found her very difficult to get alongside. She seemed distant, a bit snobby as though she was better than the rest of us so I just didn't bother with her. One of the exercises asked us to find an image that represented how we appeared to the world and then find a picture about how we really felt inside. As we were sharing these I suddenly realized how incredibly vulnerable she was. The hard outer image she projected, merely a protective shell. I began to warm to her. Perhaps we weren't different after all.
(Carol)

Photographs provide a tangible record of our existence. They tell a story about some of the events that have shaped us, moments we have valued, the places we have visited, our friendships and relationships. Pictures can provide a means of peeling back the layers and offering a fuller picture about who we were and who we are. This can be particularly meaningful for people who lack confidence in these situations and struggle when articulating their experiences verbally.

This process may occur through the act of simply looking through photographs and albums, as Hagedorn (1996) has illustrated in her work

with staff and patients in hospital settings. However, without the voice of the person to tell the story behind the image the full picture is only partially revealed. When these stories are shared in a group situation they can provide a powerful vehicle through which to make connections with others, detect resonances, identify with experiences, build empathy and create meeting places and platforms from which positive relationships spring.

The exercises in this chapter all focus on the process of relationship-building. Some activities revisit past images while others encourage group members to take photographs that move beyond the surface and to use the camera as a means of sharing and expressing interests, hopes, wishes and values. A number of the exercises focus on building relationships between group members, whereas others look to broader support networks that go beyond this experience.

As the extracts at the beginning of this chapter illustrate, the great strength of using photographs in this way is that they provide a means of challenging preconceptions. These may relate to the stereotypes we hold about people, or conversely, the preconceptions others have about us. In part this is because images allow us to move between past and present, to go beneath the surface and present the inner and outer self. By the same token this may lead to vulnerability and, as a group facilitator, you will need to ensure that group members are safe within this process and that people are not pressured to share more than they wish.

The exercises

My favourite things

This is fun to try in a group and can offer a non-threatening way of gaining new insights into who people are. It is essentially the photographic equivalent of the game ‘two truths and a lie’. Group members bring three images to the session, two that reflect things they enjoy or value and one picture of something they do not value or actively dislike. They present these to the group members, who then have to guess which is which.

REQUIREMENTS

Appropriate music, a CD player, a selection of photographs brought in by participants, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Introduce the activity and describe what is going to happen. Begin the group by playing a piece of music relating to the theme of enjoyment. I have found the song 'My favourite things' from the film *The Sound of Music* to be particularly effective in establishing a relaxed atmosphere and setting the tone of the session. As the music is playing invite group members to place their images in the middle of the circle. This gives everyone the chance to share them. When the music finishes invite each person in turn to describe the three images they have brought along (without giving any clues as to their feelings towards them). The rest of the group must then decide which images represent something that the person enjoys and which images represents something that the person does not find enjoyable or meaningful.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The main activity offers an opportunity to share the images in more detail, for group members to say a little about why they have chosen the pictures and what they represent.

EXTENSION

An extension of this would be for individuals to also bring along an image of a secret pleasure or an achievement. These are placed face-down in the centre of the group. The images are turned over, one at a time, and group members guess whom the image relates to.

These are my most favourite things

Once again this exercise offers group members the means to share things that are important. It is based on a creative writing exercise described by Philips, Linnington and Penman (1999) focusing on the senses.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper, pens and photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Group members complete the following.

- My favourite view is of...
- I love
 - the smell of...
 - the sound of...
 - the taste of...
- A treasured possession would be...
- These are my most favourite things...

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group members share their ideas and discuss the reasons for their choices. The next step is for participants to take each line from a poem in turn and photograph an object or a scene that encapsulates this. Arrange these to create a visual poem.

A special place

Most people can recall places of significance. These may relate to childhood, a favourite holiday or a den, for example. Equally, they may refer to places where individuals currently go to feel safe or valued; a place to think or to have space. This exercise asks group members to identify these spaces and to unpick why they are special. In describing and sharing these participants can learn more about themselves and what they need to feel 'safe'. When handled sensitively this activity may open up further opportunities for group members to make connections and continue the process of building relationships.

REQUIREMENTS

Pictures of different buildings, a range of photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Bring a range of images of different buildings. Encourage group members to talk about favourite places: dens, secret places, holiday homes, particular rooms or pieces of furniture.

- What was so special about that place?
- How did it make you feel?
- What qualities does a place need to have to make you feel safe, at home.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Using their cameras invite participants to photograph places they consider to be special, secret refuges of safety and peace. As they record these places ask the group members to think of ways of focusing in on the aspects of these spaces that they value.

In a subsequent session group members share their images and talk about the associations they carry, describing the features and characteristics they particularly value. Use this as the basis to talk about an ‘ideal place’ or an ideal home.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I used a variation of the above activity with a group of young people. The group had experienced difficulties in working together and it had been challenging to find activities that offered cohesion. We focused on the theme of a ‘special place’ and invited participants to take photographs of spaces they valued. The range of images was startling – from arcades and night clubs to parks and gardens. As a follow-up we used the theme of ‘making a den’. The group were instructed to work together to design a den which they would all share. The only constraint was that they could only communicate their preferences through images. Words and spoken communication were not allowed. The group struggled initially but soon found their feet and, using a combination of photographs and pictures taken from magazines, newspapers and the internet, made a fabulous three-dimensional construction with all the comforts and characteristics you would expect for a space designed for group of 14-year-olds. The end result was stunning but the most

important part of the exercise was the process of working together, finding out what was important.

Connectionz

This is a useful exercise to revisit relationships among group members helping to foster group cohesion and providing a mechanism to explore dynamics. Group members will need to be reminded to choose and bring along a photograph they have taken during one of the sessions.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographs and photographic equipment, thread, pins, a cork board.

WARM-UP

Each person shares one photograph taken within the context of the group. They identify:

- why they have chosen this particular photograph
- an aspect of the photograph they are particularly pleased with (it captured a particular moment or emotion, the composition of the image, something about how they were feeling when they took the photograph)
- what this photograph means to them.

Other group members are invited to comment or to ask questions.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Arrange the images on a flat surface so that they may be viewed by the group. Participants work together to arrange these in such a way so that each picture picks up on a theme or image that is placed before it. This connection could relate to any feature or facet of the image: something about the composition, the subject matter, the digital media used. Pin these on to a board and highlight the connections using pieces of thread. Finally, invite the group to describe the relationships between these images and the reason for their decisions.

What you mean to me

There is a saying that a picture speaks a thousand words. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell people that we care about just what they mean to us. This activity offers a language to express this that moves beyond words.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper and pens, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Group members discuss their answers to the following questions.

- What do you think are the hardest words to say to someone?
- I love you?
- I need you?
- You mean everything to me?
- I don't agree?

Can you think of a time when you wanted to tell someone that you cared about them but struggled to do this? What were the reasons for this? Fear of rejection? Vulnerability? Words not seeming to be enough to express just how deeply you feel about someone? Pride?

Explore ways group members can express feelings towards others without depending on the spoken word. List as many of these as possible. For example, a starting point might be:

- flowers
- chocolates
- a card
- a note
- a text
- a letter.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members are invited to think of a person they care about, and identify an image to reflect this relationship. For example, a person who offers support might be represented as a rock, an individual who constantly challenges and questions could be a thorn. Alternatively, a rainbow might symbolize a person who brings optimism or hope, or a clown someone who is fun to be with.

Dedicate a session to sharing the images. See what happens when you reverse this process and the group members think of images that could represent the role they play in these or other relationships.

EXTENSION

Where group members feel they would like to take this process a stage further spend time exploring ways to share their images with the person to whom they relate. For instance, participants may decide to use cardboard mounts to make the images into cards accompanied by a few words of explanation inside.

A gift for you

This builds on the previous exercise and focuses on the gift relationship.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment, images from books, magazines and the internet.

WARM-UP

The group respond to the following questions.

- What is the nicest present you have received?
- What is the nicest present you have given someone?
- What makes a good present?

MAIN ACTIVITY

Invite group members to think of a person they care about. If money was no object what present would they give to this person? Encourage

the group to think big. Group members either use their camera to take photographs of these items or look in books, magazines and on the internet to find images. The breadth of visual media allows individuals to exercise their imagination to the full. For example, Caribbean islands, yachts, diamonds. It also opens up opportunities to record more subtle spiritual gifts such as peace, tranquillity, sunshine.

The group members return and share these pictures, reflecting on their choices and what these say about the person and their relationship with them.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I have used this exercise in a number of settings. In one community-based group working with a group of parents in an area of high social deprivation the focus turned to the challenges of providing for children and young people when money is scarce. There was much discussion about how it feels when society equates love with the giving of material possessions. Group members focused on ways that this created a barrier to relationships. We then used photography as a means of finding alternative, more spiritual gifts, such as love, honesty, security, time. Families found this very empowering and one person shared how they had spoken about the activity with their teenage daughter who was able to say that the best gift her mum could give was her time rather than working all hours to give her 'stuff'.

A special memory

It is very easy to feel confronted by a two-dimensional picture of who a person is. Many relationship problems result from people not being able to move beyond this surface level. This activity is useful if you are working with a group that is finding it difficult to build relationships. It needs to be handled sensitively as some sharing is required.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographs of a special memory provided by group members.

WARM-UP

Participants work in small groups and members identify three things that everyone within each small group has in common. This should not just relate to physical characteristics (we all have blond hair, we are all wearing brown shoes) but should be used to explore hobbies, interests, past achievements, fears and hopes. To add interest to this process offer a prize for the three most unusual characteristics each small group can identify.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Remaining within this small group, each participant shares a photograph of a special memory.

- They start by describing what is happening in the picture and say a little about who the subjects are and what they are doing.
- They then say a few words about why they have chosen the image and what they hope other group members will learn about them through this.
- If the group is strong enough they could reflect back any positive things they have learnt from the image and thank the person for sharing this.

The small groups dissolve and come together as a larger group to share their experience of taking part in the process and to reflect on their learning.

Friends united

This exercise, inspired by Judy Weiser (1999), helps participants to consider the range of support mechanisms they access. It provides an opportunity to focus on specific friendships and the needs particular friends fulfil. The advantage of basing this around a photographic exercise is that it offers a clear visual representation of the support networks from which individuals can draw. Group members are instructed to bring photographs of friends and family members along to the session. Pictures should be of people who are still alive.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper and pens, large sheets of paper, pens, art equipment.

WARM-UP

The group members list the qualities that make a good friend. Working together they develop a recipe for a good friendship (for example, a good measure of trust, a pinch of reality, plenty of time to mature).

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members talk about their images describing who the people in the photographs are.

Each person draws four concentric circles on a large sheet of paper (see below).

- They begin by placing a picture of themselves in the middle circle.
- In the next circle they arrange images of people (or pets) they feel particularly close to. Individuals they would class as 'special'.
- In the circle beyond this they place images of people they would class as friends.
- The final circle contains pictures that they would describe as acquaintances.

Participants reflect on the diagram. Invite the group to answer the following questions.

- What do you notice about your diagram?
- Do you have more close friendships than acquaintances or, alternatively, would you class the people you know as acquaintances and not friends?
- Are you surprised by where you have placed particular people?

With this in mind, consider the following.

- Who would you go to if you needed encouragement?
- Who would you go to if you needed complete honesty?

- Who would you go to if you were worried about something very personal?
- Who would you go to if you wanted to feel good about yourself?
- Who would you go to if you wanted a good laugh?
- What role do you think you fulfil among the friends you have?

Images as Tools for Reflection

Reflection is a way of turning experience into learning. It provides a means of making sense of the world and offers a tool for understanding. Where this understanding relates to specific events the reflective process offers a chance to step back and to look at the same situation from different perspectives in order to identify some of the wider factors that were at play before deciding how to act differently in the future. Alternatively, reflection may relate to learning about self and who we are. Indeed, the ability to reflect is the first step to increased self-awareness and recognition of the need for change. Either way reflection is seen as central to personal growth. It is for this reason that a full chapter is dedicated to ways of using photography and image-making as a tool for reflection.

Many reflective models already exist. These can be heavily dependent on written description and the ability to remember or recall specific events that lead to learning. Such events, commonly referred to as ‘critical incidents’, are difficult to capture and even trickier to untangle. The great strength of the image-making process is that it provides a tangible means of recording experience and of structuring thinking. Where images are shared and explored in small groups individual members engaging in this process may learn how to look differently at situations, gain alternative perspectives and consider new courses of action. Once

participants feel confident in engaging in group reflection they can build on these skills to develop their own reflective processes.

The exercises in this chapter illustrate ways of using the camera within a range of reflective processes so that it becomes a vehicle through which group members are able to identify and connect with events and feelings. Ways of using and exploring images are described and consideration is given to the use of metaphor within the process. Emphasis is placed on using the camera to review experiences and develop new perspectives in order to explore alternative ways of approaching situations to create a way forward and write new endings.

The activities highlight the strength of photography in creating new insights through offering different ways of looking and seeing events as they unfold. The beauty of this medium is that ultimately the images produced offer a concrete record of the distance travelled within this reflective journey and can be visited and revisited again and again in light of new learning. In this way reflection becomes part of an ongoing process of self-discovery and change and a powerful tool for self-exploration and personal growth.

The exercises

It depends on your point of view

The ability to see a situation from different viewpoints underpins many reflective processes. This exercise introduces the theme of looking from different angles.

REQUIREMENTS

A range of adverts taken from magazines and the internet, word cards.

WARM-UP

A number of successful advertising campaigns have challenged audiences to look at or revisit images from different perspectives. Either share some of these adverts or create your own set of titles for images. This works particularly well if you use two different, conflicting titles for the same picture. For example, a picture of a cake with the caption 'naughty' and the same image with the word 'nice' underneath it or a

picture of a glass with the caption: 'half-full' and the same image with the words 'half-empty' by its side. Consider the effect that including a title has in terms of how an image is viewed.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Building on this discussion, group members develop a caption or title for an image. Where possible, participants should use words or phrases that may be interpreted in different ways. For example:

- sensitive (touchy), sensitive (understanding)
- trusting (good), trusting (weak, gullible, naïve).

The group then creates a series of images to capture or reflect the caption or title. As a group discuss the pictures. Use the following questions as a starting point.

