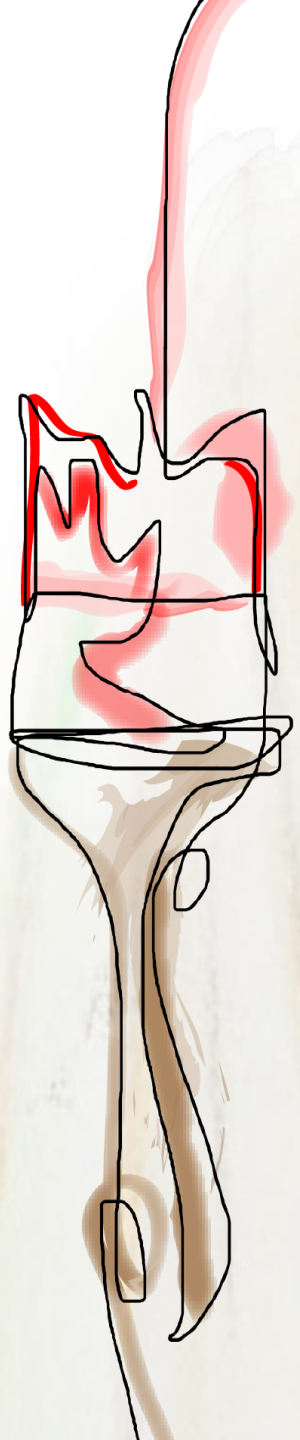




CANVAS OF CONNECTION

An Expressive Therapies Continuum
Arts-Based Supervision Approach

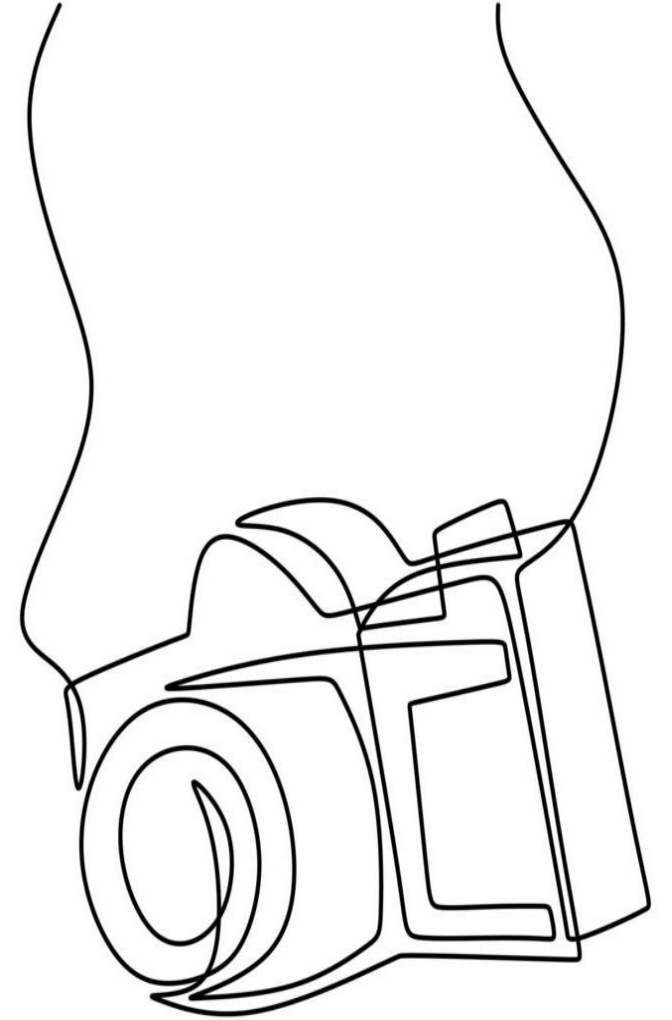
American Art Therapy Association conference
AATA 2026 Annual Conference

Hinz, Riccardi, Gingras & Gotshall (2026)

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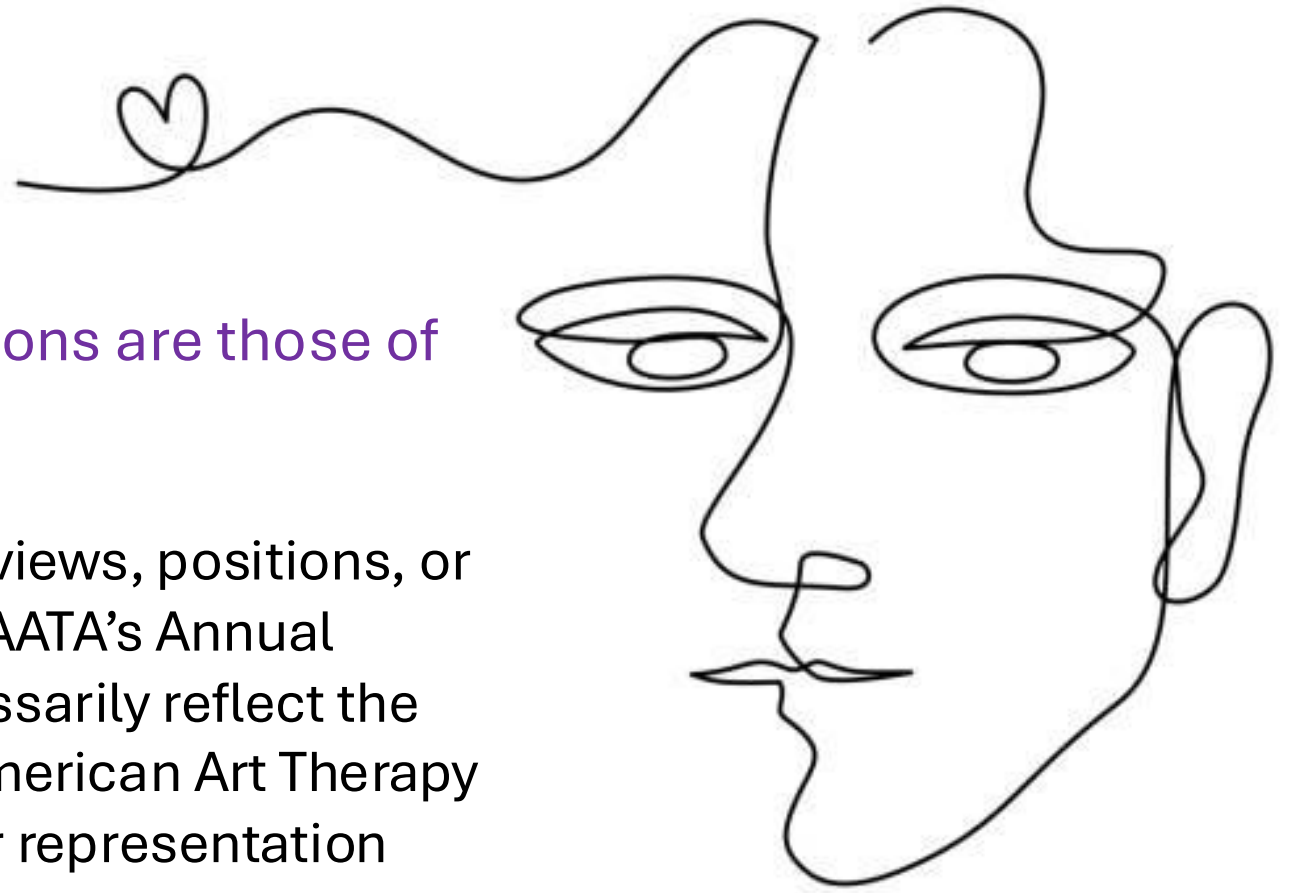
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Presentation Pathway

