

Shrink Rap Radio #135, January 30, 2008, Jungian Sandplay Therapy
David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka "Dr. Dave" interviews Liza Ravitz, Jungian Analyst
(Transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Sandra Huang)

Excerpt: *What I would think of is it's most closely to dreams. Kind of dreaming in vivo and instead of coming in and telling a therapist your dreams, here you dream right in the room into the tray and the thing different from dreams is in sandplay is that you get to actually concretely put the images in the sand and then to look at them and be with them. And we don't interpret at all so it's really the process is, comes from the deep unconscious and it's a form of play as we say but also as bringing deep issues in the unconscious to some kind of consciousness.*

Introduction: That was the voice of my guest Dr. Liza Ravitz. Liza J. Ravitz, Ph.D. is a Jungian analyst who teaches at the San Francisco C.G. Jung Institute's continuing education program. Liza practices in San Francisco and Petaluma where she works with children and adults, conducts consultation groups for therapists and presents sandplay workshops. Liza studied sandplay in Switzerland and worked in the sand with Dora Kalff. She is a certified teaching member of the international society for sandplay therapy. Liza teaches sandplay therapy in the department of Psychiatry's Child and Adult Outpatient Clinic at California Pacific Medical Center and helps create sandplay programs and train staff at mental health centers in the Bay Area. Liza has presented her work both nationally and internationally. Now here's the interview.

Dr. Dave: Dr. Liza Ravitz, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Dr. Liza Ravitz: Thank you. It's good to be here.

Dr. Dave: Yeah and what an interesting day it is. You live in Petaluma; I live Rohnert Park so that's about six or seven miles...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...separate and it is a rainy rainy Northern California day but I wanted to because you're ah, and I never know whether to say sandtray or sandplay. What...how...which do you use?

Ravitz: Sandplay, in this context it's sandplay.

Dr. Dave: Sandplay therapy. And so I wanted to interview you in person although we could have done it over the phone as I do many of my shows but I knew that you would have a rich environment...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...and I wanted to immerse myself in that environment so I drove down here on this rainy day and you're located right in downtown Petaluma. Petaluma being a, what in a recent book described as a latte town. (laughs)

Ravitz: A latte town.

Dr. Dave: Did you see that book?

Ravitz: No, I didn't but it does have a gold digging past.

Dr. Dave: Yes it does.

Ravitz: So it's way back from the gold digging times.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, I didn't realize that it does go...I suppose back to the gold days. And then it was an egg town, it has a big history...

Ravitz: Yes it does...

Dr. Dave: ...with Jewish egg farmers...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...which most people don't think of:...

Ravitz: No.

Dr. Dave: ...Jewish Egg Farmers.

Ravitz: No they don't. They don't. Yes.

Dr. Dave: And now it's becoming a more and more sort of trendy artistic bohemian little town.

Ravitz: Yes, that's the new transformation.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, (laughs) the new transformation. So I'm sitting here in a nice second story office in an older building that's field with therapists of various stripes.

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: And on your walls, I wish I had a video component here because as one might expect your walls have shelves, are lined with shelves and on the shelves are all these tiny little figures.

Ravitz: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Dave: Have you counted how many you have?

Ravitz: I haven't counted how many I have but it's been many many years of collecting them.

Dr. Dave: What would you estimate? How many do you think you have here?

Ravitz: How many figures?

Dr. Dave: Looks to me like, I would estimate like maybe two or three hundred at least.

Ravitz: Oh at least. Oh at least.

Dr. Dave: So there's plenty of material here for people to act out their fantasies or all sorts of little princess and I suppose kings and animals and...

Ravitz: They actually...

Dr. Dave: ...probably warriors and voodoos and...

Ravitz: Yes, and what's supposed to be on the shelves is everything that is, that was and that will be.

Dr. Dave: Interesting.

Ravitz: So that's what's on the shelves. From spiritual miniatures through everyday people, wild animals, domesticated animals, household things and then all kinds of natural things. Like shells and rocks and acorns and flowers and feathers.