- How do the images taken by other people support or challenge your interpretations of the word or phrase?
- What do they tell you about ways of seeing the same thing from different perspectives?
- What can you learn about your own values and how you see particular characteristics?

Invite the group members to build on this experience and to think of a situation they have recently found difficult. Challenge participants to look at this from a different angle, in order to relabel or reframe this. For example, instead of labelling something as a 'disaster' try reframing this as a 'learning point'. How does this feel? Can group members think of other situations they could revisit and reframe in this way?

A reflective walk

One of the challenges of any kind of reflection is the process of finding a way to identify and connect with feelings. This exercise offers a series of starting points or scaffolds to enable group members to take the first step in this process. It can work well as an individual exercise or may be shared with others either in a small group or with a 'reflective partner'. These ideas owe much to Joan Healey, senior lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographs of scenes taken from nature, flip-chart paper, pens, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

This exercise begins with a simple metaphor. Group members look through a series of images denoting scenes from nature, taken at different times of the year, and they choose one image. Imagining their life as that scene each person responds to the following questions.

- Which season would it be, and why?
- What do you associate with this, for example, spring, the promise of youth and possibilities; autumn, a time to reflect on past accomplishments; winter, feelings of bleakness and numbness?

If the group struggles with this metaphor the alternative is for the group members to picture their life as a weather forecast. For instance, bright with dull patches, foggy, sunny, possibility of an unsettled period with thunder.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Arrange for the group to go on a reflective walk taking their cameras with them. On the walk participants are instructed to find and photograph objects or scenes they connect with and that reflect something of how they feel or see themselves. For example, on the walk a person who is tired and sapped of energy might come across a patch of parched earth which sums up exactly their sense of exhaustion and emptiness. Another person, feeling full of energy, may choose to photograph a rose just about to bloom. Group members need to trust their instincts rather than to think too deeply about what to choose.

The photographs then form the basis of a piece of reflective writing, enabling participants to connect with their feelings and explore what was happening at the moment the photograph was taken.

Repeating this activity at regular intervals provides group members with a mechanism to record change over time.



- Figure 8.1 I had been working really hard and was so tied up in everything. I shared how I felt with the rest of the group and was set a task of finding a picture that could explore this. We took the kids to the coast and went for a walk across the beach. We were out of season and it was really, really windy. As I looked back I noticed that my footprints had disappeared. This was the moment it clicked and I found my perspective again.

EXTENSION

An extension of this activity is to repeat this exercise but from the perspective of using the walk to find images that present solutions. For instance, returning to the metaphor of the parched earth, the aim would be to find an image that could offer a solution. In this example it might be a babbling brook or a watering can. Individuals then need to step outside the metaphor and think of actual resources that the watering can or babbling brook would represent. For example, a friend, a particular environment, an activity such as swimming.

Six ways of looking at

It may be very challenging to look at a situation from another point of view. The slightest shift can turn a situation on its head and challenge

thinking. This activity offers participants a way of looking at different perspectives to gain new insights.

REQUIREMENTS

Polaroid or digital camera.

WARM-UP

Choose a number of objects. Place these on a flat surface and invite participants to use their cameras to photograph these from different angles: from above, in profile, at an angle, from underneath, focusing in to look at the detail, stepping back to take a wider view. If using a Polaroid or digital camera group members may compare images and share their results immediately. Alternatively, the group can discuss the experience of looking at the same object from different angles.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members either use one of their own images or choose an image provided by the facilitator. Ideally the photograph should contain more than one subject (people and pets or animals). Invite the group to imagine the scene from different angles:

- from the perspective of a distant onlooker
- from one of the other characters in the scene
- if the person is in the scene from their perspective.

Write a description from these different views:

- describe what the person saw
- describe what were they thinking
- identify and say how were they feeling
- any worries or hopes.

The group shares how it felt to do this and discuss ways of using this technique for difficult situations.

Walking in someone else's shoes

This builds on previous activities and invites participants, first, to explore stereotypes they might hold before looking at how the world might appear from someone else's point of view. This activity works well as a group and an individual exercise.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographs or pictures from magazines of shoes, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Group members look through photographs or pictures from magazines of shoes (for example, stilettos, Dr Martens, brogues, boots, lace-ups, trainers). For a moment they consider the type of person who would wear each pair, responding to the following questions.

- Would they be young, old, fun, serious?
- What kind of job might they have?
- What are they called?
- What interests do they have?
- What would a typical day be like for this person?
- Do they have any food likes or dislikes?
- What about their friends, what kinds of shoes would their friends wear?
- How would the world appear to this person?
- What are their hopes and their fears?

The group shares their answers and compare notes.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Based on this description, group members imagine they are walking in the shoes of this person and take a series of photographs that capture how they imagine this person would see the world. For example, where would they go on a typical day? What would reflect their interests? Can

they think of and photograph an object or a possession that is important to this person?

During the following session group members share these images and reflect on what they learnt about how it felt to see things from another person's perspective. Were they challenged to rethink who people are? What did they learn about any stereotypes they might hold? Will it change how they see people in the future and the conclusions they jump to in terms of who those people are?

EXTENSION

An extension of this exercise is to invite the person to repeat this activity basing it on a situation or individual they find personally challenging.

Thought bubbles: freeze frame

One of the challenges of reflection is remembering what happened and what you were thinking at a given moment. What did you see? Who were you aware of? How exactly did it feel? When you are in a situation you are on the inside as opposed to looking on to what is happening. This exercise looks at how photographs can provide a tool for group members to freeze a moment in time and to reflect, to really reflect, on exactly what was happening.

REQUIREMENTS

This exercise requires postcards or posters of pop art, photographic equipment (preferably a digital or Polaroid camera for instant results), Post-it™ notes and pens.

WARM-UP

Bring examples of pop art with images of characters containing thought bubbles or sub-dialogues that offer new insights into the image. Posters or postcards of paintings by Lichtenstein¹ would be a useful place to start. The group reflects on these images before looking through newspapers and magazines to find pictures to add their own captions to. The

1 Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997), an American pop artist whose work was heavily influenced by popular advertising and the comic book style.

group could hold a caption competition with a prize being awarded to the most fun or original entry.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Divide the group into two halves. One half takes part in a group activity (a game or an arts-based exercise) whilst the other half photographs the process. It is preferable to use a digital or Polaroid camera when doing this so that the images may be produced instantly. Following the activity, arrange the pictures in such a way that the group members are able to look through these.

Individuals taking part in the game or arts exercise are then invited to make thought bubbles from Post-it notes identifying what they were thinking at the time individual photographs were taken. Those members of the group who photographed the process also construct thought bubbles based on what they believe the person may have been thinking. Both sets of thought bubbles are attached to the images and the group compares notes.

To conclude this exercise, reflect on the process and discuss how accurate group members were at 'reading situations'. Invite the group members to consider times in their life when they have mis-read a person's body language and misinterpreted a situation.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I used a variation of this activity with a group of individuals who had great difficulty in 'reading' situations. For instance, some group members were oversensitive to non-verbal cues and mistook concentration for boredom or did not recognize indications that a person was angry or agitated.

We invited the group to take part in an activity whilst the facilitators stood slightly apart and photographed the process. Digital cameras meant that the results could be pretty instant and we printed two copies of a small selection of the images whilst the group members were having a coffee break. My colleague had used the autoshape tool in Microsoft Word to produce a set of thought bubbles, one set on blue paper and one on white. We then invited group members to

identify a picture of themselves and capture a thought or feeling. They recorded this on the white thought bubble. Then they had to identify a person in the picture other than themselves and write in the blue thought bubble what they believed they were thinking. At a designated moment we stuck our thought bubbles to the images. It was really interesting to compare what people were actually thinking with how others perceived their emotions.

This was a very powerful process requiring us to set clear ground rules in order to ensure that responses were managed sensitively. However, for many of the group members it was incredibly affirming and raised lots of interesting discussion about ways of checking out how others are feeling.

EXTENSION

This works well as an extension activity. Invite the person to spend time looking through their family album to find a picture they remember being taken. This may be a recent photograph or an image that is memorable because it is connected to a particular event. Use the pre-cut 'thought-bubble templates' taken from MS Word and invite the person to add their own words to express their thinking at that moment. Try to do the same for other people in the picture. If the picture contains animals, it may be interesting to include their thoughts too!

As participants look at the different thought bubbles, ask the following questions.

- Are you surprised by any of the thought bubbles?
- Do these challenge or change the way you think about the situation?
- If you could say something to these individuals what would you say?
- Have you learnt anything new about yourself through this exercise?
- Has this activity changed the way you think or feel about the people or situation?
- If so what will you do differently in the future?

Encourage the person to write a reflection based on the experience.

Alternative endings

Change can be difficult, and all too often it is easy to feel ‘stuck’ in patterns of unhelpful behaviour. Reflection offers a mechanism to step back from a situation, revisit this and then consider alternative ways of thinking and acting. Photography offers a concrete way to ‘play out’ and present different scenarios with a range of alternative endings with the person in control.

REQUIREMENTS

This exercise requires a series of cartoons and comic strips, a sheet of paper containing a grid of six equal squares, felt-tipped pens and pencils, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group members look at a series of cartoon images and comic strips to identify the ‘ingredients’ that make up a good cartoon. The facilitator records ideas on a sheet of flip-chart paper.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants share examples of unhelpful patterns of behaviour they have difficulties in breaking away from (for example, saying ‘yes’ when they want to say ‘no’, over-committing themselves).

For a moment they imagine this situation as a cartoon strip. Using the grid the group members simplify their stories, sketching out the experience into six scenes or stages with a diagram in each square representing each of these.

Participants then consider ways of creating alternative endings. These can be widely imaginative or grounded in reality. Using the camera or finding pictures in books or magazines, individuals reconstruct the endings in visual form. The group revisits the overall cartoon strip and considers steps they may need to take at different stages of the process in order to achieve this ending.

If I knew then what I know now

How often have you uttered the words, ‘in hindsight’ or ‘If only I had known then what I know now...’. Time is a great teacher. Reflection is all about thinking about and learning from decisions in the light of their consequences. This exercise enables group members to do just this. The process is extremely powerful and works best with groups who know each other well and where trust exists between members.

REQUIREMENTS

Print out an extract of ‘All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten’ by Robert Fulghum,² a selection of photographs from different periods of a participant’s life.

WARM-UP

As a group read ‘All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten’ by Robert Fulghum. Based on this participants make a list of ten lessons they have learnt in life. Invite the group members to imagine they have been asked to write a guide for the young people today entitled ‘rules for living’. Working together the group develops a list of ten guidelines based on their experience: five beginning with the word ‘Do’ and five beginning with the words, ‘Do not’. Discuss ways of illustrating this guide and the types of images that could be included.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group members are instructed to bring photographs of themselves at different points of their life. Working individually they put these in chronological order identifying significant life events that are not reflected by the images and replacing these by blank cards or pictures from magazines to make the chronology complete.

The next stage of the process is to imagine that the pictures can speak. Beginning with the most recent image participants imagine the conversation this image would have with the image next to it. Questions that might be used as prompts include the following.

2 Robert Fulghum (1937–date) is an American author, primarily of short essays.

- What advice would the person you are now give the person you were then?
- What mistakes would you advise this person not to make?
- What opportunities would you tell them to seize?

Moving through the chronology, continue this process. As confidence levels grow invite the group members to vary the pattern. For example, see what happens when the most recent image has a conversation with the youngest image and vice-versa. Perhaps, for example, an image at the beginning of the chronology might want to talk about hopes and dreams the more recent image has forgotten.

The group members come back together to discuss the process and any new insights gained and key lessons they will take into the future.

Images and Self-identity

As the previous chapter has illustrated, the reflective nature of the image-making process makes it an ideal medium through which to gain greater understanding of who we are. Jansen writes:

Recovering memories in therapy significantly helps a person to develop a sense of identity, individuality, uniqueness and meaning – all of which may add up to a sense of self. (Jansen, in Dowrick 1992, p.22)

The process of visiting and revisiting images can offer new insights and provide a means through which to explore some of the hidden values and value systems we may subconsciously subscribe to as well as reflecting on past achievements and identifying future aspirations.

The exercises contained in this chapter offer participants the opportunity to engage in a process of self-exploration within the safety of the group. Activities are varied and may easily be graded, ranging from fun explorations of an ideal day through to a closer look at personal values gleaned from the contents of a handbag or briefcase. Many focus on building self-esteem and confidence, recognizing achievements and encouraging group members to identify aspects of their daily life which bring meaning and reinforce a sense of whom they are.

Identity is explored through a number of the activities with emphasis placed on the use of images as metaphors providing individuals with a

vehicle through which to explore subtle facets of their personality and a means to consider the wider factors that shape whom they are.

The image-making process is also used in the context of creating self-portraits and looking at some of the personal myths that limit growth. These exercises epitomize increased self-awareness and allow participants to begin to identify potential changes they may wish to make. These lay the foundations for further activities contained in subsequent chapters.

The exercises

All about me

This exercise invites group members to consider the ‘essential’ facts about whom they are. In considering ways of expressing these and sharing this information with others individuals can gain greater insight into their own priorities.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment (a Polaroid or digital camera would be ideal as this activity works best when the group produces instant visual results).

WARM-UP

Group members respond to the following questions.

- When you meet someone for the first time, how do you introduce yourself?
- What are the ‘top three’ pieces of information you share?

The facilitator records the responses.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Using a throwaway camera participants take ten photographs that express something of whom they are. The images could relate to likes, dislikes, roles, values, hobbies, interests. For example:

- season of birth
- friends

- family
- favourite food
- favourite drink
- favourite colour
- hobbies
- interests
- roles.

Group members either use the images to create a photographic collage about themselves or choose one image and illustrate this using words that capture who they are.

In my bag

You can tell a great deal about a person from the contents of their handbag or briefcase. This light-hearted activity offers group members the opportunity to use everyday objects to explore who they are.

REQUIREMENTS

Group members' handbags, rucksacks or briefcases containing their contents, photographic equipment, flip-chart paper and pen.

WARM-UP

Bags come in all shapes and sizes. Women have handbags, men carry briefcases or rucksacks, some doctors still have Gladstone bags. This exercise begins with a fun activity where group members try to imagine what they would find in the bags of a number of well-known people from history. The following characters may form a useful starting point.