**Understand the ETC
supervisory model and
its core concepts.**

**Use three short role-
plays to make the
model observable.**

**Follow Nev's case
through three key
supervision moments.**

Collaborative plan



RATIONALE

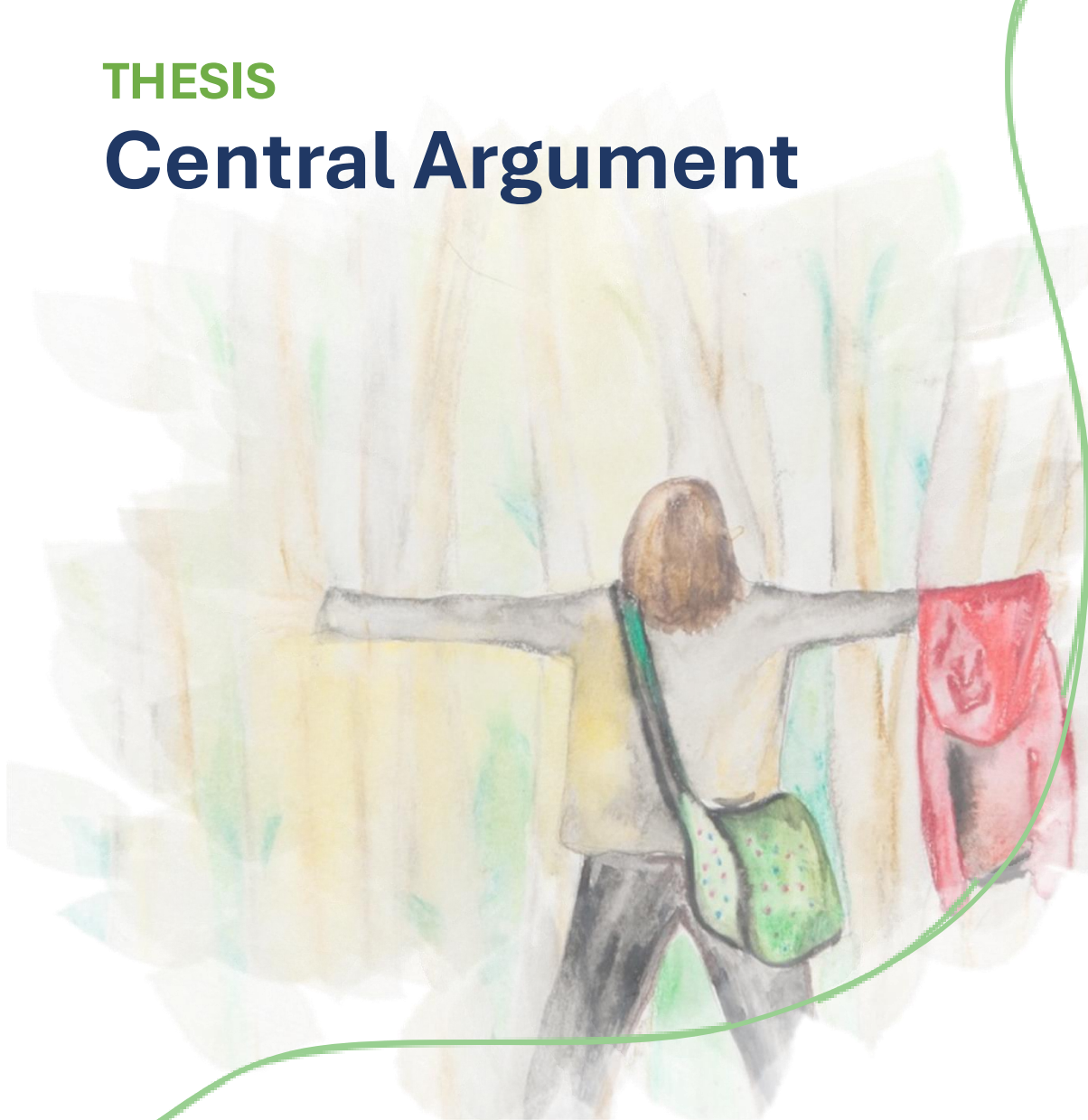
Why Rethink Art Therapy Supervision?

- Supervision often covers extensive clinical, ethical, and instructional content.
- That pressure can reduce confidence for both supervisees and supervisors about what to do.
- The ETC model helps move from only asking “What do I do?” to also asking “How does this feel, and what does it mean?”



THESIS

Central Argument



In ETC-based supervision, art-making is not an optional activity; it is a way of thinking, relating, evaluating, and repairing.

The model keeps the focus on clinical learning while allowing emotional and artistic material to become visible enough to discuss.