Dr. Dave: Well that's great. That's great. As I might have mentioned to you, one of my listeners asked me to conduct an interview with a sandplay therapist and then I was referred to you by Dr. Maria Hess.

Ravitz: Oh yes.

Dr. Dave: Who I think has studied with you some.

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: And who studied me actually for a long time, she was my teaching assistant.

Ravitz: Oh.

Dr. Dave: And now she's a very successful teacher and therapist in her own right...

Ravitz: Yes, she is.

Dr. Dave:and also has been a guest on this show two or three times. And I also have many listeners who share my own interest in Jungian psychology.

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: So why don't we start out with me asking you how you came to be a Jungian analyst and I know you have a Ph.D.; were you a psychologist first?

Ravitz: Yes, and I'm still a psychologist.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Ravitz: You know. But yes a psychologist and then you go the extra training to become a Jungian analyst.

Dr. Dave: It takes a long time, it's not easy and I hear the San Francisco institute in particular is pretty challenging.

Ravitz: It's very challenging.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, tell us a little bit about what you went through.

Ravitz: Well you have to go through four years of courses and then probably another, you know, five or six years of training and consultation and...

Dr. Dave: And going through it, Jungian analysis yourself.

Ravitz: You must go through Jungian analysis and...the whole time that you're at the institute in training and you learn more about your patients through senior consultants and eventually you need to go before a few boards and you need to write up some cases and just demonstrate that you have a sense about what you're doing from a Jungian point of view.

Dr. Dave: And they can turn you down at any point...

Ravitz: They can turn you down.

Dr. Dave: ...And they don't really have to give you a lot of explanation either.

Ravitz: No, they don't and you can go back a step and then try again and uh...the main thing though that they really look at is your personal development...

Dr. Dave: Ummhmm.

Ravitz: ...and that's one thing that's unique about the San Francisco Institute especially is that their emphasis is on personal development as well as professional development around your patients.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Ravitz: Because of course, if you haven't dealt with your own complexes and your own issues you can't really deal with someone else's.

Dr. Dave: Right. Now, what sort of therapeutic stripe were you of before you went to the Jung institute to get your training?

Ravitz: Well, I think I've kind of been on a real journey in that respect. When I did my Ph.D. I was trained as a behaviorist...

Dr. Dave: Interesting. (laughs)

Ravitz: ...And yes.

Dr. Dave: That's a very far afield.

Ravitz: Very far afield and have always worked with children and adults so my Ph.D. program was in both and then I became a family therapist. And in those days there weren't many around and I was a family therapist for a very long time and still have very strong roots in systems theory.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Ravitz: And when I moved to California, I was reading a...it's called *The Secret of the Golden Flower* and it's a Buddhist treatise and I've always had difficulty integrating my spiritual interest and my psychological interests and I opened it up and the introduction is by this fellow, C.G. Jung.

Dr. Dave: Carl Jung, yes.

Ravitz: And it was all about integrating psychology and spirituality and it was a real high for me.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Ravitz: And I realized Jungian psychology was where I could integrate my interests and feel like a whole person doing my work.

Dr. Dave: Very good. Just out of curiosity, where did you do that behavioral doctoral work?

Ravitz: It was at DePaul University in Chicago.

Dr. Dave: Okay, yes a well known university.

Ravitz: Yes, when I was there the basketball team was on the top in the nation.

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Ravitz: And the band Chicago came out of DePaul.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. Okay so we're here to talk about sandplay, so how did you get involved in sandplay work?

Ravitz: Well, I actually grew up on the East Coast near the ocean so sand and water have always been part of my life, from childhood. And also one of the things we did in my family was we collected miniatures.

Dr. Dave: Oh what a natural...(laughs)

Ravitz: And many of the...some of them, not many but some of the miniatures in my collection come from my childhood.

Dr. Dave: Interesting.

Ravitz: And when I moved to California, I went to work at a mental health center and I walked in and I see this tray with sand in it and all these miniatures and it was like I had come home.

Dr. Dave: That was where? You walked in where?