- Winston Churchill (cigar, victory 'V' sign).
- Shakespeare (a quill, parchment, ink, a copy of his complete works, a theatre guide, a globe).
- Queen Victoria (crown jewels).
- Sherlock Holmes (magnifying glass, pipe, deerstalker).
- Mary Poppins (tape measure, sugar lumps, medicine).

An alternative way of approaching this activity is to list a series of items and invite group participants to guess whom this is, based on the objects listed.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members are given the task of emptying out the contents of their handbag, rucksack or briefcase and photographing each item it contains. They are instructed that if, for some reason, an object they would normally find in their bag is not there they should find a way of representing this.

Share the images in a follow-up session. As you do try the following.

- Group members organize the photographs into different categories of their choosing (for example, essential/non-essential, beauty/practical, work/pleasure, things for me, things for family).
- Ask participants to imagine that they have to discard everything from their bag with the exception of three items. Which three items would they choose? What made them choose these? What does this choice say about who they are? If they had undertaken this activity three years ago would they have made the same choices? What might have been different?
- Invite the group members to imagine that they are a stranger looking at these objects for the first time. What do the items tell them about the person from whose bag they came?
- An alternative to this exercise is to repeat this activity, but instead of using the contents of a handbag or briefcase, ask the group to focus on the contents of their fridge.

Ideal day

This is another example of an exercise that helps participants to identify and gain greater understanding of valued aspects of their life.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper and pen, photographic equipment, images from books and magazines, paper or card, glue, scissors.

WARM-UP

Begin by exploring with the group or an individual the ingredients that make up the perfect day. Here are a few examples:

- take plenty of sleep
- add a leisurely morning
- a dose of humour
- a hint of relaxation
- a smattering of friends
- leave to ferment in a nice glass of wine
- take a sunny day
- friends and family
- add a small hyperactive dog for good measure
- a long walk
- spend a day mixing thoroughly
- turn out and leave to relax when feet are tired.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants create a photographic montage of their ideal day using the following questions as starting points.

- Where would you be?
- What time would you wake up?
- What would you eat?
- What would you wear?
- Where would you go?
- Whom would you go with?

Encourage individuals to reflect on the montage. Are they surprised by anything? If so what? If they were to compare their ideal day with a typical day at present, how different would this be? Reflecting on this, what might they change?

My view of the world

We all possess a unique perspective. This exercise invites individuals to explore what this perspective is and to reflect on some of the values they currently hold.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper and pen, photographic equipment, sheet of card, scissors, glue.

WARM-UP

Group members sit in a circle. The facilitator describes how they will say the beginning of a sentence and on hearing this each person needs to jot down their response on a piece of paper. The phrases are:

- beauty is...
- happiness...
- love is...
- disappointment is...

Once everyone has done this, individuals in the group then take it in turns to share their answers. For instance answers in response to the phrase 'Love is' could include: a bunch of flowers...breakfast in bed...a wet nose. Emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer and the more spontaneous the response, the better. Try this for other words.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members create a joint banner or flag to build a visual representation of these phrases. Under each category the group members place photographs, images from books, newspapers or magazines to correspond to the particular theme or stimulus.

Love is...	Wealth is...	Beauty is...
Contentment is...	Friendship is...	Freedom is...

Discussion focuses on similarities and differences between these different interpretations. Participants could then build on these ideas to consider what they require to feel happy.

Dimensions

Everyone carries a mental picture of who they are and who they would like to be. Sometimes these may be one and the same picture, on other occasions a gulf exists between the two. Into this equation we can add a further dimension, which is a picture of how we believe others see us. This exercise offers participants the chance to explore what these different perspectives are.

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper, pen, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group imagines that they could invite any person in history to be their dinner guest. They name this person and say a little about their choice. Whom do they admire and aspire to be?

MAIN ACTIVITY

For this exercise group members are instructed to find or create images using photographic media for the categories listed below. Each person photographs a minimum of five images for each of the categories.

- *True self*: these are photographs that relate to how the person sees themselves. They might be about physical appearance, encapsulate a quality or a characteristic. This is not necessarily as the rest of the world perceives the person, it may be the part they keep well hidden. For example, when I used this with one group a person in her seventies chose to show her true self with a picture of a young woman which captured perfectly how she felt inside. Another person who, on the surface, was incredibly outgoing and bubbly chose to take a photograph of a tiny rabbit, capturing something of her insecurity and timidity.
- *Ideal self*: these are images of the person's ideal, how they would like to be. They might be the same as the true self or they may be very different.

How I imagine that others see me

This final category is probably the most difficult or challenging. Here, participants capture pictures to express something of how they believe others see them. This might be about the image they project to the rest of the world or it might speak more about the labels and preconceptions other people hold.

When the participants have completed the image-making process, place the pictures in the different categories side by side. Spend time sharing the images and invite group members to respond to the following questions.

- What do you notice about the different images?
- Do any of the pictures surprise you?
- How closely related are the images of your ‘true self’ to your ‘ideal self’? If they aren’t closely related what would you need to do to bring them more into line? Is there a particular goal that you can identify from this exercise?
- What do you feel about the images which describe how you imagine others see you? Are there particular events or circumstances that have led you to choose these particular pictures?

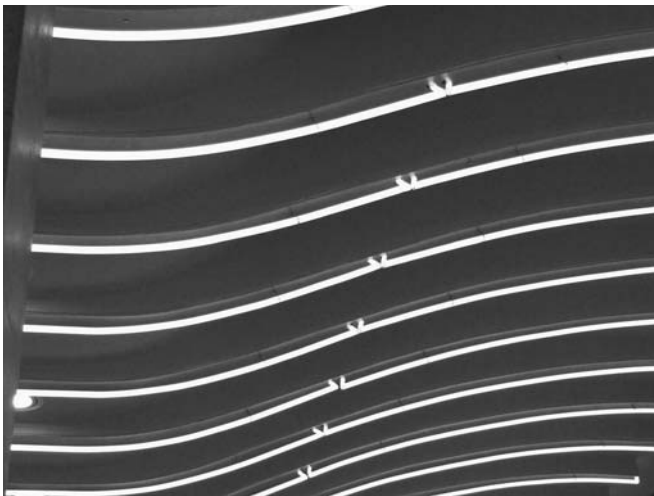
The images below show the results of what one group came up with.



- Figure 9.1 I think that to the rest of the world I appear as hard, straight lines. I chose this picture because concrete is tough, manufactured, it has no give. I think that this is what others think. Somewhere through the centre of this is a steel girder.



- Figure 9.2 This is what is really on the inside. I'm a bit like wood. Yes I still thrive on order so the straight lines stand. However, inside I am more flexible, far more gentle. I feel vulnerable. Wood is like that too. When it's too hot it burns.



- Figure 9.3 In my heart of hearts I would like to be like this curvy line. More flexible, more able to bend. I like this image because it is so light and bendy. It's great. Even though it is manufactured and I suspect that if you put too much pressure on the glass it would blow.

Peeling back the layers: making a photographic book

Photograph albums are extremely precious. They are concrete records of key events, memorable moments, precious times, places of interest. The following exercise challenges group members to create a personal album with a difference, one that dips beneath the surface and literally allows them to ‘peel back the layers’. The physical making of the album is used as the warm-up activity and is important as it offers the person control over its dimensions, size, the design of the front and back covers, and the layout of the pages. Instructions of how to make a simple album are included in the Appendix at the end of this book.

REQUIREMENTS

Two small pieces of backing board, sheets of paper, tape, thread, darning needle, wrapping paper, glue, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Make a simple photograph album using the instructions in the Appendix at the end of the book.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The book is divided into different chapters beginning with sections that focus on external, concrete dimensions of whom the person is, moving gradually from the outer self to the inner self: emotions, dreams, hopes, wishes. Take these as themes and find images to illustrate each theme. Here are ideas for possible chapters:

- physical appearance
- favourite physical feature
- least favourite physical feature
- home
- friends
- family
- work
- hobbies and leisure

- a precious place
- a treasured possession
- sources of happiness
- sources of sadness
- sources of irritation
- favourite food
- favourite drink
- least favourite food
- least favourite drink
- where I see myself in one year's time
- where I see myself in two year's time
- where I see myself in five year's time
- where I see myself in ten year's time
- hopes about the future
- dreams.

Self-portrait

A self-portrait is a visual image that moves beyond the surface to portray the inner as well as the outer self. This is a technique that has been used since the Renaissance by artists. This exercise therefore sits well within a chapter focusing on self-awareness as it offers a tool to promote reflection and exploration, inviting group members to consider the fundamental question, 'Who am I?'. Judy Weiser (1999) offers a very comprehensive exploration of the use of self-portraits using photography and if you are interested in developing these ideas further it would be worth reading this chapter of her book whose details you will find in the list of references at the back of this book.

REQUIREMENTS

Postcards of self-portraits, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Look at a range of self-portraits. Artists such as Lucien Freud, Van Gogh or Paul Gauguin offer a good starting point, and postcards of their paintings are readily available. If you have access to the internet it would be worth looking at the photographic self-portraits of Andy Warhol, or the work of Gerhard Richter and his 'self-portrait three times'. Reflect on what the self-portrait represents and what the artists are trying to communicate through their art. What can you learn about a person through their self-portrait? How does a self-portrait differ from other kinds of pictures? What might the strength of the self-portrait be? How might working in this way promote understanding: by the person, of the person by those viewing the image?

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group considers ways to create their own self-portrait through photography. Individuals could do this in any number of ways and whilst photography must form the main element participants could also add to this using other artistic media. Ways of approaching this include the following.

- A photograph taken in a picture booth.
- Taking an existing photograph and adding details to this using paints or pens.
- Using the delay feature of the camera to appear in front of the lens.
- Inviting a friend or a group member to take the photograph.
- The group might decide to express something of whom they are through what they wear. For example, wearing a smart work suit, a colourful outfit or something very casual. They might even choose to dress up.
- If the group has access to a computer they could manipulate the photograph digitally.

Participants reflect on their photograph, responding to the following questions.

- How does it feel when you look at the image?
- What does it say about who you are?
- How far removed is it from the picture you present to the rest of the world?
- Which image do you prefer and why?

Use this as the basis of a group discussion or a piece of individual work.

Caricature

Caricature: a grotesque usually comic representation of a person by exaggeration of characteristic traits, in a picture, writing or mime. (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1990, p.169)

This exercise very much builds on the theme of the self-portrait. It asks the group to identify the key distinguishing characteristics through which they are recognized by others. These might be physical features or might relate to more subtle personality traits. Once again the challenge is for participants to capture the essence of whom they are through film and photography. The main difference between this method of creating a caricature compared to the usual technique is that the person remains fully in control and directs the overall process.

REQUIREMENTS

Examples of caricatures (taken from newspapers and the internet), photographic equipment. This exercise works well if you have access to a computer with an image-editing tool.

WARM-UP

The group looks at examples of caricatures. Gerald Scarfe is probably one of the most famous caricaturists and his images are still found in many newspapers. Other examples may be taken from magazines and the internet. Use these as the basis for discussion, inviting participants to consider what a caricature represents, whether these are generally positive or negative images and how it might feel to be the subject of a caricature.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Continue to facilitate discussion directing the following questions at participants.

- If someone was to draw a caricature of you what would be the main physical characteristic they would choose to focus on?
- Do you have any particular habits that someone might wish to capture? For example, gesticulating with lots of hand movements when you speak or sticking out your tongue when you think?
- Moving beyond the physical, can you think of an aspect of your personality that they might select (for example, exuberance, shyness, joviality)?

Invite group members to focus on their response to one of the discussion questions. Working in pairs they create a caricature using the camera. This exercise works particularly well if group members have access to a digital camera and a computer with an image-editing tool that can manipulate an image. It may be useful to hold the session in a community venue such as a college. Otherwise you will need to improvise, encouraging group members to think about the angle of the camera, the focus, facial expression or the pose they choose to adopt. Props are allowed.

End the activity with an exhibition of the images. Encourage the group to talk about the experience and how it felt to participate in the process. Were they surprised by the end results? Did they learn anything new about themselves or others?

More than surface deep

Photographs work on many levels. This exercise offers participants an opportunity to move beyond the surface and to consider what lies beneath. This may be used to highlight that there is more to people than meets the eye and can support group members in looking beyond the immediate, challenging some of the preconceptions they hold. This exercise is adapted from one described by Weiser (1999).

REQUIREMENTS

This exercise requires images taken from books and magazines, photographs brought by individuals to the session.

WARM-UP

Group members look through a range of images taken from books and magazines. Bustling scenes with multiple characters are particularly effective here. Participants spend time discussing the pictures, sharing their interpretations of what they portray, picking up clues and creating narratives about what is happening within particular images.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members choose one of their own photographs, imagining that they are looking at the picture for the first time as an outsider. They reflect on the following questions.

- What does this image say about who you are? How does it do this?
- Based on what you know about yourself what does it not reveal?
- What does it teach you about looking beyond the surface?

The group discusses how it felt to take part in the activity and any insights that they gained. Encourage participants to build on this work using further images.

Metaphor

Metaphor: the application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable. (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1990, p.745)

Metaphors are useful when looking at self-identity because they offer group members a way of describing and thinking about themselves in such a way that they are able to gain distance. This has the advantage of enabling participants to talk about their feelings in the third person in order to keep this 'safe'.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Group participants play the metaphor game. One person leaves the room and the remaining participants elect a group member to be the 'subject'. The group member returns and tries to guess who has been chosen. In order to do this they are allowed to ask a series of questions. However, the group is only able to respond using metaphors. Questions will be framed in the following way: 'If this person was a..., what kind of a... would they be?' For example, if the person in question was very relaxed and laid-back and the group had to describe them as a piece of furniture their metaphors might include: 'comfy armchair', 'settee', 'a soft bed'. The game ends when the person guesses correctly and then another group member leaves the room and the process begins again.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members use their cameras to photograph everyday objects that express who they are. For example:

- utensils
- pieces of furniture
- flowers
- trees
- animals
- books
- magazines
- clocks
- types of food.