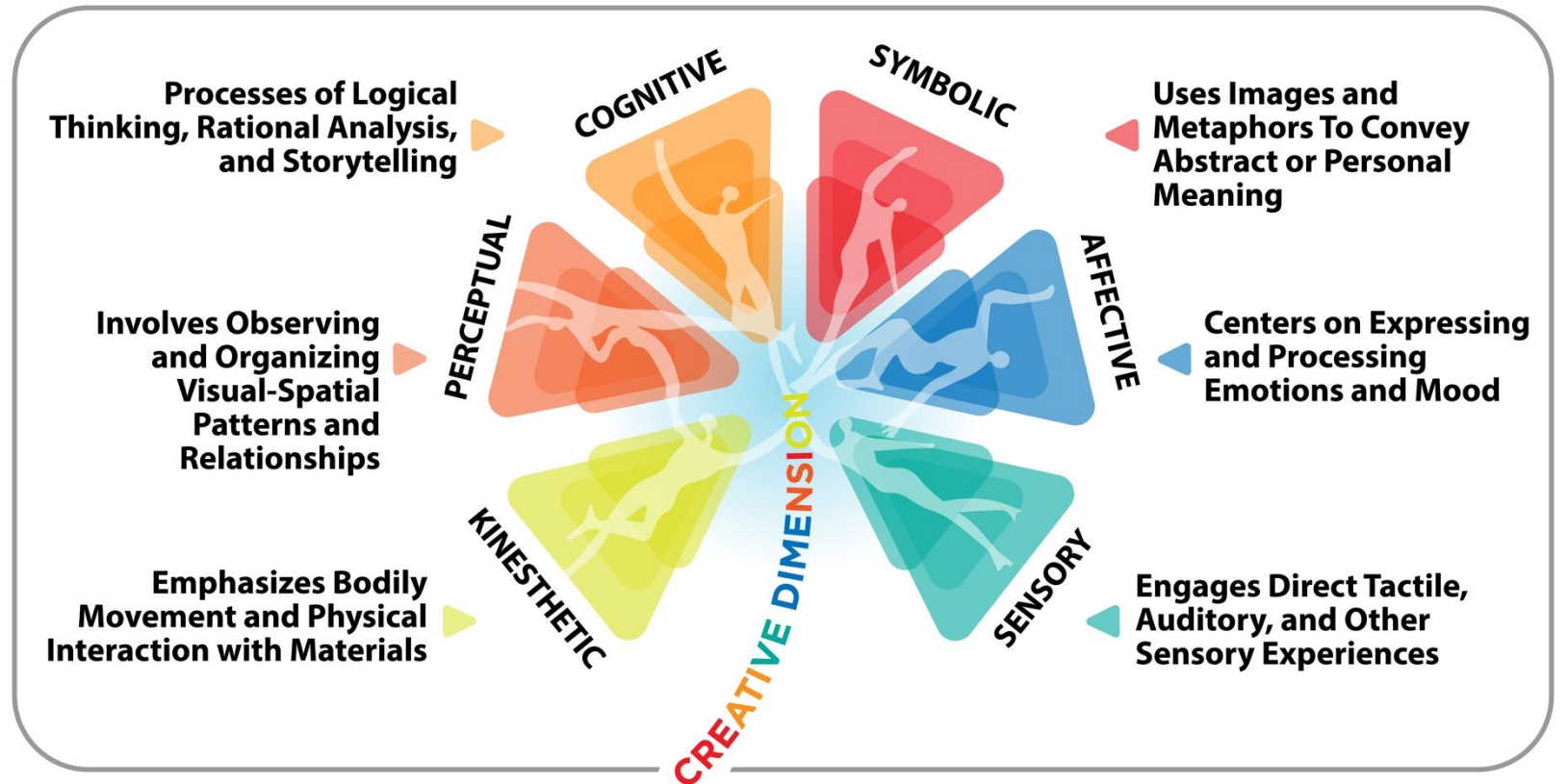
What Makes the Model Arts-based?

- The supervisor and supervisee use images, materials, symbols, and dialogue to understand clinical work.
- Art-making becomes a shared method for attunement, self-reflection, and professional development.
- The art product is not treated as decoration; it becomes evidence for reflection and learning.



THEORY BASE

Expressive Therapies Continuum



The ETC organizes how information is processed through art-making: bodily, sensory, perceptual, affective, cognitive, symbolic, and creative.



Three Levels of Information Processing

Kinesthetic / Sensory

Body and sensation

- Kinesthetic: movement, rhythm, action.
- Sensory: tactile, visual, and bodily qualities of materials.

Perceptual / Affective

Form and feeling

- Perceptual: organization of line, colour, form, and space.
- Affective: expression and processing of emotion.

Cognitive / Symbolic

Thinking and meaning

- Cognitive: logic, planning, verbal thinking, and problem-solving.
- Symbolic: metaphor, imagery, and personal meaning.



Creative Dimension

- The Creative dimension integrates the ETC levels rather than adding another separate step.
- In supervision, it appears when the supervisee can move flexibly between structure, feeling, symbol, and clinical judgment.
- The goal is not simply to make art, but to use art-making as a disciplined form of inquiry.



Two Goals of ETC Supervision

Goal 1

Master the ETC so it can guide assessment, intervention, and clinical reasoning.