Ravitz: Into a mental health center in San Francisco.

Dr. Dave: In San Francisco. So somebody there had that sort of setup.

Ravitz: They had the setup but interestingly their sandbox was about...I would say about ten feet long and about three feet wide and about a foot high and the kind of the usual size of the sandtray as you can see is about two by three.

Dr. Dave: Yes, it's a lot smaller. It almost looks like it's made to be portable if necessary.

Ravitz: Yes, it's actually when you look at it, it's actually the range of your vision and that's why it's the size that it is. So when you look down you can see the whole box.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Ravitz: So my original introduction was really to a sandbox which I always feel quite amused about, the size of it.

Dr. Dave: Okay. I don't know if you know about Wikipedia on the internet.

Ravitz: Oh yes.

Dr. Dave: It's a wonderful resource and often when I'm trying to get a little background information for a show that I'm going to do, often I will consult Wikipedia.

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: I was shocked to see that neither sandtray nor is it Nora Kalff? Cora Kalff?

Ravitz: Dora, with a D.

Dr. Dave: Dora Kalff. Neither were listed on...

Ravitz: Oh my.

Dr. Dave: ...Wikipedia.

Ravitz: Uh huh.

Dr. Dave: So maybe somebody out there will get inspired...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...by listening to this. Why don't you give us a bit about the history of sandplay because I know that you studied with Dora Kalff and...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...that she's an important figure in the history.

Ravitz: Yes. Sandplay went through various different beginnings until Dora Kalff became involved in it and she's the one really responsible for the way sandplay is today. And she was Swiss and she lived down the street from Jung and Jung would send his children to Dora's house to play and one day he bumped into her on the street and say "What do those children do at your house? They always come home so calm." And she got into a discussion with Jung about her sandtray and her miniatures and he was very taken with it because the method was very Jungian and they began to collaborate and through his talking with her, she developed it into the Jungian method that it is today.

Dr. Dave: Well originally she had it just as kind of a sandbox for kids to play in? Is that...?

Ravitz: Well, her children played in it and as she was developing it more and more, and she of course saw patients and originally just did it with children but then eventually did it with adults.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Ravitz: But she was developing it all this time while she was working with it.

Dr. Dave: And I remember reading about Jung when he was going through a time of crisis that...his water works..

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...right? Didn't he play with sand and stones and nature?

Ravitz: Yes he did, he did. He actually built a tower out of rocks. And...

Dr. Dave: A large physical...

Ravitz: A large physical...

Dr. Dave: ...house that he could live in.

Ravitz: Yes, yes. Where he kind of made room of his own. And while he was in deep deep...kind of self evaluating, the only thing that worked for him was to go back to his childhood games of playing with sand and water and stones.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I think I saw a film clip in which he's got his...I don't know if it was a film clip or a still photo but he had his breeches kind of rolled up to his knees and he's kind of wading in shallow water and he's making little dams and things like that which brings back my own childhood days. My grandparents had a cabin in the mountains in Southern California and I used...

Ravitz: Oh yes.

Dr. Dave: ...build dams and so on. (laughs)

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: In the spring there.

Ravitz: Yes, yes because that early childhood play is really the channel to creativity and to the deepest part of ourselves.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Ravitz: And children just contact that naturally.

Dr. Dave: Right. Right.

Ravitz: And as we grow unfortunately, a lot of us lose that connection.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Ravitz: And especially as adults and one way to get it back is to return to those activities and play.

Dr. Dave: Now I'm remembering...and I'm blocking on her name, there is a...one of the early Jungian women who's most strongly associated with the idea of active imagination. She wrote some books...is it Hannah?

Ravitz: Or Marie Von Franz?

Dr. Dave: No, it's somebody else.

Ravitz: Or...Hannah Segal? Umm...

Dr. Dave: I meant to look this up before I came here.

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: It's okay, it's of no great importance. (laughs)

Ravitz: Yes, yes. It was a very...um...you know developed by Jung and so his disciples used it.