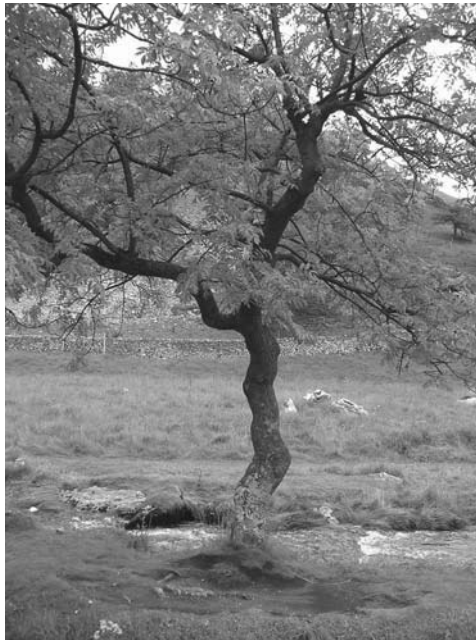
Dedicate a session to look at the images. Facilitate discussion around the following questions.

- What do you notice about the photographs you have taken?
- Are there any images that you are particularly pleased with?

- Are you surprised by any of the images? Why?
- Which image do you think best captures something about who you are?
- Do the images reflect how other people see you?

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

We were asked to find an image that would act as a metaphor to describe something about our personality. Immediately I knew that I wanted to photograph a tree. So, armed with my camera, I set off. Initially I had imagined that I would find an evergreen, something with plenty of leaves, such as a weeping willow. However, as I began my search I came across a small spindly sapling. Immediately I felt a connection. It was windy and the poor thing was taking quite a battering. For a moment I felt quite shocked at its vulnerability and I had this urge to cry. I thought about work and how hard things had been recently. I'd been torn in all sorts of directions and then there had been the home situation too. Yet, as I began to photograph this



► Figure 9.4

fragile sapling being tossed about by the wind, I was surprised by its resilience. The flexibility of its trunk meant that it could bend this way and that without any apparent damage. Rather than oppose the elements it moved with them. The larger, more established trees were stronger but less flexible. These were the ones pulled up by their roots. I felt really heartened by this. I had always seen my inexperience as a weakness but in a strange way it was quite the opposite. I left that place as a survivor and those images now sit on my desk at work, a reminder that first appearances can be misleading.

Legacy: symbols of achievements

This is an extremely affirming exercise. At one level it encourages participants to explore their past achievements, at the same time it looks to future aspirations. On another level it looks at values and dreams and asks participants to describe what they would describe as a life lived well, where they should direct their energy and what they hope to be remembered for. This is a good way to crystallize thinking about what is important and offer a sense of direction. It may also be used to build confidence and self-esteem.

REQUIREMENTS

Sheets of flip-chart paper, pens, photographs brought by group members.

WARM-UP

There are a number of websites containing the epitaphs of historical figures. Here are a few to begin with:

- Bette Davis: 'She did it the hard way'
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: 'Steel True: Blade Straight'
- Cecil John Rhodes: 'So much to do: so little done'.

Reflect on these. What would participants like to be known for? What might their epitaph read?

MAIN ACTIVITY

Individuals draw a graph of their life. Dividing the horizontal axis into ten-year intervals they identify an achievement for each block of time (if you are sharing this with a group of younger people you need to adjust the blocks accordingly). For example, between birth and age ten a person may have passed some form of cycling proficiency or earned a badge in swimming. Once the group has completed this part of the exercise they must then take photographs of objects or subjects that reflect these achievements.

Invite the group members to share their images. The activity may end here or the group could use the photographs as the basis of a collage titled 'my legacy'.

EXTENSION

See Chapter 10 to look at ways to extend and develop this activity further.

Images as belonging

The following exercise recognizes the importance of belonging. Photography provides a medium through which to explore identity and to consider what group members require to possess a sense of meaning. This is particularly pertinent to asylum-seekers or refugees who have been displaced from their own countries as a result of war or violence. It is also of relevance to younger people, particularly with the increase in gang culture where this sense of belonging may come at a great personal cost.

REQUIREMENTS

For this exercise you will require a range of images from magazines which reflect the theme of belonging, sheets of card, glue and scissors.

WARM-UP

Group members are invited to think of a time when they felt part of something. Offer a list of examples. For instance:

- a club or an association
- the feeling when returning from a holiday
- family
- a time at school or work.

How did this make people feel? Was this a positive experience or a negative one? Why?

MAIN ACTIVITY

Explore images associated with the theme ‘belonging’. Provide examples to begin the process. For example:

- pictures of home
- slippers warming by the fire
- an embrace
- love
- regimentation
- a uniform.

Participants create a photographic montage (a collage) based around the theme of belonging. Reflecting on the images they respond to the following statements.

- ‘Belonging is...’
- ‘Belonging feels...’
- ‘Belonging offers...’
- Is there a cost to ‘belonging’ (for example, having to conform to something or take part in things that you don’t feel comfortable with)?
- Is there a way to belong without having to conform?

EXTENSION

This could form a stand-alone activity or you may link it to a series of activities, each of which link to a different aspect associated with the theme of belonging. For instance, you may choose to explore this in the

context of a geographical location, a particular interest or hobby, a social group or in terms of family relationships.

I would not be without...

Still focusing on the theme of self-awareness this light-hearted activity encourages participants to revisit their priorities.

REQUIREMENTS

For this exercise the theme tune to the radio programme 'Desert Island Discs' would be ideal. You will also need flip-chart paper, pens and photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Begin the session by listening to the theme tune of 'Desert Island Discs'. Group members imagine they have won the opportunity to live on a desert island. They are instructed that each person is allowed to take four items to the island with them (not people). Participants describe their four items, justifying the reason for their choice.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Excluding family and friends what does the group identify as their life essentials? What makes life good:

- a particular food dish or edible treat
- nice clothes
- your job
- relaxing bath
- soap
- your art pad
- your camera?

Individuals then use their camera to create 'Top ten things I could not live without' (not including family and friends).

Placing these in order of importance the group are invited to discuss the following.

- Was this a difficult thing to do?
- Is there anything that surprises you?
- What was the most difficult choice you had to make?
- What do you think the list says about your values in life?
- If you had done this exercise one year ago would the images have been different?
- How about five years ago? What would the differences have been?

This works well if the person or group then revisits these at given intervals to reflect on any changes that may occur over time.

Light and shadow/limited exposure

We all have positive and negative facets of our personality, things in life that we are pleased with or quite proud of and aspects that we don't like or feel ashamed of. Jung (1938) described this less positive side as the 'shadow-self' and saw this aspect of the personality as being as necessary and important as its counterpart. He argued that the person needed to get in touch with this less positive side of their personality in order to gain true self-awareness. This exercise offers the opportunity to explore these two different dimensions at a very superficial level. For further exploration it is necessary for group members to seek support from a person properly trained in psychotherapeutic techniques.

REQUIREMENTS

This activity requires small squares of paper, pens, magazines, pictures from the internet, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Each person writes ten sentences beginning with the words 'I am'. Five of the sentences refer to something positive: things they like about themselves or characteristics that others have admired, and five refer to negatives: less positive parts of their life. They consider how these could be represented in pictorial form.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The main exercise emphasizes how these positives and negatives combine to make the person whom they are. Use the following steps to support participants in creating a photographic art work to weave these two elements together to illustrate how they interlink.

- First, take or find images in books, magazines, newspapers and on the internet that represent the less positive aspects of self. These should all be black and white. If group members are using an SLR camera they will need to purchase a black and white film. Otherwise digital images may be downloaded on to the computer and a simple graphics package can be used to convert them.
- The next step is to take photographs that express ‘the good bits’. These remain in colour.
- Group members mount both sets of photographs on separate pieces of card: one for black and white images, the other for colour.
- Now, cut a groove half way along one of the pieces of card and slot the other sheet in here so that the two pieces of card fit together.
- Reflect on the end structure.

This can be a very personal and revealing process. Less emphasis should be placed on the content of the images and more on the experience of undertaking the process. As individuals look at these different aspects of self, considering the positive and negative; the good and the bad facilitate general discussion inviting the group members to share how it makes them feel.

Can individuals accept that these two elements live side by side or are there aspects they would like to change? If so how might they do this?

Room 101

We can all think of examples of things we dislike or things that we object to. If these remain hidden their significance and importance may balloon beyond recognition, the result of which is increasing introspection and

increased feelings of helplessness. One way to cope is to share these feelings with others. Photography can provide a useful tool in this process, offering distance and a vehicle for discussion. The process of exploring these areas can help to lessen the hold such fears exercise and cause them to lose their ‘magic’. This can form the basis of further work.

This activity may be shared on a number of levels. The aim is to facilitate discussion among group members of things they dislike. You may initially choose to keep this on quite a superficial level and it can be very light-hearted, including discussion around traffic wardens, wasps, horse flies. As a group debate these, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having these and how should they be removed.

REQUIREMENTS

The book *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by George Orwell, photographic equipment, books, magazines, scissors.

WARM-UP

The group talk about what is meant by the term ‘Room 101’. You could read an excerpt from George Orwell’s book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* or play an excerpt from the television show also named ‘Room 101’.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members take photographs or find images from books or magazines of three items that would be in their Room 101.

They present these to the group, justifying their choice.

As a group spend time discussing ways to cope with fears and worries. Alternatively, find a way to neutralize the objects in Room 101 by finding positive images.

Advert

This exercise offers a fun, relatively non-threatening way of looking at individual strengths, future hopes and wishes.

REQUIREMENTS

'Lonely hearts' columns taken from the newspaper, photographic equipment, a grid layout, card, glue, scissors.

WARM-UP

Look through a series of 'lonely hearts' columns' in the paper noting how people describe themselves. Look out for adjectives such as 'bright' 'fun-loving' 'intelligent'. Pay attention to the format of the entry, usually something along the lines of:

particular person seeks... for...,

then particular requirements.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The aim of the exercise is for group members to create a photographic version of a lonely hearts column. These are arranged in a grid format as illustrated below.

Images of <i>positive characteristics</i> that define you	Image of something you are <i>looking for in life</i> (could be a person, could be a particular role, could be a possession or an object)
<i>Purpose:</i> an image representing something you would really like to achieve	<i>Any requirements</i> (relating to the thing you are looking at in life)

As a group share the end results. Explore how it felt to identify these different aspects and what people have learnt from this exercise. Alternatively, play a game where participants guess who created which advert.

Images as Agents for Change

The following quotations reflect two very different dimensions of image-making in relation to change.

The pictures that you're taking are telling your story – that your life is important. Just in taking the pictures it gets you involved, you know, looking at your life and what's good about it, what's bad about it, what things need to be changed. You look at your community and say, 'What could I do to make my community better?' (Battle Creek Photovoice participant, in Foster-Fishman et al. 2005, p.275)

The cumulative picture built up through the gradual changes documented in the photographs can reveal evidence of changes to appearance that had gone unnoticed. (Frith and Harcourt, 2007, p.1345)

Building on many of the ideas contained in other sections of the book this chapter looks at ways of using image-making as a vehicle for personal growth. Photography is described both as a means of recording change and as an agent for change. Exercises demonstrate how to use photography to help participants re-envision the future, as a framework to structure personal development through the creation of visible goals and, finally, as a means to create a tangible record of the distance travelled.

The activities are carefully graded and it is suggested that time is spent using photography to help group members explore their own attitudes towards change before embarking on the later exercises that look at how to implement the steps that lead to personal growth. The chapter recognizes the complexity inherent in taking such steps and of the challenges of managing new circumstances. For this reason the exercises should not be used in isolation but as part of a broader range of activities encouraging insight, self-awareness and reflection. Combining group sessions with individual interactions to meet specific needs can help to further support this journey.

Personal growth is seen as an ongoing process and the exercises offer participants a selection of tools, techniques and a medium for ongoing personal development that extends well beyond the life of the group and forms the basis of a lifelong learning process.

The exercises

Images to reflect change

The exercises in this chapter look at how the image-making process can both document and provide a catalyst for change. A useful starting point is to explore how group members regard and respond to change. For example, is change seen as something they welcome, or is it something viewed with suspicion? Is change understood as a painful process, either difficult or challenging, or as a source of stimulation, an antidote to boredom and routine?

REQUIREMENTS

Flip-chart paper, pens, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The session begins with the group members listing all the words they associate with change. Do not let individuals think too much before giving a response; rather, try to capture the words that automatically spring to mind. As facilitator list these on a sheet of flip-chart paper. When the ideas are exhausted spend time reviewing the list. Are the

words mainly positive or negative? Is change generally something the group embraces or generally worries about?

MAIN ACTIVITY

The focus of this exercise is for group members to take photographs that reflect change in some way. For example, they might choose to photograph the changing seasons or to capture an image that is about growth or metamorphosis.

In this session, or in a subsequent meeting, invite the group to reflect on their images.

- What do their images say about their response to change?
- What lessons can group members learn by looking at these images?
- What do they say about the short-term costs weighed against the long-term benefits of this process?
- What are the ideal conditions required to make change lasting?
- What can group members learn about situations where the decision to change is forced on them and isn't a choice?

Use this as the basis for discussion. Suggest that group members keep the image and use it as a focus or a reminder when they are making changes to their lives that are particularly difficult or challenging.

Group members may choose to use these pictures in a number of ways. Here is an example of one person's response to the image they created.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

Julie had been coming to the group for about four weeks. She was one of the quieter members so it came as quite a shock when she took a lead within the session. The initial photographs Julie chose to share with the group were of the changing seasons. Here is what she wrote after spending time reflecting on the picture. She used this as an opportunity to talk about the changes that took place after the unexpected breakdown of her marriage.

Just as you have grown so, too, have I changed. Shedding my leaves so that I stood there cold and exposed. I did not choose this way, rejected and humiliated. However, time has passed and now I stand, reclothed and resplendent. I no longer mourn the leaves that fell away. They have fed me and made me who I am. The winds that battered my branches and ripped away my trunk are the same winds that have given me strength.

Old self/new self

The above reflection highlights the value of metaphor when discussing this process of change. The strength of metaphor is that it offers group members an additional language through which to articulate their thoughts while offering some distance. This first exercise encourages participants to focus on the metaphor of an animal or creature when exploring facets of their personality and characteristics they would like to develop. The emphasis here is on the person they are now compared with the person they would like to be.