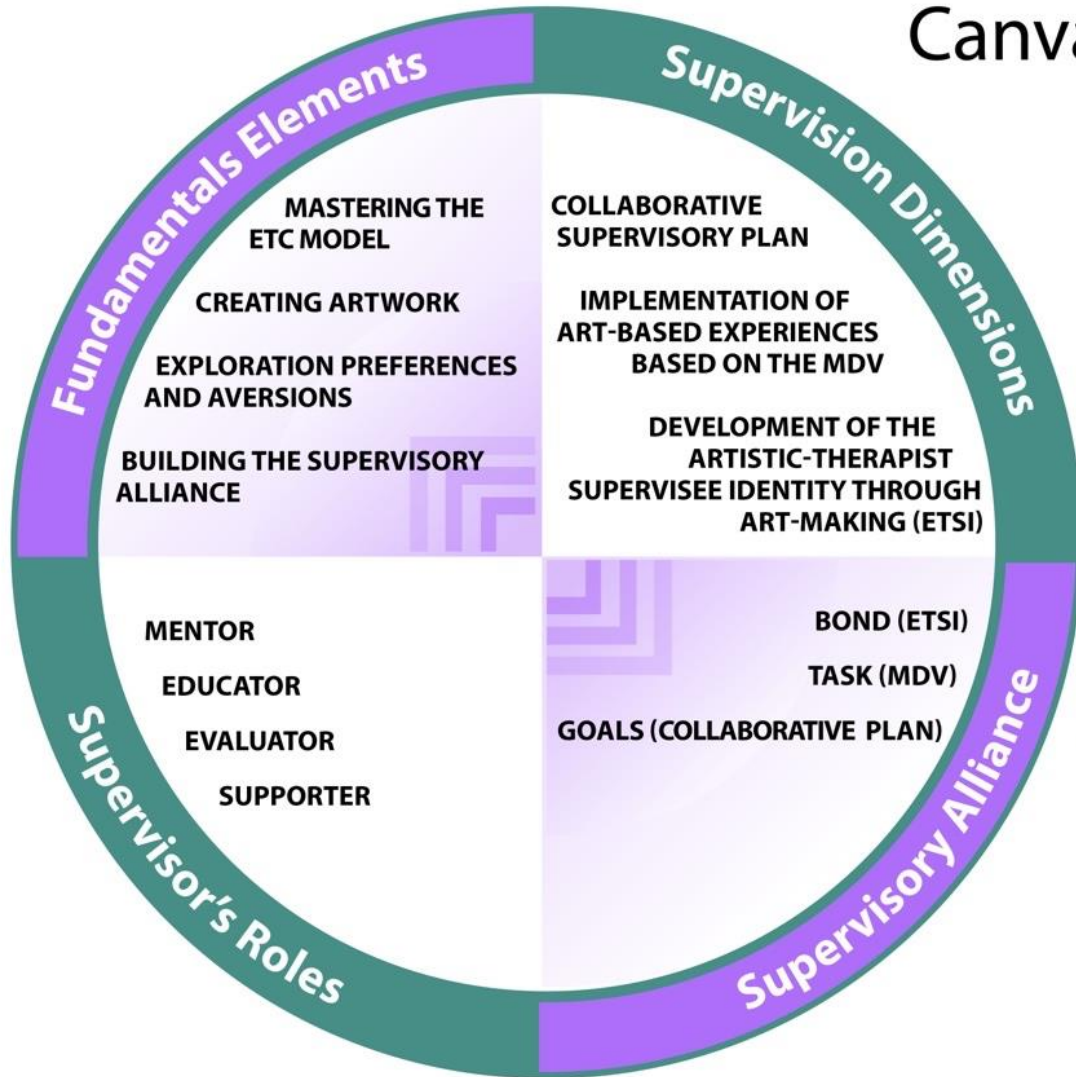
Goal 2

Use the ETC to strengthen the supervisory alliance through joint art-making and exploration of preferences and aversions.

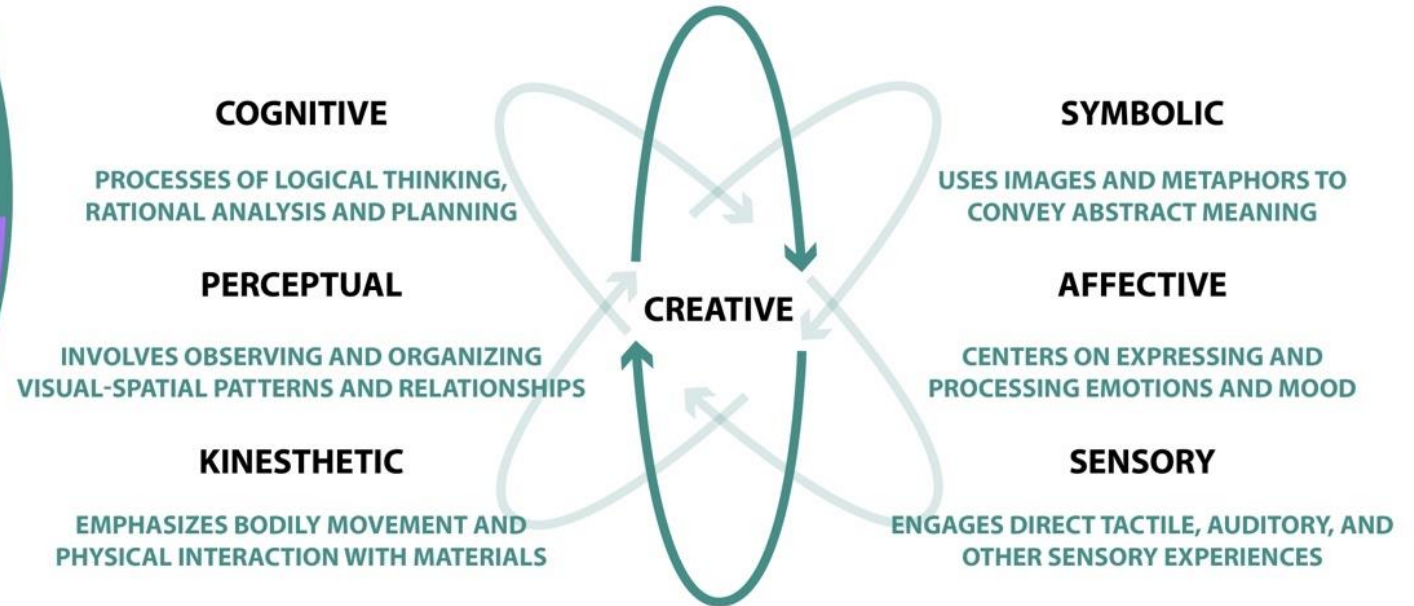


ETC SUPERVISORY MODEL

Canvas of Connection



Co-creating and art-making in art therapy supervision can enhance the effectiveness, growth and depth of the supervisory relationship



SUPERVISORY MODEL

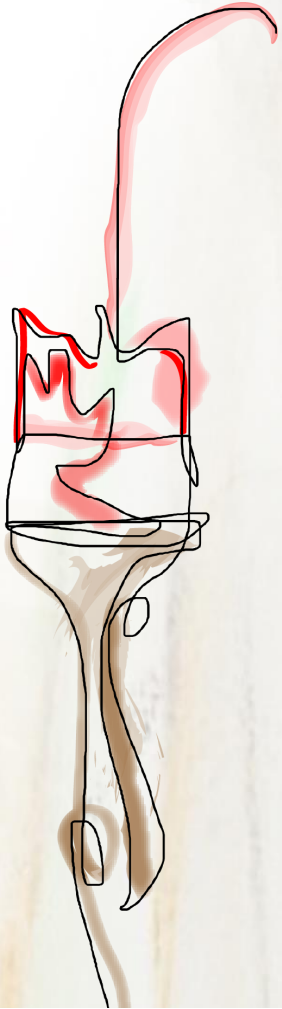
Four Fundamental Elements

- Mastering the ETC model
- Creating artwork with supervisees
- Exploring artistic preferences and aversions
- Building the supervisory alliance