Dr. Dave: Yes, so you know, I would think that sandplay would somehow be a subset of this larger Jungian activity or field that's been referred to as active imagination. Would that be accurate?

Ravitz: Yes. What I would think of it's most closely to dreams.

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Ravitz: And it's kind of dreaming in vivo and instead of coming in and telling your therapist your dreams, here you dream right in the room, into the tray and the thing different from dreams in sandplay is you get to actually concretely put the images in the sand and then to look at them and be with them. And we don't interpret at all so it's really the process is, comes from the deep unconscious and it's a form of play as we say but also as bringing deep issues in the unconscious to some kind of consciousness.

Dr. Dave: Is it hard not to interpret? I mean, sometimes you know, doesn't the mind just kind of leap to kind of "Oh I know what that's about!"

Ravitz: The mind, the therapist mind does.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Right, Right.

Ravitz: Yes, yes. Yes it does.

Dr. Dave: Is that part of the training then? Learning to hold yourself back?

Ravitz: Oh yes, of course, of course. And that's similar to psychotherapy as well. The therapist mind might be going someplace but your job is really to stay with the patient and sandplay especially is about attuning to the patient and being with the patient and witnessing the work that they're doing. And it's an expressive bodily method and in the ideal we don't go into our heads while the process is going on.

Dr. Dave: That's really a break from the original psycho analytic idea where the analyst would come up with some brilliant interpretation...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...and everything was supposed to come together.

Ravitz: Yes, yes, it is different and that's one of the differences between psycho analytic from a Freudian point of view and Jungian analytical psychology is that interpretation is helpful but what really gets to the core and what really makes change is content, contacting affect and contacting emotion.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmmm.

Ravitz: And working with the deep unconscious and the belief in Jungian psychology is that given a safe place, the patient will naturally move toward a healing process. That the psyche naturally moves towards healing. So the therapist doesn't have to be brilliant and make interpretations, mainly the therapist needs to create a safe and protected space. And in Jungian psychology we call that a temenos, a safe sacred place where the psyche can unfold and people can do their work in a very depth full way in a safe place.

Dr. Dave: The container is often used as well right?

Ravitz: Right, that's right.

Dr. Dave: A safe container.

Ravitz: It's a safe container, yes. Not only the room and the temenos that the therapist creates but of course the sandtray in itself is a container.

Dr. Dave: I had sort of thought to ask you about, you know, what's your view of healing? But I think you've kind of expressed it. That the psyche tends towards healing.

Ravitz: Yes, naturally.

Dr. Dave: Naturally.

Ravitz: We're born like that.

Dr. Dave: And your job is to create that space in which that tendency can exercise itself.

Ravitz: That's right. That's right. And in terms of my ideas about healing is just like we talked about before. We come in with a self that carries our essential being and we get disconnected from that. And sandplay...through sandplay we can reconnect in a very depth full way with our deepest essential nature which is the self.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: And once we are in alignment with the self, once the consciousness and the unconsciousness are in alignment healing takes place.

Dr. Dave: In relation to the sandplay, is that an auxiliary technique that you bring to your work? Or is it the centerpiece of what you do? In other words, are you doing sandplay with all of your patients or is it an element that you bring in some of the time in sort of an adjunctive way?

Ravitz: Yes, I think that's a good question and it really depends on the patient. Most of the time with children, I'd say up to maybe eleven, from I see kids as young as three years old, my kids tend to almost always do the sandwork in the sand. And they may do art as well or play with some games but they tend to pretty much stay with the sand as an activity until their process is complete. And that's how I know there's been a lot of healing, is when they eventually move away from the tray. The adults, it varies, some adults never work in the sand and some adults work a few times in the sand and other adults do a whole sandplay process which could just be up to, you know, twenty or fifty trays if that's what speaks to them in their healing.

Dr. Dave: I could imagine that with adults, maybe in the work, there would be a point where you would maybe be inspired to say "Well, what about the sandtray? Would you like to...?"

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: Is that a kind of invitation that you would issue and if so, what sort of situation might prompt that invitation?