REQUIREMENTS

Images of animals, magazines, books, photographic equipment, scissors, card, glue.

WARM-UP

The group looks at pictures of different animals and talks about the characteristics associated with each of these. For example:

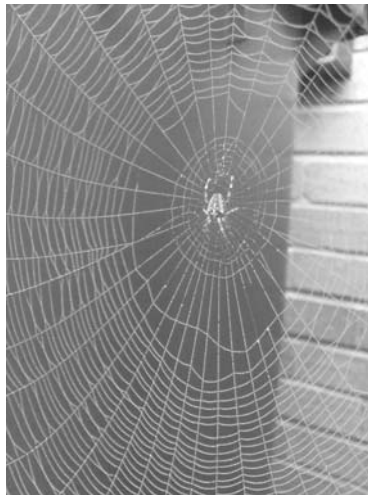
Fox	Swan	Cat	Dog	Rabbit
Owl	Mouse	Lion	Ostrich	Hedgehog
Monkey	Elephant	Pig	Gazelle	Snake
Caterpillar	Tortoise	Butterfly	Spider	Mosquito

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members choose one image they feel best sums up the characteristics of their personality as they see themselves at the present moment. They should not confine their ideas to the images provided but should seek out additional pictures where appropriate. The images and narratives below illustrate some examples of this.



- ▶ Figure 10.1 Dreaming of being a swan. Claire asked us to choose a picture of an animal that summed up who we were. The intention was then to find another image of an animal containing character traits of who we wanted to be. Originally I had the idea of photographing a duck. I often feel a bit clumsy, tend to wear my heart on my sleeve whereas I would really like to be a swan all elegant and floating on the surface. It was interesting though because when I shared the image with my group they commented on its beautiful markings and how well it blended into the background. I'd never thought of it that way and in fact a swan would stand out like a sore thumb. I became really attached to this picture and for the first time saw how beautiful I was. For one of the first times ever I felt a sense of contentment.



- ▶ Figure 10.2 I like to be in control. As I sit in the centre of the web I can feel each twinge, each vibration and I know exactly what is happening in this my kingdom. I love the sense of knowing all there is to know and keeping everything together. Like a conductor conducting his orchestra. I spend my days working and weaving, giving all I have even to the point of being completely spent inside. I give of me and part of me. The cost is great. People fear me and keep away. So small and yet so mighty. Yet when the wind blows too strongly or changes direction all my work can be undone so easily. I can be blown this way or that, only to start again.
The above account was written by a person using the image of a spider's web to describe his need to be in control.

Reflect on the reasons for this choice.

- Why did they select this particular creature?
- Would others describe them in this way?
- Are there characteristics of this animal they don't possess?

Participants then imagine they could choose the animal whose characteristics they would like to possess. Again this should be done pictorially with the person either seeking out or photographing the creature. If the person is happy with their initial image they should reflect on the positives.

Taking the two images group members cut the image into pieces and re-assemble it to create this 'new self'.

Use the session to discuss the process of metamorphosis.

- Was change painful or difficult?
- What have group members learnt about themselves through this activity?
- What have they learnt about change?

Invite group members to talk about change in context of their own lives.

A day in the life of...

Imagine a 'fly on the wall' documentary about your life. What would the cameras capture? What would they reveal? In watching the film what would you learn about yourself? This is a useful activity to help group members identify areas for self-development. The exercise invites participants to record a 12-hour period of their life using still photography and to use these images as the basis of a reflective exercise focusing on priorities and potential changes they may wish to make.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Individuals identify activities that have become part of an established routine. For example, fish and chips from the chip shop for Friday tea,

football on a Saturday afternoon, laundry on a Monday morning. Encourage group members to share any amusing stories they associate with these (for example, the time you couldn't go to a friend's wedding because it clashed with the football).

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group choose a day to record their activities. Every 30 minutes they take a photograph to reflect what they are doing at that moment in time. Over the 12-hour period each person should have a total of 24 photographs. When these have been printed or developed participants review the pictures.

For each photograph they:

- describe what they were doing at that exact moment
- reflect on how it felt to take the picture
- decide whether the activity is something they enjoy or value and reasons for this
- give each photograph a caption: a one-liner that acts as a subtext.

Placing the images in chronological order, consider whether these are reflective of a typical day.

Use a subsequent session to explore the images in more detail. Invite group members to arrange their images around different themes. For instance, things they want to do, things they have to do, things they enjoy, things they find boring, roles that offer meaning or value and roles that devalue, images taken outside and images taken inside, images of the person on their own and images taken with other people.

Extend the discussion to invite group members to identify aspects of their life they are satisfied with and areas they would like to change. Consider simple steps group members may take to initiate this change using an individual session to support this process.

EXTENSION

To extend or develop the activity repeat the exercise but base this around a much longer period of time, for example a week or a month.

Wish you were here

Where are you in your life and where would you like to be? Are you close to your ideal or far-removed from it? This is a variation of the previous activity, but rather than using images of animals or plants it focuses on the well-known medium of postcards and the catch-phrase, ‘Wish you were here...’ This works well on a number of different levels.

REQUIREMENTS

Picture postcards, blank cards, felt-tipped pens.

WARM-UP

The group members look through a series of picture postcards. Participants choose one postcard, somewhere they would like to be, describing the reasons for their choice. Ask individuals to reflect on how it might feel to be in that place. How is this different from where the person is now?

MAIN ACTIVITY

Invite group members to consider where they would like to be in two years’, five years’, ten years’ time. This might be a place they would like to live, it could relate to their career; a particular job or role, a personal dream or something about family or friends.

Participants use their camera to photograph images that in some way illustrate these hopes and wishes. Individuals mount these on a small piece of white card with the words ‘Wish you were here...’.

In a subsequent session the group members share their images. Participants imagine they have been transported into the future and the person they are in the future is writing the card to whom they are in the present. They compose a message on the back of the card beginning with the words ‘Wish you were here...’. Individuals could:

- describe where they are
- describe how it feels to be in the image on the front of the card
- describe the journey they took to get there
- offer themselves a few words of encouragement.

At the end of the activity the group focuses on the present. Discussion then revolves around the following themes.

- What did they learn about where they wanted to go?
- How far away does it feel from the point where they are in their life at present?
- What do you need to do to get to their dream destination?
- What might some of the barriers be and how will they keep motivated?
- What steps do they need to take to realize this dream?

Role-play

We all have multiple roles. Some will be valued and integral to our identity. Others will be less important or even detrimental to our sense of self. This activity uses photography as a means of exploring these and considering ways to discard those roles that have a negative effect on well-being.

REQUIREMENTS

Appropriate music, flip-chart paper and pen, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Begin the activity by playing the Shania Twain song 'She'. Note down all the roles that she refers to in this piece. Build on this and create an A–Z of possible roles a person may hold. For example:

- advocate, anchor, adviser
- brother, banker
- carer, confidante
- daughter.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The challenge faced by group members is to find a way of representing these multiple roles and to record them through photographic media.

Examples participants have used in sessions I have facilitated include: a chef's hat (cook), a thermometer (medic), a filing cabinet (organizer), a sticking plaster (healer).

The group members then:

- look at the images they have taken
- select ten photographs, each representing a separate role they currently hold
- from these they choose three photographs that reflect the three roles they value the most
- on the two blank pieces of paper they write down two roles they would like to have in the future
- substitute these pieces of paper with two photographs of roles that they currently hold and would like to give up.

As a group, discuss the activity and share any insights gained. Explore opportunities to develop new roles and talk about possible steps individuals might take to adopt these. Consider some of the barriers that might prevent success.

VARIATION

A variation of the above activity is to invite the group members to create images that reflect a wide variety of different roles they may hold. During the following session participants share their images. As the meeting progresses group members are invited to place their pictures together at a central point in the middle of the room.

One at a time group members go to the images and pick up one picture that represents a role they currently hold and value or a role they would like to develop. As they do this they say a little about what that image means to them and the group engages in a process of joint problem-solving to explore ways that they might achieve this.

In the final stage of the activity the group members explore the remainder of the images and discussion focuses on roles that group members wish to discard or reject.

Excess baggage

This exercise encourages group members to identify things in life that cause anxiety, lead to tension and weigh them down. Again the aim of this activity is to identify areas for personal growth and change.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Participants begin by reflecting on holidays. What kind of a person are the group members in terms of packing? Do they travel light or bring everything except for the kitchen sink? The group shares stories about times they have been on holiday and packed things they did not use (winter clothes when it is glorious sunshine, tea-bags, books that remained unopened). Individuals consider things that weigh their luggage down.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Discussion moves from items that weigh down luggage to things that weigh individuals down in life. The group identify things they worry about and prevent them from enjoying life to the full. These might relate to particular situations or people they feel that they carry emotionally. The group members spend time using the camera to photograph objects that reflect these (for example, pictures of money to represent finances, body parts to represent health).

Dedicate a session to look at the images.

- What do the group members notice about the pictures?
- Is there anything that surprises them about the images or the pictures they have chosen?
- Why do they carry these things with them: ‘just in case’, ‘not wanting to offend’, ‘habit’?
- Are there any steps they could take to make them feel less weighed down?

End the group with a general discussion of ways to declutter and ways to make positive changes.

Getting rid of the rubbish

This offers an alternative to the previous exercise, 'Excess baggage'. Once again it picks up on the theme of having a psychological spring-clean to weed out those aspects of life that weigh the person down.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Invite the group on a photographic walk armed with cameras. As you walk look out for any photographic pieces of rubbish or debris discarded in the hedgerow, on the pavement and in the gutter.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Print off or develop these images and find a way to mount and display them on a pinboard or on the wall so that they may be shared by the entire group. Participants can then see if they can identify parts of their life that weigh them down: negative thoughts or struggles with particular items of the rubbish displayed. For example, a dumped washing machine may symbolize a very significant worry whilst an empty crisp packet may represent a smaller concern or niggle.

Once a group member has identified an image and made a connection with a particular worry or concern they are invited to remove the photograph from the pinboard or wall.

When everyone has had a chance to do this bring the group back together. Offer participants space to talk about their images and to describe the connections they have made. Once they have done this they are invited to tear the image into pieces and place these in a waste basket in the centre of the group, a symbolic act of discarding the issue and putting it to one side.

Bottling up...it does what it says on a tin

This exercise focuses on emotion and explores ways to manage feelings.

REQUIREMENTS

Adverts containing images of bottles or containers, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group members look at photographs of bottles or containers (perfume bottles, deodorant, tins, glass jars) and participants guess what substance the container holds. Discussion focuses on how the design of the container reflects its contents.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group members consider the question: If they could bottle a particular feeling what feeling would they bottle and why?

Working individually each person chooses at random a word card containing an emotion. The emotions include:

anger	joy	sadness
hurt	pleasure	love

Using their camera group members seek out possible containers to house these emotions, bringing these images back to the group.

During this session, or in a subsequent meeting, group members share their photographs, justifying their choices. The group imagines the consequences of placing a particular emotion in an inappropriate container (for example, anger in a fragile glass phial). Discussion moves on to what happens if particular emotions are contained in unhelpful ways (for example, anger turned inwards). The group ends with a general exploration of ways of coping with strong emotions.

Tiny steps...

Change does not have to be something that is sudden or dramatic. Indeed, sometimes the most long-lasting changes are those which occur gradually over time. You need only think of the dieter who loses a few

pounds every month and who sustains the weight loss as compared with the person who ‘crash diets’ and puts weight back on as quickly as they lost it. This exercise explores ways of making small changes in order to make a big difference.

REQUIREMENTS

Two similar images which may be used as the basis of a game of ‘spot the difference’, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group members compare two seemingly identical images and play ‘spot the difference’. Discussion focuses on how change can sometimes be imperceptible. They share examples where tiny adjustments to lifestyle have led to lasting changes.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Group members use their cameras to photograph the same scene at the same time every day for a month. What can they learn from these images? What do they notice? Can they detect any tiny, imperceptible changes? Ask group members to think of something they would like to change about their life at that given moment. Invite them to consider how tiny imperceptible changes might lead to a more significant change. How could they use the camera to document and record this? What might be the advantage of recording change in this way?

EXTENSION

Use a session to work with participants to set a goal and use their camera to record the small changes that are taking place over time. Explore the value of creating a tangible record of their achievements, looking at the role of photography as a source of motivation and encouragement.

My life as a book

If group members are sceptical whether they are able to make any significant life changes it may be useful to help individuals to reflect on prior experiences and transitions they have already been able to negotiate

successfully. These can help participants to see change as a continual process and draw confidence from past achievements.

REQUIREMENTS

Card, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group members imagine their lives as a book. Each person identifies titles they would give to different chapters. Time is spent sharing these.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Looking at their chapter titles participants focus on finding an image or series of images that reflect them. Group members mount the images on separate pieces of card with the title underneath. Individuals also consider the titles of future chapters and images which might express these.

During a subsequent session the group members share their books. The group spend time considering:

- how they have negotiated significant life changes in the past
- factors that have helped or hindered the process
- a time when change has been very positive
- the resources available to support change.

Encourage the group to continue this process, adding to the chapters over time. They might give an overall title to their book and write a short introduction summarizing the type of story it contains. For example:

This book is a mystery...a tragic comedy...a drama...

The road less travelled

The chapter now moves from using image-making to help participants explore their attitudes to change and the process of identifying areas for growth to the actual mechanisms of the decision-making process. The following exercise offers a gentle introduction to visual approaches of envisioning the future and recognizing the consequences of choices we make.

REQUIREMENTS

The poem ‘The Road Not Taken’ by Robert Frost¹, photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Read the Robert Frost poem ‘The Road Not Taken’. Use this as the basis to encourage group members to reflect on turning points in their life, decisions they have made and directions they have taken. Facilitate discussion around the following themes.

- Do group members find it difficult to make decisions? Are they the kind of person who feels overwhelmed by the possibilities?
- Are they someone who generally thinks things through very carefully or do they find it easier to make decisions quite quickly?
- How do they envisage or picture future possibilities?
- Once they have made a decision do they ever look back?