SUPERVISORY MODEL

Three Supervision Dimensions



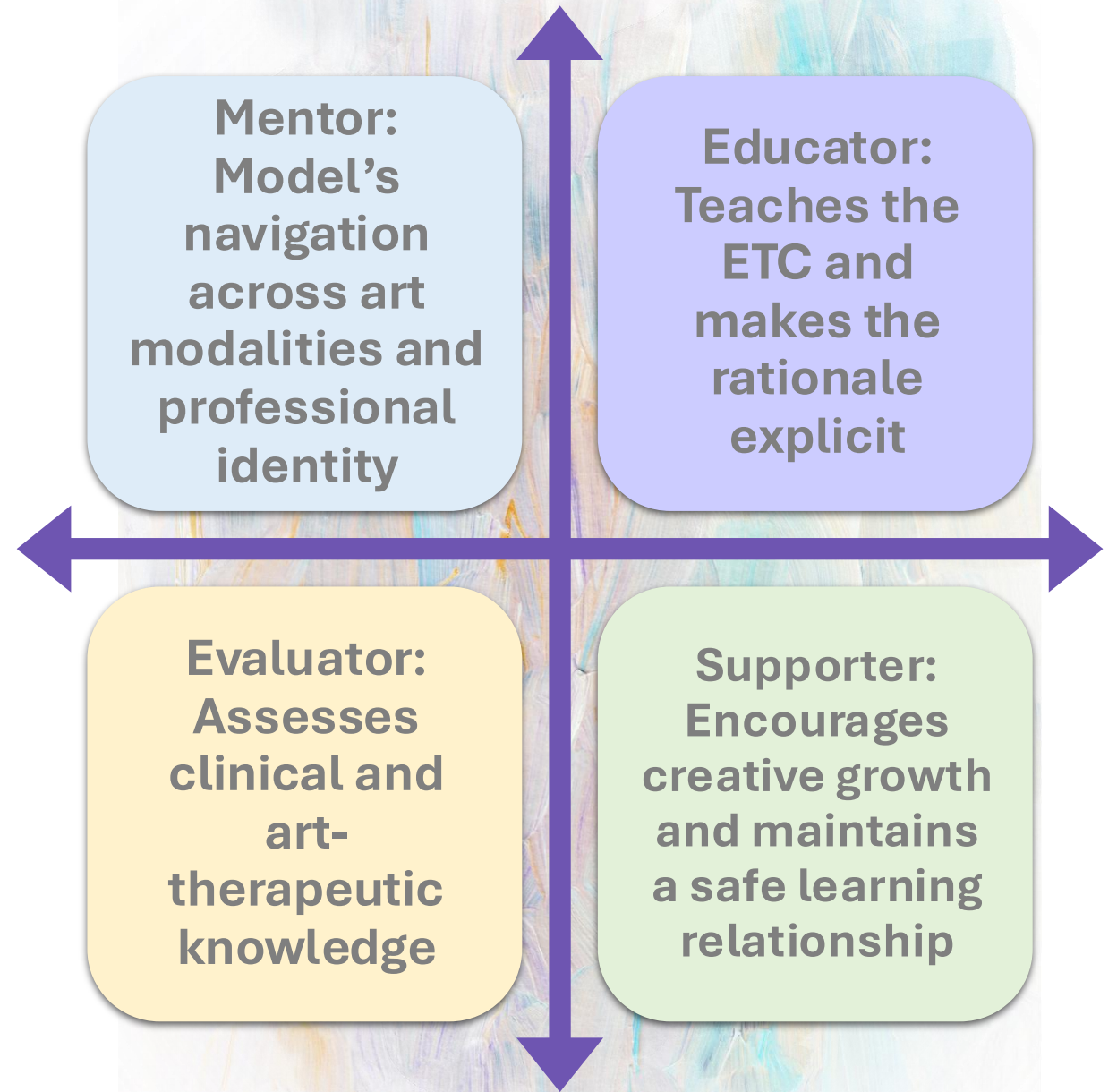
**Collaborative Supervisory Plan:
Goals are defined with the
supervisee**

**Art-based Experiences through MDV:
Materials and instructions are
intentionally adjusted**

**Identity Exploration through ETSI:
Art-making supports reflective self-
inquiry as artist and therapist**



Supervisor's Roles



SUPERVISORY MODEL

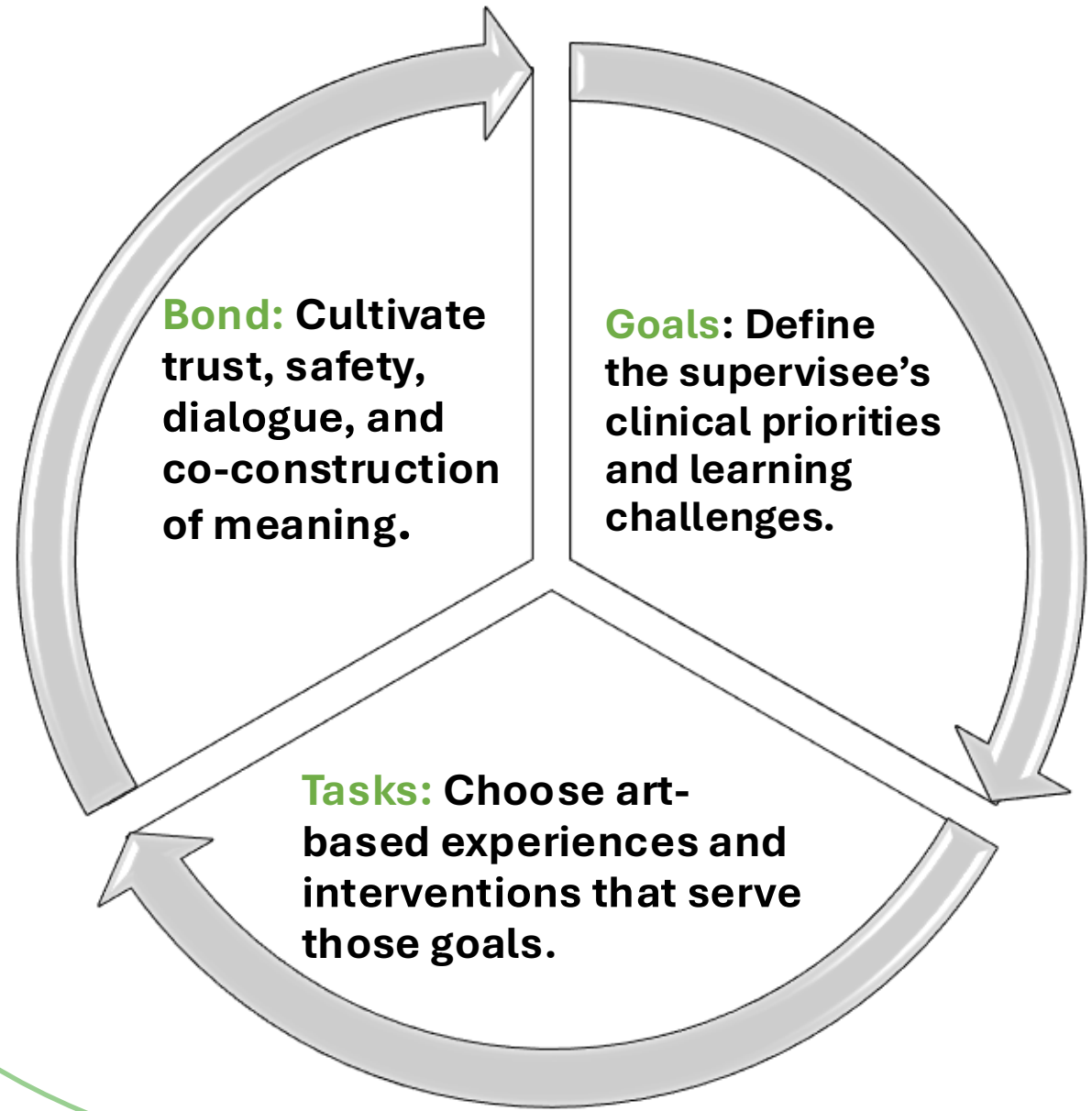
Positive Supervision Alliance



- Tasks in supervision refer to the interventions chosen to achieve supervisory goals (Bordin, 1983)
- Discuss with supervisees which components of the ETC we are enacting through our instructions
- Discuss how MDV are intentionally employed to enhance the therapeutic experience
- Model and support students in learning and applying the ETC framework



How the Supervisory Alliance is Built



Maintaining Boundaries in Supervision

The model uses art for educational self-exploration.