Ravitz: Well, what often happens is people come in, adults come in and they're always very taken with the miniatures but they don't want to touch it and they think it's for children.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Ravitz: And so when I see certain adults really drawn to it but don't quite know what to do, often I'll invite them. "You might want to come and work in the sand." And sometimes especially when they're having difficulty verbally expressing what's going on inside or if they're in a very deep process that just doesn't have words and the feeling is they really need to access a deeper part of themselves and they're having difficulty doing that. And then I might invite them to go to the tray.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: Once they're familiar with it and they've used it and know about it, then it's up to them. If they want to go they go. I tend not to direct them after that. Then it's their own psyche pulling them there.

Dr. Dave: Yeah. I really like the way you link it to dreams. I like it because I'm very interested in dreams...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...I like to work with dreams; I've taught courses on dreams and I've been in dream groups and so on. And of course, a person doesn't always remember their dreams.

Ravitz: Yes, that's right.

Dr. Dave: And so here you don't need them to remember anything.

Ravitz: No...You don't need them to remember them, no. And part of the technique is taking a picture of the production when the patient or client leaves the room.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: So you have a record of it.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: And you can look back on it with your client at a much later time after they've maybe completed their process. And the protocol usually is after years after they've terminated, you might have a patient come back and want to go over their sandtrays and so we have a record of it in that way.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm. Do you invite them? Let's say...maybe you can help us understand the process a little bit, a more detailed level as a person as creating something in the sand, creating some kind of scene...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: Do you have them verbalizing during that? Are they talking about what they're feeling or what it means?

Ravitz: You're really just following them and they might talk. You know, children often are playing a game and so they'll have a whole fantasy going on and often they're talking and this happens and that happens. Boys play a lot with soldiers and girls play a lot with horses and unicorns and children might speak in fantasy and what's going on. And then afterwards I might ask them "Tell me about your picture. Do you a story?" And they might tell me a story or give me a title of what's going on. I don't really ask them questions while they're doing the production because it tends to interrupt their process.

Dr. Dave: What about with adults?

Ravitz: And with adults, adults tend to initially want to know everything that's going on. So they'll ask me "What do you see? What do you interpret? What am I doing?" And that just happens initially and once an adult gets more into the process and can feel it in their body and feel the depth of it those kinds of things tend to fall away. And sometimes adults will talk about "Oh, I think this means this." Or "this means that," or they may comment on "Oh I like the way this rock feels, it's so smooth it reminds me of this or reminds me of that." But oftentimes there'll be silence while they're making a production. And...

Dr. Dave: Do feelings tend to come up? Are there tears?

Ravitz: There's usually...some after it's finished.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: And we sit down and look at what's been made and kind of take in the wonder of it. I might say "Tell me about your tray" and even in talking about "Well the rocks are going on a path and the house is over here and the well over here..." and an association will come up to something in childhood or something that happened to them, or maybe some trauma that happened to them and they'll begin to talk about that. And through that talking there will be affect and there may be tears and sadness or as the time goes on, there may be some joy because they deeply feel the healing.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: So there is conversation but it comes out of the patient, it's nothing that I really lead. Because the understanding is that the therapist is there to witness and to follow the patient's psyche, so I follow as opposed to lead in this situation.

Dr. Dave: Yes. I'm tempted to ask you to talk about a case history or something but I didn't prompt you about that in advance and it might be too difficult to come up with an adequate disguise on the spot. But is there any kind of story that you could share that could be appropriate?