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants think about their life at the moment. Do they have any significant decisions to make over the next few days, weeks, months? These could be concrete and relate to work, family, possible career options even a house move. The decisions might also relate to life choices they need to make such, as a change in lifestyle, change in behaviour, a relationship.

Group members choose one example of a decision they need to make. They visualize this as a crossroads with paths leading in different directions. Each path represents a future possibility and a different destination. Some of these are very positive, others less so. The aim of the exercise is for group members to think about ways of representing these destinations and using the camera to photograph and create visual images to illustrate the consequences of following a particular route or life-path.

1 Robert Frost (1874–1963), an American poet, who is highly regarded for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech.

EXTENSION

During a subsequent session group members use the images as a means of thinking through the different choices available and potential consequences of following these.

Goal-setting

One of the biggest challenges of meeting personal goals is to keep motivated. This exercise considers how photography may be used within this process as a source of encouragement and as an aid to motivation.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment, large sheets of paper, marker pens.

WARM-UP

Participants consider a New Year's resolution they have made in the past. The group members discuss the challenges they faced when trying to succeed, the level of difficulty and how they kept motivated. Hold a competition to see who has managed to break their resolution in the shortest amount of time. Contrast this by exploring factors that promote and contribute to success.

MAIN ACTIVITY

When thinking about larger goals it may be useful to break the goal down into smaller steps and to imagine how it might feel to meet these. This can act as a focus to increase motivation and maximize the chances of success. Explore with the group ways that photographs can offer an added dimension to help group members envisage and prepare for each stage of the journey. The following exercises can take place over a number of sessions. Alternatively, they could form the focus for photographic assignments that take place outside of the group and the meeting could be a place where these are shared and explored collectively.

- Participants think of something they would like to achieve in the long term. Imagining this as a journey they draw a line on the sheet of paper to represent this. The endpoint of this line is the goal to which they are working.
- Using the line as a guide, invite group members to break their goals into smaller steps. The group spends time imagining what these milestones might be. Working individually they take photographs or objects, people or scenes to symbolize or represent these milestones. These images can be added at the relevant points on the line.
- For the final part of this exercise group members picture how it might feel at different points of the journey as they work towards this goal. Again, using their camera, they photograph these different emotions and add these to the timeline.

The group shares how it felt to take part in the process. Encourage discussion around goal-setting and how photography can help to record change and to maintain motivation.

Group members should use the photographic timeline as a means to monitor and record process. As they reach particular milestones participants may take additional photographs to illustrate how it feels to succeed at these key points.

Boulders and bridges

Objects can act as powerful metaphors and offer useful props or triggers to help people think about situations in different ways. Within the Kawa model, for example, Iwama, Baum and Christiansen (2006) used the metaphor of the river to conceptualize life. Within this model rocks are representative of life circumstances and driftwood of individual assets and liabilities. This is one of many models drawing heavily on the use of metaphor to describe obstacles.

This exercise builds on these ideas to explore how the process of finding objects to represent situations and then photographing these can help participants revisit and re-frame challenges and to find creative solutions.

REQUIREMENTS

Selection of pebbles, stones and small rocks, photographic equipment.



► Figure 10.3



► Figure 10.4



► Figure 10.5



► Figure 10.6

WARM-UP

Invite the group to look at a selection of pebbles, stones and small rocks. Participants feel the texture, weight and shape of these. Thinking of a

challenge they have recently faced they select one of the stones to represent this. Group members then answer the following questions.

- What made you choose that particular pebble, rock or stone?
- As you hold it, how does it make you feel?
- What do you notice about its texture, its weight and shape?
- How does it reflect the challenge you were thinking about?
- What would you like to do with the pebble, rock or stone?
- Does it make you think about the situation any differently?

MAIN ACTIVITY

Individuals think of a challenge they currently face. Their task is to find and to photograph an object that represents this in some way.

Use the following questions to stimulate discussion.

- What was the initial attraction to this particular object or feature?
- What strikes them about it?
- What words spring to mind as they look at it or touch it?
- Photograph the object from different angles: close-up images, photographs taken from a distance, pictures taken from different angles. As they do this what do they notice?
- Thinking back to their challenge, can they think of any different ways or perspectives they bring to this?

The group members develop their images and spend time looking at these. As they do, what do they notice? Are there any details they missed the first time? Does it look different in any way? Do the images offer any new or different insights? Again, thinking back to the original challenge, do they still think about this in the way they did at the beginning? If not, how has their thinking changed?

EXTENSION

Reflecting on the first exercise the aim now is to find a second metaphor, a solution to the challenge. Allow the person time for this so, before they seek out the second image, ensure they have an idea or an impression of

what they are going to photograph, although by the same token ensure that this thinking is not overly rigid. If an alternative solution presents itself, group members should trust their instinct. Participants might, for example, choose to select a number of possible solutions as opposed to just one.

REFLECTING ON PRACTICE

I'd been thinking about a problem that I had been having at work so when we were asked to choose a pebble or a stone that reflected this my choice was easy. I took a handful of the smallest pebbles and gripped them really tightly until they ran through my fingers. I explained to the others that it was one of those slippery, moveable feasts and no sooner had I managed to get on top of one of the issues then something else cropped up and I felt the situation slipping away from me so I was literally forced back to the starting point all over again.

The challenge then was to find something that reflected the challenge we faced and to photograph this. I had the idea of taking an image of a river near where I live. It is a beautiful part of the world out in Derbyshire.

I decided to walk along the riverbank and as I did I noticed how the river meandered. I liked this idea because it showed how my problem changed constantly. In some parts the water flowed very quickly so that it appeared to be incredibly turbulent, in others it was as still as a millpond. Again this seemed to sum up perfectly the nature of the job, fluctuating between chaos and boredom.

I had already thought that my solution was to find a bridge, and I knew just the spot, but as I crouched by the water, zooming in to get the shot with my camera, I was struck by how shallow the water was. In fact, first appearances were misleading because there were small sandbanks where the waterbed was quite built up. When I started to photograph the bridge I made up my mind because it was so big and broad, and somehow to think of a solution that avoided the water completely no longer seemed right. In fact it occurred to me that it was probably better to find a shallow bit and wade in. So long as I avoided the very turbulent bits I would be OK. The water might be

a shock at first but I would get used to it and work out how to best negotiate the currents.

Genie in the bottle

Successful change management is dependent on two processes. The first is the identification of areas of life that have a negative effect on health and well-being, and ways to address these. The second part is recognizing future hopes and wishes. The following exercises build on the activities described in Chapter 9.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The group members imagine that they have stumbled across an old, dusty bottle on a beach. They pick up the bottle and give it a rub. As they do invite the group to describe what happens next.

MAIN ACTIVITY

As the person rubbed the bottle there was a puff of smoke and the genie of the lamp appeared. The genie spoke the following words:

I am the genie of the lamp and you are now my master. The only problem is that whilst I speak your language I can only listen through pictures. I will grant you three wishes. All you need to do is to take three photographs of those things you would like to have.

The group members simply do as the genie says and capture images that sum up three things they would like to own or three things they would like to happen in the future.

The group return with the images and these are explored during a subsequent session. Participants explain what the images are and what they represent. The facilitator raises the question whether these hopes and wishes are things within the person's grasp and the group engage in a collective problem-solving activity to consider how they could achieve these in the future.

Ten things I hope to do before I'm very old

This exercise focuses on things participants would like to achieve in the future and offers an alternative way to look at goal-setting.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

Group members imagine they are writing a guide book about life. They are invited to name:

- ten places you *must* visit
- ten meals you *must* eat
- ten pieces of music you *must* listen to
- ten books you *must* read
- ten films you *must* watch
- ten activities you *must* try.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants imagine they have been asked to illustrate the front page of this book. Choosing one of the above categories they find and photograph images that capture the 'musts' they have identified. These are arranged to create a montage.

Discussion can then focus on the images as the group members consider whether any images are missing and if activities they would like to take part in before they are very old still remain. Use this as an opportunity to look at future hopes and aspirations, practical steps group members can take to achieve these aspirations.

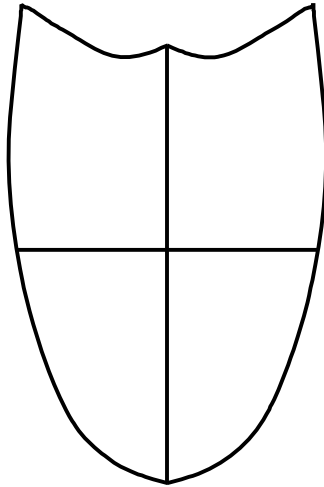
Shield

A shield can be a symbol of heritage, a sign of protection, an object of valour. This exercise invites participants to create their own shield reflecting something of past achievements, potential obstacles, possible resources and finally a motto to sum up an overarching philosophy or

approach to life. This exercise is a variation of the popular shield activity used in many group work settings.

REQUIREMENTS

A selection of school or society mottos, a template of a shield, photographic equipment, piece of card, marker pens.



► Figure 10.7

WARM-UP

See if the group can recall any school or society mottos. For example:

- Be prepared (Scouts).
- Seek, serve and follow Christ (Girls Brigade).
- To thine own self be true.
- Work hard and succeed.
- Live long and prosper (Star Trek).

Can participants think of a motto or saying that would sum up their approach to life?

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Using the template above, the group complete the four segments of the shield.

- In the first segment they place photographs or images that reflect something of their strengths.
- In the second segment they place photographs or images that reflect something of the obstacles or challenges they face.
- In the third segment they place photographs or images that reflect some of the resources on which they can draw.
- In the final segment they place an image of an animal which encapsulates key characteristics of their personality.

Finally, around the outside of the shield they write their personal motto that guides their actions and reflects their outlook on life.

Endings

Endings in many ways are as important as beginnings. The end of one journey represents the start of another as participants move from the comfort of the familiar into new territory. This can feel both frightening and exciting, and the final sessions offer individuals the opportunity to prepare for and negotiate this transition.

If the group has been facilitated as a closed group, with a fixed membership over a specified length of time, the relationships that will have been formed within the group and the depth of exploration and level of sharing will have been significant. For many individuals, the experience of taking part in the programme will have been intense and powerful and it will be difficult to let go and move on. The ending may be viewed with a range of emotions, including sadness, loss, fear, anticipation, expectancy and perhaps relief. There may be anger and questions raised about 'Why must this end?' This response can form part of the denial which accompanies the process of leaving (Atkinson and Wells 2000).

The final sessions must therefore take account of all these emotions and offer a time to:

- celebrate what has been achieved
- review the range of activities people have taken part in
- reflect on the relationships that have been formed
- reinforce the learning that has occurred
- look to the future.

The final sessions require careful planning in order to support each person in negotiating and managing this time of transition. You will need to consider how you will prepare group members for the ending of the programme and ways to celebrate the journey participants have made.

The exercises

It's been fun

This exercise offers a light-hearted look at the highpoints of the group, offering participants an opportunity to identify and share with others elements they have enjoyed.

REQUIREMENTS

Before the session the group members are invited to bring an object or an image to the group that represents an aspect of the experience that has positive memories. The other requirement for this activity is a camera that can produce an instant result, such as a digital or Polaroid camera.

WARM-UP

Group members share their objects and talk about what the object represents. Discussion focuses on elements of the group individuals have particularly enjoyed.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Working in small groups, participants identify one event or activity that has been meaningful and recreate a pose or a scene from this that represents this in some way. Other members of the group photograph this.

Each small group shares their image and other members see if they can guess which particular session they are representing or describing.

The journey travelled

This exercise works particularly well as an 'ending' or as a way to reflect on a period of change on the journey travelled.

REQUIREMENTS

Group members bring images taken over the duration of the group, a selection of art materials.

WARM-UP

The group spends time reflecting on a memorable journey. For example, the car journey home with their newborn child, the car ride to the church for their wedding or a time when they have been away and have been desperate to return to see family or friends. Allow time for group members to share their experiences.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants think of the journey they have taken either individually with their camera or with the group. They spend time sharing the 'golden moments' and noting whether anything was particularly memorable or challenging, describing the turning points, the highs and the lows. If group members could represent these as landmarks what would they be? Invite the group to find a way of expressing these through the medium of photography. The challenge is to choose a theme they can base these on. Find a way to present these visual journeys either as an exhibition or a performance, setting the images to music.

I have learnt

The final sessions offer group members an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and consider the extent of their learning within the group.

REQUIREMENTS

Digital camera, access to a computer and a desktop publishing package such as Publisher.

WARM-UP

The group creates an A–Z of all they have learnt over the duration of the group. For example:

- awareness of others
- balance
- composition
- dedication.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group creates an advert for future groups, describing what members could expect and things they could potentially learn or discover. The group illustrates this with images taken within sessions. Discussion ends with participants considering what they have taken from the group and changes they have observed within their own lives.

Thank you for the memory

This is another activity that works very well as the group draws to an end. The focus is very much about celebrating the shared experience of the group and the contributions others have made.

REQUIREMENTS

Photographic equipment, slips of paper, a container.

WARM-UP

Invite the group to take a slip of paper and write their name on this. These are then folded in two and placed in a container. Each group member draws a name from the container and describes a positive memory associated with that person.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Working in pairs or small groups, participants create an image they would like others in the group to remember them by. The group ends with the sharing of the images and individuals explain the reason for their choice.

My wish for you

This exercise is very much about focusing on the journey ahead. It also forms a nice way to express an appreciation of others in the group. The exercise could run over a couple of sessions.

REQUIREMENTS

A selection of poems and prayers associated with journeys: the Irish blessing that begins with the words, 'May the road rise up to meet you' would be a good one to include; photographic equipment.

WARM-UP

The session begins with group members reading through and sharing the poems and prayers associated with journeys. Group discussion focuses on how participants envisage the path or road ahead.

MAIN ACTIVITY

The group members work in pairs. Each person shares with their partner what they imagine things will be like after the group has ended and where they see their own personal journey, the obstacles they face and the opportunities they hope for. Based on this conversation group members then have to find and photograph objects that represent things they would like to give the person to enable them to navigate the road ahead. These could be very practical things, for example a picture of a roadmap or compass for someone who is not sure where they are going, or the images could represent more spiritual gifts or qualities: peace, hope, rest. The images are shared in a subsequent meeting and used as the basis to talk about the future and the skills, strengths and practical resources they will take with them from the group.