Clear boundaries make personal and professional reflection safer.

The ETC gives the supervisor a language for keeping reflection connected to clinical goals.



ETC Mastery Becomes Clinical Judgment

- The supervisee learns to identify overused, underused, or blocked ETC functions.
- The supervisor helps connect these observations to client needs and treatment goals.
- MDV choices become intentional: structure, complexity, and materials are selected for a clinical purpose.



ETSI: Reflective Self-inquiry

- Expressive Therapist Self-Inquiry (ETSI) combines art-making with structured reflection on feelings, attitudes, reactions, and material choices.
- It supports awareness of preferences, aversions, and potential biases.
- In the case study, the ETSI becomes central for understanding both the supervisory relationship and professional identity.



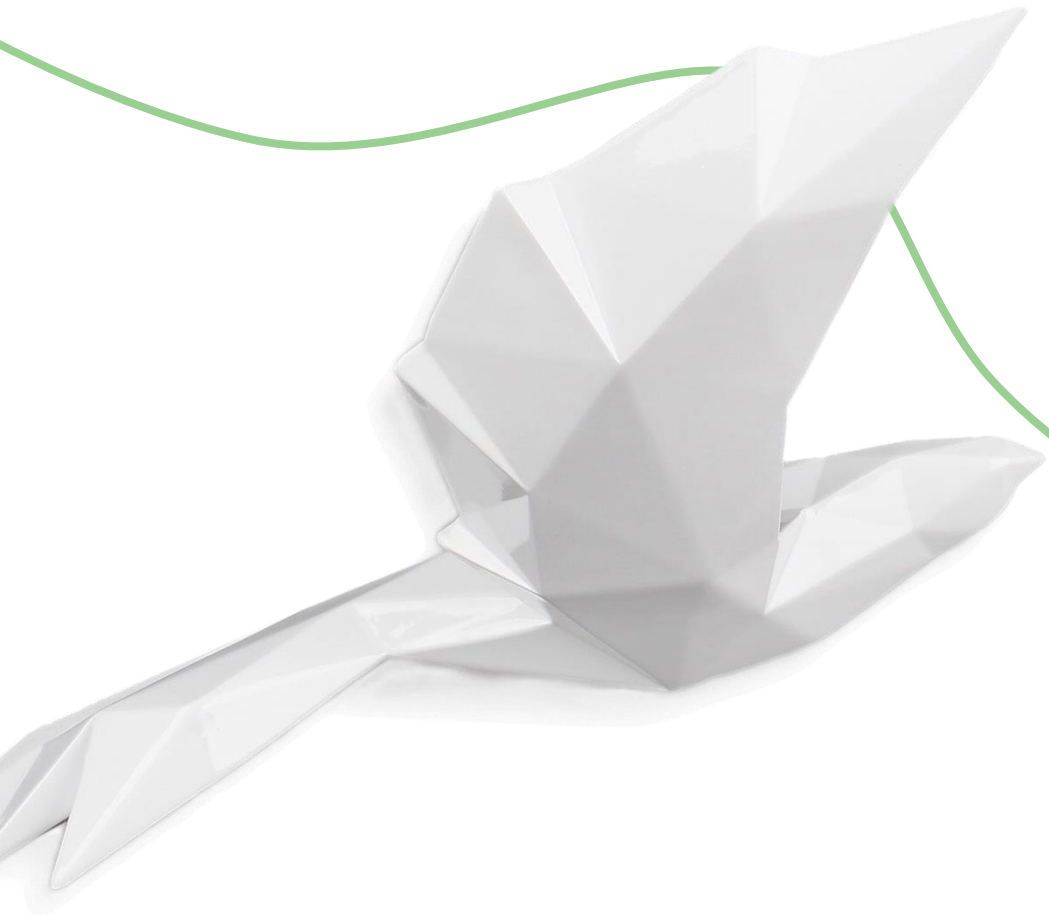


Preferences and Aversions Matter

- A therapist's own comfort with materials can shape what is offered to clients.
- Unexamined aversion can unintentionally narrow the client's possibilities.
- The model asks supervisees to experience media and processes before prescribing them therapeutically.



Media Dimension Variables



- MDV explain how tasks and materials influence therapeutic processes
- The three key variables are: Task Structure, Task Complexity, and Media Properties.
- MDV help therapists adapt interventions in alignment with treatment goals.
- Supervisor emphasizes
 - Immersion in art materials and processes
 - Assessment of preferred level of ETC functioning as they interact with various art media
 - Creation of images to understand the effects of MDV



What are Ruptures?

Disagreements on how the supervisor and supervisee work together in session or between session (MDV)



Disagreements on goals of supervision (ETC)



Breakdowns in how supervisor and supervisee negotiate their respective needs or desires (ETSI)



Ruptures in the Supervisory Alliance

- Supervision includes evaluation, which creates vulnerability.
- A supervisee may withhold opinions when feeling judged or contradicted.
- The ETC model treats rupture as material that can be explored and repaired, not avoided.
- The intentional use of art-making with various ETC components can restore and strengthen communication