Ravitz: Well, I have so many, you know going through my mind, but often with children, for instance the one I'm thinking about was a child who was very afraid to leave their parent. And she was older, she was like seven and was very clingy and had to be with her parents all the time and at home was afraid to be out of the room and when she went to sleep she had to check windows and doors and was a very fearful child and through working in the sand she was able to contact and of course this is all unconscious, but contact a very young part of herself that felt abandoned because she had to be in the hospital as a very young child. She was maybe three or four and had to be hospitalized for a few months and though she saw her parents it was really quite a traumatic experience for her. And in those days they didn't allow the parents to be as much in the room as they do now. And so she really felt an abandonment at that time and developed a lot of anxiety about separating from her parents. And in the sand she was able to express that symbolically and to work through those feelings of abandonment and to strengthen herself through the process so that she no longer needed to cling to her parents so tightly. She got more in alignment with that deep self and through the play released a lot of emotion about that time and was just really strengthened and when we finished she no longer had any of those symptoms. She became much more independent and was able to have sleepovers where she never was able to do that before. And became much more energetic in her school and became more involved in activities so a lot of energy was released through the sandplay process that had been caught up in holding tight around her anxiety, around separation. And I saw her for, that particular child, I saw her for about a year. She probably did about thirty sandplays I would say.

Dr. Dave: What about...that was a great job. What about an adult one? Does an adult one come to mind?

Ravitz: An adult one...umm...let me see. I had a young woman who had a very disturbed father and who seemed like he was probably psychotic most of the time and had a very distant mother. And when she came in she was very unhappy and was very depressed and was very shut down and she worked for an arts organization and just didn't feel any meaning in life and through the process in the sand, returning to earlier, her early times in childhood, again a lot of this is unconscious. She kind of dealt very deeply with that fear of that psychotic father...

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: ...and a figure that's often used in the sand is I have a figure of Hitler...

Dr. Dave: Interesting. (laughs)

Ravitz: ...and Hitler is often used.

Dr. Dave: Powerful archetypal figure there.

Ravitz: Very powerful of kind of domination and aggression and a no way out figure and that might live inside them and also might be part of their experience. And she used that figure a lot and she was able to contact parts of herself and in the beginning as I say she was very depressed and didn't find any meaning in life and as she returned to play in the sand she was able to contact that creative part of her that had been so damaged by her childhood experience and became much more outgoing and much less depressed and was able to, in the sand, go from very dark productions like with scorpions and snakes and gorillas and wild beasts and dinosaurs and lots of sharks, and as she moved through her process she was able to move into a place where her trays became much more beautiful with flowers and she could create a secret garden where she could be and have peace and at one point she made a beautiful tray and we call these self trays and a self tray is a production where the therapist and the patient can feel in the room a sacredness enter and we know through looking at the tray and the feeling between us that the patient has constellated the self and has contacted that harmonious deep layer of the psyche where creativity and sacredness lives and in that contacting there is enormous healing and realignment and it was a very powerful experience for her to experience that in the sand.

Dr. Dave: Okay, thanks for sharing that. So that's self with the capital s.

Ravitz: With a capital s, yes.

Dr. Dave: The higher self or the big self.

Ravitz: The totality of the personality.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: You know you mentioned that Hitler figure...

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...and it brought to mind that there is a little action figure of Carl Jung...

Ravitz: Yes there is.

Dr. Dave: ...and I wonder if you have this. Is that part of your collection as well?

Ravitz: I don't have Jung and there's also a Freud.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Ravitz: And I actually don't have either one of them. They're a little big actually.

Dr. Dave: Okay, you're right.

Ravitz: They're about six inches...

Dr. Dave: Yes, uh huh.

Ravitz: ...high and the figures tend to be around three inches or so, though I have some as you can see that are larger...

Dr. Dave: Yeah.

Ravitz: ...but I don't have the Jung or the Freud.

Dr. Dave: Okay. (laughs)

Ravitz: (laughs)

Dr. Dave: The Jung would be...it's too bad it's not smaller, it'd be a good, sort of wise old man type...

Ravitz: It would be a wise old type man.

Dr. Dave: ...archetypal figure.

Ravitz: Yes it would.

Dr. Dave: I wonder if there are any sorts of generalizations that one can make about what sandplay is good for or what it's not good for. The kind of person who, you know for whom it would be a good thing or the kind of person for whom it would be a bad thing.

Ravitz: Yes, yes, at one level it's really good for people who have suffered trauma. Because...