Celebration

This exercise works well as a final session.

REQUIREMENTS

A range of photographic equipment, party nibbles, balloons and streamers, certificates of attendance for each participant. Group members are

asked to bring an image of something they associate with a good party to the session.

WARM-UP

Participants are invited to share their image and say a few words about why they have chosen this.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Participants work together to create ‘the ultimate group photograph’. The session ends with the awarding of certificates and a celebration of the group and its achievements.

Where the Personal and Professional Meet

Of course the exercises described in this book are not confined to use with the groups you work with. They can also offer you a medium for self-exploration, leading to your own personal and professional development. Indeed, the reflective nature of the image-making process makes it an ideal medium to gain distance, to step back and examine your practice and look at events from a very different perspective, which can add a rich dimension to the reflective processes you are already engaging in as part of the personal and professional development planning process.

This final, brief chapter is intended to offer a flavour of some of the ways others have used the exercises described in this book, by offering three short narratives where colleagues describe how the activities have formed the basis of:

- reflecting on practice during supervision
- staff development activities
- as a means to deal with powerful emotions.

It is hoped that in offering a glimpse of the potential use of image-making within a professional or work context you might feel inspired to revisit some of the activities and explore these within the context of your own needs.

Using photography in supervision

Supervision may be defined as:

A formal process of professional support and learning which enables individual practitioners to develop knowledge and competence, assume responsibility for their own practice and enhance consumer protection and safety of care in complex clinical situations. (Department of Health 1993, p.15)

If you are working in a health-related field, supervision will be a familiar process. Usually undertaken formally by your manager or a clinical specialist it provides a mechanism to explore your professional practice, regularly seeking out areas for development. If you are working in an area other than health, supervision will be less formal and will probably occur through discussion with colleagues or peers.

Whether undertaken formally or informally the principle aim of supervision is to promote reflection on practice in order to deepen understanding and identify ways of moving forwards. This may be in relation to your own development needs or could be in relation to an individual or a group you are working with.

Photography may be used in a number of ways within supervision:

- as a focus for discussion
- as a vehicle to talk about sensitive or difficult issues
- as a means to explore difficult group dynamics
- as a way to re-examine familiar situations.

The strength of image-making is that it offers a means through which to structure discussion. The intention is not to photograph people or physical dimensions of the environment in which you work; rather, the images should possess a more metaphorical quality. The act of seeking out such images will form part of the processing of the experience. A photograph can offer distance, providing a way to step back and gain space from a situation. Talking about this in the supportive supervision relationship may then offer you a means of revisiting that situation from a different perspective which, in turn, can lead to new perspectives and insights. Here is an example of how such insights may arise.

I had been feeling very dissatisfied with work but I couldn't quite put my finger on why this should be. I was working on a forensic

unit – low security and little had changed. The only thing I could think of was that a young woman had been admitted on to the ward who particularly unsettled me. She spent the entire time pacing around the room. Her energy was remarkable like a rubber band, wound tightly just waiting to break. I had tried everything to make a connection but nothing was working. I didn't feel as though I was doing well at my job and this only served to reinforce my insecurities.

I wanted to talk about this in supervision but wasn't sure how to do this so I used the reflective walk to see if I could find an image to sum up how I felt. It was my intention to find some kind of a spring or a coil to capture some of the energy and frustration I was experiencing. However, I took a slight detour from my usual walk and came across a huge aviary in the middle of town in the financial district of the city. I'd not been that way before so it took me by surprise. Instinctively I started to photograph this structure. I felt sorry for the birds who were in there. They were so beautiful and I could see how some had started to peck at each other or fly into the sides of the huge cage-like structure. I felt that they reflected something of the person I was working with. The metaphor of the cage on the locked ward and the energy they possessed turning in on themselves.

Satisfied I took the image to supervision and explored possible strategies that we could implement on the ward to support the person. This felt incredibly helpful. At one point my supervisor picked up the photograph and asked me to say a little more about the context. I explained the circumstances how I came across the aviary in the middle of the office block and we laughed a little as I reflected that, ironically, the office workers who had constructed the aviary were perhaps more imprisoned by the office blocks in which they were working, a kind of invisible cage. This was the moment that I made the real connection and the reason for my dissatisfaction. I spent the rest of the session looking at strategies to cope with the constraints of the environment in which I worked and the institutionalization I was also experiencing.



► Figure 12.1 The glass cage.

Staff development and education

Staff development is an important feature of most work environments. It offers a medium for the acquisition of skills and provides opportunities for team building and team working. Where the focus is on team-building, exercises taken from Chapter 7 may be excellent fun and provide a medium whereby group members can learn new things about each other. The session on three life achievements can be particularly powerful and may enable teams to identify skill sets which have been hidden to that point.

A further dimension to the use of photography within staff development relates to its potential as a teaching tool. Creative media is engaging, offers a different way to engage with a subject area and provides a means to challenge preconceptions. It also offers an alternative, perhaps more memorable, method of sharing ideas with colleagues. Here is my own account of using image-making in this way and the accompanying photographs used within the session:

It was never my intention to take photographs as part of the session for staff development. However, I wanted to capture something of the experience of the individuals that I worked with and began the process during my lunch breaks – of sitting in low chairs, being hoisted, spending time in unoccupied beds – capturing this on film.

The images were striking and spoke volumes in terms of the paucity of sensory experiences that people on the unit were given, for the world appears to be a very different place when you are sitting just six inches from the ground, or suspended in mid air in a hoist or enclosed in a white linen cocoon. Staff were shocked and we talked a great deal about how to do things differently. I do not believe this would have happened if I had based the development session on a talk.

Dealing with powerful emotions

Working in community and hospital settings has, for me, been as much a personal as it has a professional journey. During this time I have helped individuals cope with chronic illness, worked with individuals to the point of death, supported families, and helped young people cope with the divorce of parents and the anger associated with this.

For me photography has been a friend and companion on this journey, an outlet for emotion, a way for me to understand the professional and the personal. At various times the images have represented a safe haven, provided a focus to channel powerful emotions, or offered a way to unravel and make sense of what is happening.



- ▶ Figure 12.2 This image represents my personal journey. The mountain is sometimes the needs of the client, sometimes where I hope to be in the future in my professional career. The path moves this way and that. It reminds me that things are not meant to be straightforward and that it is OK to move from the straight and narrow from time to time, even if it is just to look at the view, providing I don't go too near the edge. The image sits above my desk. On a good day I look at this and feel that I am almost at the top. When things have been less successful I think of the distance already travelled and this offers hope.

CONCLUSION

Looking to the Future

This book has explored the potential of photography as a medium for reflection, personal exploration and change. It has demonstrated how the image-making process can offer new insights and how looking at a situation through a lens offers a different perspective and teaches us how to look at the world and ourselves in a different way.

I hope you will have glimpsed the breadth of what photography has to offer as a tool for both personal and professional development. Photography is a remarkable medium that works on many different levels. For some people the opportunity for personal growth will lie in being able to use a camera, to be in complete control and to participate in the image-making process. For others it is the chance to respond to, talk about or talk through an image, to share memories and in doing so to express powerful feelings and emotions or to use pictures to engage in further creative journeys. For each person we work with the emphasis will be different, but the effect will be the same: the transforming of relationship.

Photography can give a person a voice, provide an outlet for self-expression, a chance to learn something new. It can give flight to the imagination, help us to see the world through someone else's eyes, and change beyond recognition our understanding of who that person is, as we enter into a dynamic and meaningful dialogue that goes beyond words. For this to happen we must always focus on the person and ensure that the individual is at the heart of the process.

The potential of this medium is vast and is not limited by a person's age, disability, language or culture. The exercises contained in this book

are suitable for a range of groups, including those held in the community, in hospitals and other inpatient settings, and they may easily be adapted to meet individual needs. The ideas equally provide an excellent foundation for professional development and have a place in both the personal and professional planning process.

This book offers an approach that does not depend on specialist training or sophisticated equipment. However, it is recognized that other approaches exist within a broader therapeutic framework. A list of books at the end of the text, signposts the reader to other resources that may be of interest to people who are keen to develop this approach.

Writing a book about the potential of photography is a bit like taking a picture. You peer through the lens and discover that there is just so much to see, so many choices to make – should I look at this aspect or that? Will I capture a complete panorama or focus in on a tiny detail? How can I balance all of the different elements and do justice to these diverse perspectives? I hope that you have enjoyed sharing this snapshot, this glimpse of the many opportunities that visual images can present. However, above all, my wish is that you have been encouraged to embark on a photographic journey so that together you may discover for yourself what other possibilities this process of image-making can hold.

References

- Atkinson, K. and Wells, C. 2000, *Creative Therapies: A Psychodynamic Approach within Occupational Therapy*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.
- Berman, L. (1993) *Beyond the Smile: The Therapeutic Use of the Photograph*. London: Routledge.
- Concise Oxford Dictionary. (1990) Eighth edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Craig, C. (2005) *Focusing on the Person: Exploring the Potential of Photography for People with Dementia*. Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.
- Cronin, O. (1998) 'Psychology and photographic theory.' In Prosser, J. (1998) *Image Based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*. London: Routledge.
- Department of Health. (1993) *A Vision for the Future. The Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Contribution to Health and Health Care*. London: HMSO.
- Dowrick, S. (1992) *Intimacy and Solitude*. London. The Women's Press.
- Foster-Fishman, P., Nowell, B., Deacon, Z., Nievar, M.A. and McCann, P. (2005) 'Using methods that matter: the impact of reflection, dialogue and voice.' *American Journal of Community Psychology* 36, 275–291.
- Frith, H. and Harcourt, D. (2007) 'Using photographs to capture women's experiences of chemotherapy: reflecting on the method.' *Qualitative Health Research* 17, 0, 1340–50.
- Hagedorn, M. I. E. (1996) 'Photography: an aesthetic technique for nursing inquiry.' *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 17, 517–27.
- Iwama, M., Baum, C. and Christiansen, C. (2006) *The Kawa Model: Culturally Relevant Occupational Therapy*. Edinburgh: Elsevier Health Sciences.
- Jung, C.G. (1938) 'Psychology and Religion.' In *Collected Works 11: Psychology and Religion: West and East*. Bollingen series XX, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Krauss, D. A. and Fryrear, J. L. (eds) (1983) *PhotoTherapy in Mental Health*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Lahad, M. (1992) 'Storymaking in assessment method for coping with stress: six-piece-story-making and BASIC Ph. In Jennings, S. *Dramatherapy: Theory and Practice* 2 (pp.150–64). London: Routledge.

- Lemon, N. (2007) 'Take a photograph: teacher reflection through narrative.' *Reflective Practice* 8, 2, 177–91.
- McKillop, J. (2003) *Opening Shutters – Opening Minds*. Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.
- Martin, R. and Spence, J. (1985) 'New portraits for old: The use of camera in therapy.' *Feminist Review* 19, 66–92.
- Mitchell, R. (2005) 'Captured memories: a photography project in a drop-in centre.' University of Stirling, Dementia Services Development Centre.
- Ortberg, J. (1993) *Everybody's Normal Till you Get to Know Them*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
- Percy, M.S. (1995) 'Children from homeless families describe what is special in their lives.' *Holistic nursing practice* 9, 4, 24–33.
- Philips, D., Linnington, L. and Penman, D. (1999) *Writing Well. Creative Writing and Mental Health*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Pink, S. (2001) *Doing Visual Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Rampton, T.B., Rosemann, J.L., Latta, A.L., Mandlco, B.L., Olsen Roper, S. and Dyches, T.T. (2007) 'Images of life: siblings of children with Down Syndrome.' *Journal of Family Nursing* 14, 4, 420–42.
- Russell, L. (2007) 'Visual methods in researching the arts and inclusion: possibilities and dilemmas.' *Ethnography and Education* 2, 39–55.
- Smith, C. (2007) 'Innovative rehabilitation after head injury: examining the use of a creative intervention.' *Journal of Social Work Practice* 21, 3, 297–309.
- Wang, C.C., Morrell-Samules, S., Hutchinson, P., Bell, L. and Pestronk, R.M. (2004) 'Flint photovoice: community-building among youth, adults and policy makers.' *American Journal of Public Health* 94, 6, 911–13.
- Weiser, J. (1999) *Phototherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums* (2nd edition). Vancouver, Canada: Phototherapy Centre.
- Wilson, N., Dasho, S., Martin, A., Wallerstein, N., Wang, C. and Minkler, M. (2007) Engaging young adolescents in social action through photovoice. The Youth Empowerment Strategies (YES) Project. *Journal of Early Adolescence* 27, 2, 241–61.
- Yalom, I.D. (1975) *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (2nd edn). New York: Basic Books.

Resources and further reading

PhotoTherapy

The use of image-making as an agent to promote reflection and facilitate change is far from a new concept. PhotoTherapy as it is called is a strong, entire form of therapy that has evolved in Canada and America with photography and image-making at its core. This approach began in the 1970s and powerful advocates of this approach have included Judy Weiser and Jo Spence.

PhotoTherapy utilizes a range of psychotherapeutic techniques to enable individuals work with a therapist to gain new insights through the image-making process. The following texts offer a broad introduction to the subject area for those interested in finding out more about this approach.

- Amerikaner, M., Schauble, P. and Ziller, R. C. (1980) 'Images: the use of photographs in personal counselling.' *Personnel and Guidance Journal* 59, 68–73.
- Berman, L. (1993) *Beyond the Smile: The Therapeutic Use of the Photograph*. London: Routledge.
- Comfort, C. E. (1985) 'Published pictures as psychotherapeutic tools.' *Arts in Psychotherapy* 12, 4, 245–56.
- Fryrear, J. L. and Corbit, I. E. (1992) *Photo Art Therapy: A Jungian Perspective*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Hogan (Turner) P. (1981) 'Photography in the educational setting.' *Arts in Psychotherapy* 8, 3, 193–99.