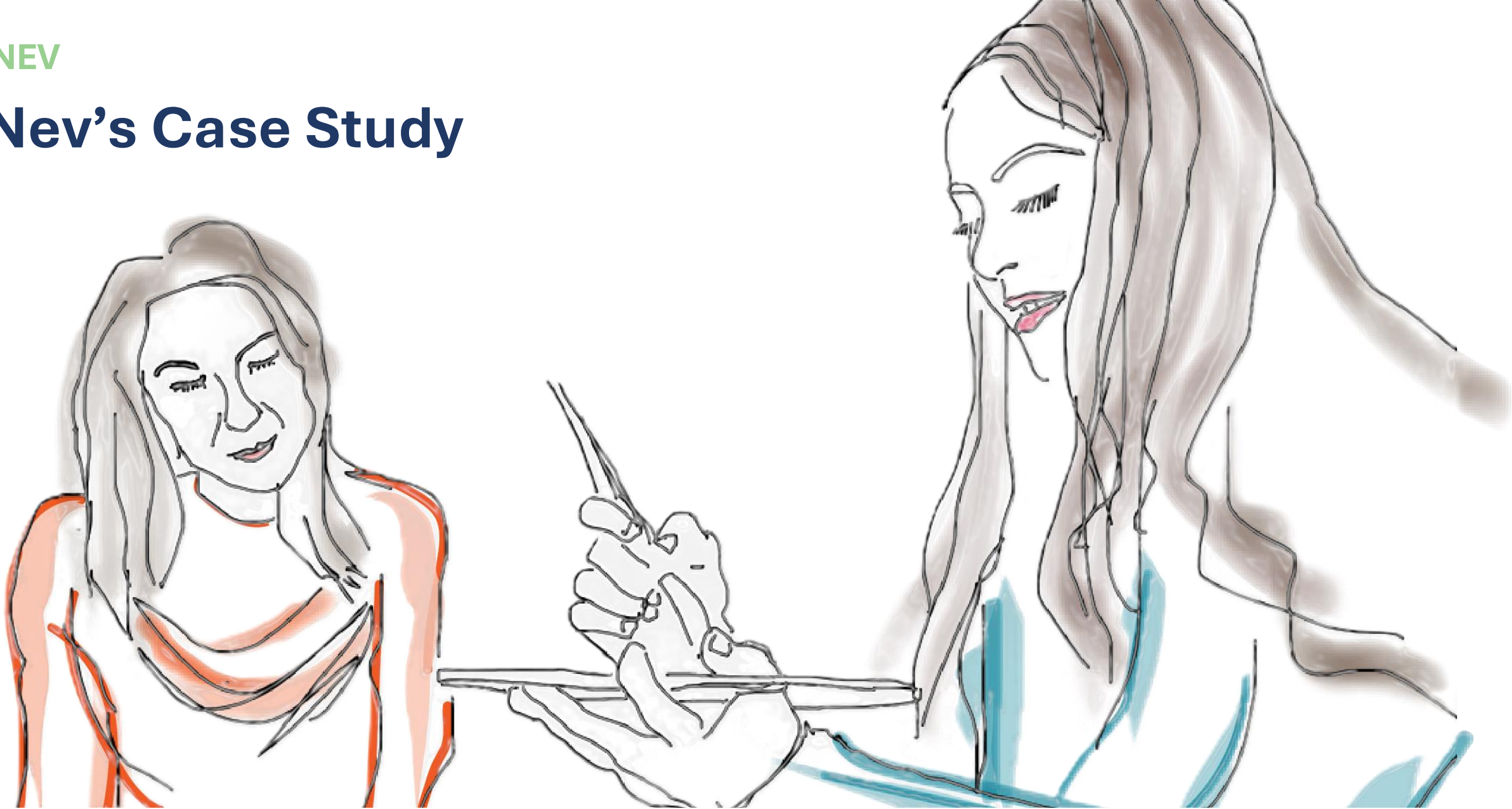
How Artmaking Supports Repair

- Images, diagrams, and symbols can hold complexity when words alone are too direct or too narrow.
- Looking at a shared image can make different perspectives easier to recognize.
- Repair requires emotional communication as well as problem-solving.



NEV

Nev's Case Study



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Case Context

- Nev is a 39-year-old Métis art therapy student from Manitoba.
- Her first internship involved group art therapy in elementary schools.
- The supervision process included ten videoconference sessions.



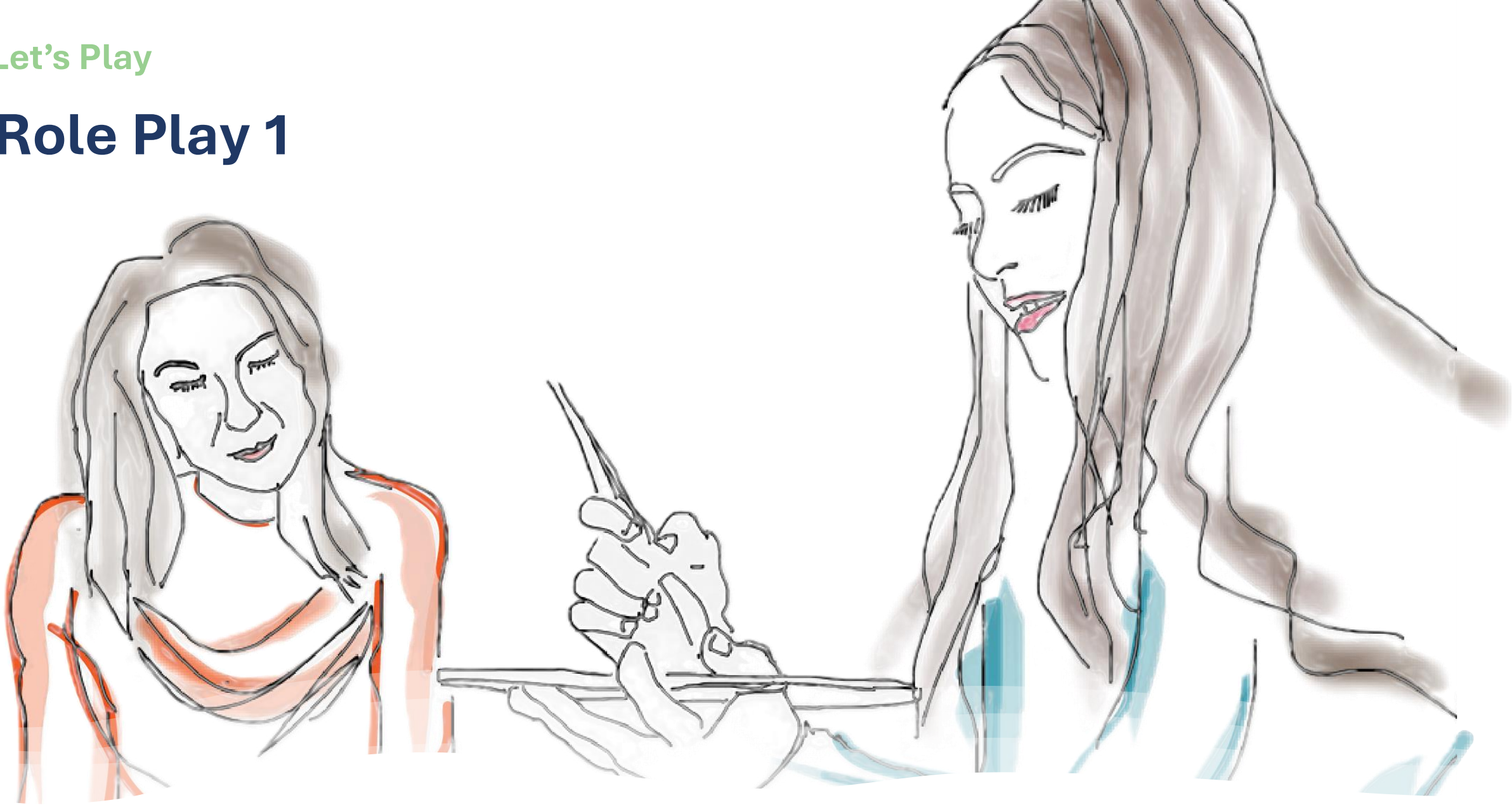
Model-to-Case Alignment

- Collaborative plan: Nev's three goals organize the supervision process.
- MDV: interventions are adapted through structure, complexity, and media properties.
- ETSI: preferences, aversions, and identity are explored through art-making.
- Alliance: rupture and repair are addressed through validation, shared responsibility, and symbols.