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz:...especially early trauma because early trauma is, the memories of it, as we call it implicit memory, the memories are in the body. The really, before there was the ability to verbalize and so patients can't access that layer through verbal talking and sandplay can access very early infant time. Those memories that live in the body that are unconscious. So it's very good for dealing with trauma in that way. It's also very good

for depression because the person, be a child or adult, is so out of contact with themselves, and talking about it sometimes just doesn't help and because they direct the play and they direct the production, through this process they contact a part of themselves that has been inaccessible to them before and in contacting that it helps to move the depression and shift it into a different way and to transform it into something that has meaning instead of something that's so dark and barren.

Dr. Dave: Okay, and is there...are there situations where its counter indicated?

Ravitz: Well, at one point they used to feel that you wouldn't want to put a psychotic person in the sand.

Dr. Dave: Ummhmm.

Ravitz: Because it might be too stimulating and you don't want to access deep deep layers you want to help someone who's falling apart in a psychotic way to pull back together and that's been kind of a common protocol. Though they are using it in different settings where there is work with people who do have psychotic episodes so that part is mixed in terms of working with psychotic folks but otherwise I think it's pretty much can be a benefit to most people.

Dr. Dave: Okay, there are many people using sandplay who don't have the credentials of being a certified Jungian analyst which is we have said as a very long and vigorous training.

Ravitz: Yes.

Dr. Dave: What are your thoughts about that? Do you think that's a dangerous thing? Or you know, what are your thoughts?

Ravitz: Well I think there is a sandplay organization, it's called, the American arm is called Sandplay Therapists of America and the international arm is called the International Society of Sandplay Therapists and these societies have trainings and a prescribed way of learning about sandplay and they certify sandplay therapists who don't necessarily don't have to be Jungian analysts.

Dr. Dave: Oh, okay.

Ravitz: But they've taken courses in Jungian psychology and they've done their own sandplay process and they've been in consultation groups and had training from certified sandplay therapists so that there is a way to learn and go through a training.

Dr. Dave: Ummhmm.

Ravitz: And to become certified so that you are totally able to do the work.

Dr. Dave: Do you see this approach evolving at all? Is it changing over time? And if so where do you see it going in the future?

Ravitz: Yes it is actually. It's a good question because sandplay is in a very exciting phase right now from my point of view and I think that in the beginning Dora Kalff didn't emphasize as much the transference and counter transference going on between the patient and the client.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: There was much more emphasis on the production and what was going on in the tray and not as much emphasis on what was going on between the patient and the therapist. And there have been a lot of work and writing on what really is going on between the patient and the therapist and a lot more talk about the transference and the counter transference. Where it appears in the tray and also what might be going on between the two people in the room and what the therapists picks up in their own body that gives them clues as to what might be going on with the patient. Another thing that's very interesting to me is the new research that's coming out on the brain and that trauma gets stuck in the emotional part of the brain, which is the right brain and verbal language of course is in the left brain, and so out of the research now they seem to be concluding that in order to access emotional trauma you need to work in the right brain. And right brain work is non verbal and is more in the expressive arts.

Dr. Dave: Mmmhmm.

Ravitz: And so sandplay fits right in with that and is a right brain activity and it very much syncs with the new research coming out about the brain and that's very exciting for me.

Dr. Dave: Yeah, that's fascinating. Well as we begin to wind things down, I wonder if you have any resources for listeners that might want to find out more about this approach or if there is a book or two that you would recommend.

Ravitz: Yes, there's a site on the web. It's called sandplaytherapistsofamerica.org and you can just go in there and there's some articles, they talk about sandplay, they have events, sandplay events all over the country and that are going on via conferences or individual workshops. And they have certified sandplay therapists in there if you want to work with somebody so you can get a lot of information from that site. And there are now many many books on sandplay and of course there's the original by Dora Kalff, which I like, it's one of my favorites and there are many new books coming out now. And I think kind of perusing them and picking one you might want to start with is helpful.

Dr. Dave: Okay. Well Liza Ravitz, I want to thank you so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Ravitz: Thank you. It's been a pleasure talking about this.