- Weiser, J. (2004) 'Phototherapy techniques in counselling and therapy: using ordinary snapshots and photo-interactions to help clients heal their lives.' *Canadian Art Therapy Association Journal* 17, 2, 23–53.
- Weiser, J. (1999) *Phototherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums*, second edition, Vancouver: PhotoTherapy Centre Press.
- Ziller, R. C. (1989) *Auto-Photography: Observation from the Inside-Out*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Creative writing

Chapter 5 highlights ways of using photography with other arts media. Here is a more extensive list of books and resources that you may wish to read for yourself or recommend to individuals who have enjoyed engaging in the creative process.

Lapidus (the Association for Literary Arts in Personal Development)

This is a useful organization aimed at individuals interested in the use of creative writing as a tool to promote health and well-being.

Lapidus, BM Lapidus, London WC1N 3XX, UK
www.lapidus.org.uk

NNAH (National Network for Arts in Health)

This organization brings together the arts and health communities. It plays an important role in the production of and dissemination of a range of information and resources.

National Network for the Arts in Health, 123 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7HR, UK

- Bolton, G. (1999) *The Therapeutic Potential of Creative Writing: Writing Myself*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Bolton, G., Howlett, S., Lago, C. and Wright, J. (2002) *Writing Cures: An Introductory Handbook of Writing in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. London: Brunner–Routledge.
- Flint, R. (2000) 'Fragile Space: Therapeutic Relationship and the Word.' In F. Sampson (ed.), *Writing in Health and Social Care*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Glouberman, D. (1995) *Life Choices, Life Changes: Develop Your Personal Vision with Imagework*. London: Thorsons.

Schneider, M. and Killick, J. (1998) *Writing for Self Discovery*. Shaftesbury: Element.

Digital scrapbooking

This is a wonderful medium combining photography with collage in the creation of a personal visual record that could relate to any one of a number of topics of personal significance.

Aitman, J. (2005) *Scrapbooking*. Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Search Press.

Memory Makers. (2005) *Creative Scrapbooking with Your Computer: Simple Tips and Techniques for Stunning Layouts*. Cincinnati, OH: Memory Makers.

McKenna, S. (2005) *Cropping for Scrapbooking*. Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Search Press.

Walsh, C. (2008) *The Busy Scrapper*. Cincinnati, OH: Memory Makers.

Wines Reed, J. and Wines, J. (2005) *Digital Scrapbooking for Dummies*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Resources for people working with individuals who have dementia

Much of my work has focused on working with people with dementia. Here are examples of resources specifically relating to this client group.

Craig, C. (2005) *Focusing on the Person: Exploring the Potential of Photography for People with Dementia*. Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.

McKillop, J. (2003) *Opening Shutters – Opening Minds*. Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.

This is a book of photographs taken by James following the diagnosis of dementia. The remarkable images throughout the book serve as a powerful illustration of the potential photography offers as a tool for communication.

Mitchell, R. (2005) *Captured Memories*. Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.

This book describes an exciting project where people with dementia recorded their experiences of participating in a series of outings on film. The events are beautifully recorded in words and pictures and the detailed descriptions provided by Rosas provide a good framework for individuals who may be interested in using photography with a similar group.

Fleming, R. and Uchide, Y. (2004) *Images of Care in Australia and Japan*. Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.

This publication highlights the all encapsulating nature of the image making process. A picture book illustrating the characteristics of life in two nursing homes, one in Australia, the other in Japan, is accompanied by a CD containing more photographic material, background information and analysis of the project and its findings.

Rose, S. and Killick, J. (2001) *Video Portraits: Recognising the Whole Person*. Stirling: Dementia Services Development Centre.

This pack contains three videos made by film-maker Sitar Rose in a residential home in Edinburgh. They were made in collaboration with the individuals portrayed and demonstrate the empowering nature of video-work.

Photography

The following photography books present a range of ideas in terms of how other photographers have approached particular subject matter. They may provide inspiration for groups and act as a useful starting point for the development of themes.

Adams, A. (2007) *Ansel Adams' 400 Photographs*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company.

Arthus-Bertrand, Y. and Brown, L. (2005) *The Earth from the Air*, third edition. London: Thames & Hudson.

Bendavid-Val, L. (2003) *Through the Lens: "National Geographic" Greatest Photographs*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Books.

Cox, R. K. (2008) *Wildlife Photographer of the Year: Portfolio 18*. London: BBC Books.

Fothergill, A. (2007) *"Planet Earth": The Photographs*. London: BBC Books.

Reuters (2009) *Our World Now*. London: Thames and Hudson.

McCullin, D. (2007) *In England*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

National Geographic Society. (2004) *In Focus: "National Geographic" Greatest Portraits*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Books.

Digital photography

This is not a book about the technical aspects of photography. However, as group members become interested in the medium they may wish to

explore this dimension of the image-making process. The following can offer a useful starting point in this process.

- Freeman, M. (2006) *The Complete Guide to Digital Photography*, third Edition. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Freeman, J. (2008) *Digital SLR Photography*. London: Collins.
- Hall, B. (2000) *The Complete Beginners Guide to Using a Digital Camera for the First Time*. Cirencester: Management Books.
- Harman, D. and Jones, D. (2007) *The Digital Photography Handbook*. London: Quercus Publishing Plc.
- King J. A. and Timacheff, S. (2008) *Digital Photography for Dummies*, sixth edition. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sherman, J. (2007) *Your Digital Camera Made Easy: A Beginner's Guide*. London: Age Concern Books.

Technical photography

This may be of interest to individuals who would like to develop thoughts around composition and design.

- Busch, D. (2007) *Digital SLR Cameras and Photography for Dummies*. 2nd edn. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.
- Freeman, M. (2007) *The Digital SLR Handbook*. London: Collins.
- Frost, L. (2006) *The Creative Photography Handbook: A Sourcebook of Over 70 Techniques and Ideas*. Cincinnati, OH: David & Charles PLC.
- Frost, L. (2001) *Night and Low-light Photography: The Complete Guide*. Cincinnati, OH: David & Charles PLC.
- Joinson, S. (2007) *Get the Most From Your Digital Camera: The Ultimate Guide to Digital Cameras, Software Printing and Technique*. Cincinnati, OH: David & Charles PLC.
- Lezano, D. (2007) *The Photography Bible: A Complete Guide for the 21st-Century Photographer*. Cincinnati, OH: David & Charles PLC.
- Peterson, B. (2004) *Understanding Exposure: How to Shoot Great Photographs with a Film or Digital Camera*. New York: Amphoto Books.
- Peterson, B. (2003) *Learning to See Creatively*. New York, NY: Amphoto Books.

Appendix

Making your own photograph album

To make a handmade book you will need the following:

- two pieces of card cut to the same size (backing board is good materials to use) 15 x 21 cm
- two pieces of wrapping paper 18 x 25 cm
- five sheets of paper to make the inside pages 21 x 29 cm
- a length of thread and a needle
- a ruler, pencil and glue
- a length of coloured adhesive tape.

Take a piece of the card and the wrapping paper. Place the card on the plain side of the wrapping paper. Glue the edges of the paper and stick to the card. Repeat this for both pieces of card.

To make the front and back covers of the book, trim off a length of the adhesive tape and place it on the table, adhesive side up. Place the covers on to the tape ensuring that a gap of about 1 cm is left between the covers so that the pages will fit. Fold the piece of tape over at either end.

To make the pages of the book take the sheets of paper and fold them in half lengthways. Then open out the pages and on the outside edges of the fold, mark three points. A point at the centre (A) and two further points 4 cm at either side of this point (B) and (C). Make holes at these points using a needle. Thread the needle and cotton and starting at the centre point (A), on the outside of the fold feed the needle and

thread through the hole. Pull the thread through until about 3 cm remains. Working in a figure of eight, take the needle and thread through point B so that the needle is on the outside of the book before pushing it back through the centre. From the centre finally go through point C on the inside fold. This should bring you back to your starting point. Trim off the needle and tie the two ends of thread together in a tight knot, cutting off any excess cotton.

To join the covers to the spine, apply a thin layer of glue over the inside of the front cover. Take the sewn pages of the book and place the folded edge into the gap left for the spine. Repeat the process for the back page.

The fun is deciding what to put inside the blank pages.

Index

- accessibility
 - of digital photography 14
 - of photography 21
- appeal of photography 19
- Atkinson, K. 178

- Baum, C. 169
- Berman, L.
 - on engagement with photography 14
 - on language on photography 24–5
 - on negative impacts of photography 45
 - on photography as communication aid 90
 - on photography as memory aid 27, 28
 - on photography as therapy 26
- 'Beyond Sight' (exhibition) 20

- cameras
 - choosing 36, 37, 38–9
 - exercises to build confidence in using 54–7

- caricatures
 - exercises to create 139–40
- Christiansen, C. 169
- communication
 - exercises to encourage 90–101
 - through photography 24–5
 - promotion through photography 27
- composition of groups 35
- Craig, C.
 - on 'ordinariness' of photography 15
 - on photography and self-esteem 28
- creative writing
 - exercises to encourage 74–8
- creativity
 - exercises to encourage 59
 - in groups 32
 - and photography 21–2
 - see also* imagination
- Cronin, O. 21

- different viewpoints
 - exercises to see 115–16, 118–21, 132

- digital photography
 - accessibility of 14
 - choosing a digital camera 39
 - and image manipulation 61
- Dowrick, S. 127
- drawing
 - exercises to create 72–3
- duration of group meetings 40

- emotions
 - exercises to explore 90–101, 164–5
 - and facilitators 188
- endings
 - exercises to celebrate 178–83
- equipment
 - cameras 36, 37
- Escher, Maurits Cornelis 67, 68
- exercises
 - to build confidence in using cameras 54–7
 - to build relationships 102–13
 - to celebrate endings 178–83
 - to create drawings around photographs 72–3

- exercises *cont.*
- to create impermanent art 71–2
 - to create photomosaics 70–1
 - to create self-portraits 137–9
 - to encourage communication 90–101
 - to encourage creative writing 74–8
 - to encourage imaginative work 67–70
 - to encourage personal growth 152–7
 - to encourage reflective process 114–26
 - to encourage self-exploration 127–51
 - to encourage storytelling 80–4
 - to explore emotions 90–101, 164–5
 - to explore how photographs are presented 61–5
 - to explore metaphors 141–4, 169–74
 - to explore music 84–5
 - to explore sounds 85–7
 - to foster group cohesion 50–4
 - to promote fun and enjoyment 57–61
 - to see different viewpoints 115–16, 118–21, 132
- facilitators
- number needed 36
 - role of 32–3
 - and self-exploration 184–9
 - and staff development 187–8
 - and staff support 185–6
- Flick-books 57–9
- Foster-Fishman, P. 152
- framing photographs 63, 65
- Frith, H. 22, 23–4, 25–6, 152
- Frost, Robert 167
- Fryrear, J.L. 14
- Fulghum, Robert 125
- groups
- cohesion within 50–4, 102–13
 - composition of 35
 - duration of meetings 40
 - ending of 178–83
 - equipment for 36, 37
 - finding focus for group 34–5
 - location for meeting 37
 - membership of 35
 - naming as an exercise 53–4
 - organization of sessions 40–1
 - privacy within 43–4
 - role of facilitator 32–3
 - safety within 41–3, 49–50
 - starting the group 33–4
 - times for meeting 37
- Hagedorn, M.I.E. 102
- Harcourt, D. 22, 23–4, 25–6, 152
- Healey, Joan 116
- hobbies
- photography as example of 30–1
- images
- exercises to explore 60–1
- imagination
- exercises to encourage 67–70 *see also* creativity
- impermanent art
- exercises to create 71–2
- internet
- and digital photography 14
 - and social networking sites 21
- Iwama, M. 169
- Jung, Carl 148
- Krauss, D.A. 14
- Lahad, M. 75
- Lemon, N. 24
- on photography as memory aid 28
 - on photography as self-exploration 31
- Lichtenstein, Roy 121
- Linnington, L. 104
- Martin, R. 14
- McKillop, James 26
- membership of groups 35
- memory
- photography as aid to 27–8, 57
- metaphors
- exercises to explore 141–4, 169–74
- Mitchell, R. 19
- on photography as memory aid 57
- music
- exercises to explore 84–5 *see also* sounds
- Opening Shutters – Opening Minds* (McKillop) 26
- Ortberg, J. 97
- Penman, D. 104
- Percy, M.S. 30

- personal growth
 exercises to encourage 152–77
- personal importances
 photography as aid to 29–30
- Philips, D. 104
- photograph albums
 making a 136–7
- photographic displays
 exercises to explore 61–5
 framing photographs 63
 size of photographs 61–2
- photography
 accessibility of 21
 appeal of 19
 communication through 24–6, 27
 as creative process 21–2
 engagement with 13–14
 exercises to promote enjoyment of 57–61
 as a hobby 30–1
 as memory aid 27–8, 57
 negative impacts of 44–5
 personal importance of 29–30
 popularity of 20
 as process and product 23–4, 30
 and relationship building 29
 and self-esteem 28
 as self-exploration 19–20, 31
 and sense of control 22–3
 skills needed for 20
 therapeutic value of 14, 44–5
 and visual culture 13–14
- photomosaics 70–1
- ‘PhotoTherapy’ 14
- Pink, S.
 on visual culture 13
- poetry
 photographing 74–5
 privacy within groups 43–4
- Rampton, T.B. 30
- reflective process
 exercises to encourage 114–26
- relationships
 exercises to build 102–13
 exercises within groups 50–1
 photography as aid to 29
- safety within groups 41–3, 49–50
 exercises for 51–3
- Scarfe, Gerald 139
- sculpture exercise 64
- self-esteem
 photography as aid to 28
- self-exploration
 exercises to encourage 127–51
 and facilitators 184–9
 and photography 19–20, 31
- self-portraits
 exercises to create 137–9
- size of photographs 61–2
- skills
 for photography 20
- social networking sites 21
- sounds
 exercises to explore 85–7
- Spence, J. 14, 31
- storytelling
 exercises to encourage 80–4
- textiles
 use of 87–8
- times for group meetings 40
- visual culture
 and S. Pink 13
 and photography 13–14
- Wainwright, Alfred 55
- Wang, C.C. 19
- Weiser, Judy 14, 111, 140
 on negative impacts of photography 45
 on photography as therapeutic tool 14
 and self-portraits 137
- Wells, C. 178
- Wilson, N. 19
 on photography as promoter of change 30
- Wolfman Report, The 21
- Yalom, I.D. 33