Let's Play

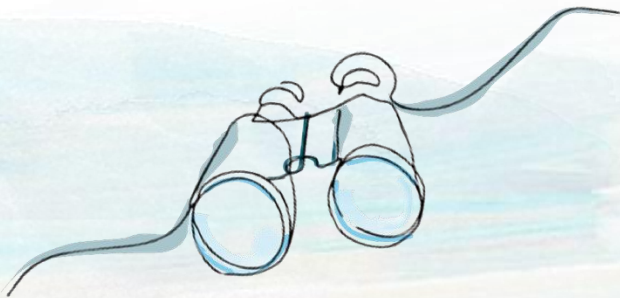
Role Play 1



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DEBRIEF IN PAIRS

Alliance	Trust grows because supervisor/supervisee can name the difficulty
ETC level	Perceptual and Cognitive processing organize the initial sessions
Risk	Shared aversion could narrow learning if the supervisor does not stay reflective
Clinical value	The supervision frame becomes a place for honest learning



After Role-play 1: What to Notice



Phase 1: Co-creating the Supervisory Alliance

- The alliance is established at the beginning through a strengths-based approach.
- Nev identifies the objectives she wants to achieve during supervision.
- The supervisory plan begins with more structure because hands-on instruction is needed.



Nev's Three Supervision Goals

Develop competence in documentation related to the ETC framework.



Increase confidence in assessment and intervention choices.



Build clinical skills for supporting children in group art therapy.



Why is the Beginning Structured

- The initial plan engages the Perceptual and Cognitive components of the ETC.
- The supervisor clarifies consent, documentation, group themes, interventions, the online platform, and note templates.
- Structure supports safety while Nev enters a new clinical and technological environment.



ETSI in the First Phase

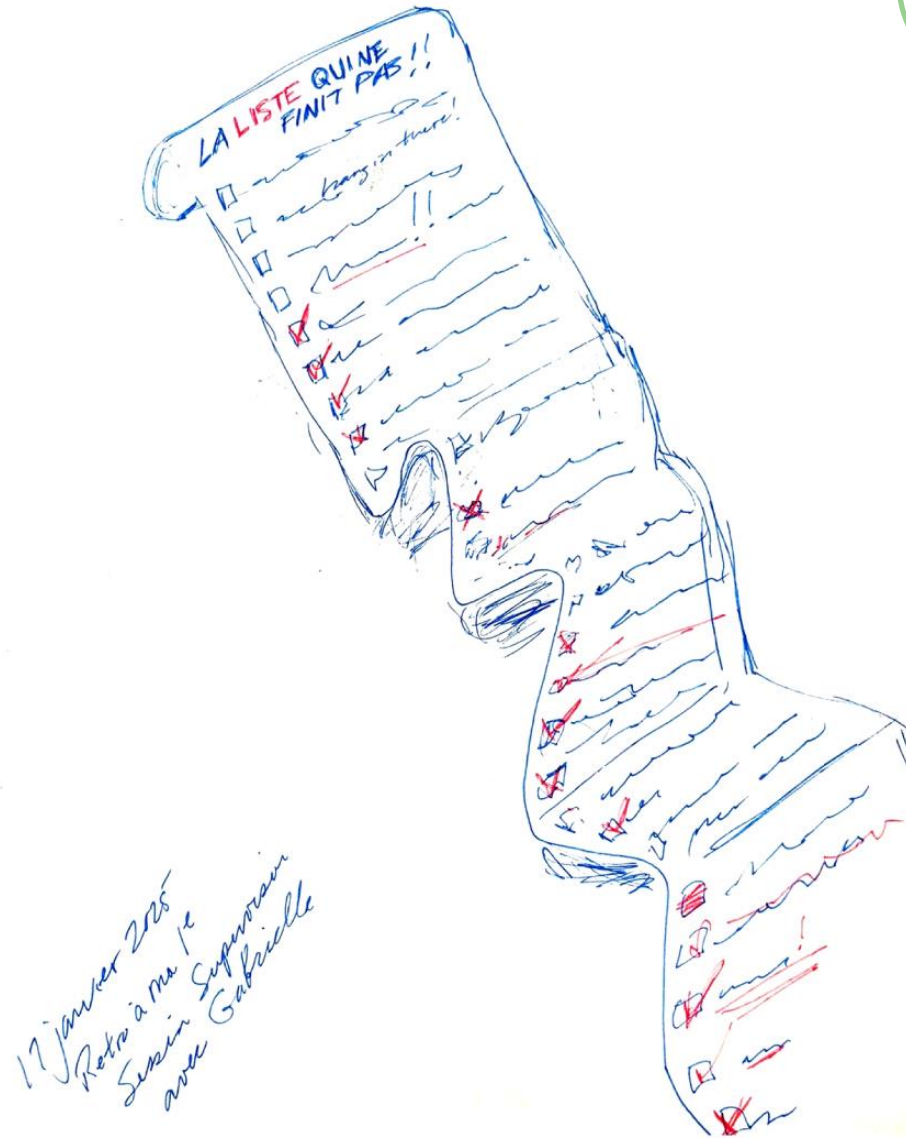
- Nev and the supervisor complete ETSI to examine preferences and aversions.
- Both discover shared aversions to administrative and technological tasks.
- Both also share preferences for the Affective and Symbolic components of art-making.



OPENING FRAME

Nev's First Response Art

- The never-ending list condenses the weight of new tasks.
- Words, check marks, and repeated lines make overload visible.
- The image opens discussion about frustration without reducing it to a complaint.





The Supervisor's First Response

- The supervisor also depicts being overwhelmed by the online platform.
- The image creates shared ground rather than distance.
- Her empathy does not remove her responsibility to mentor and support problem-solving.



Functions of ETC Supervisory Model in Phase 1



Collaborative plan The relationship begins with explicit goals and practical supports.

ETSI Preferences and aversions become visible rather than hidden.

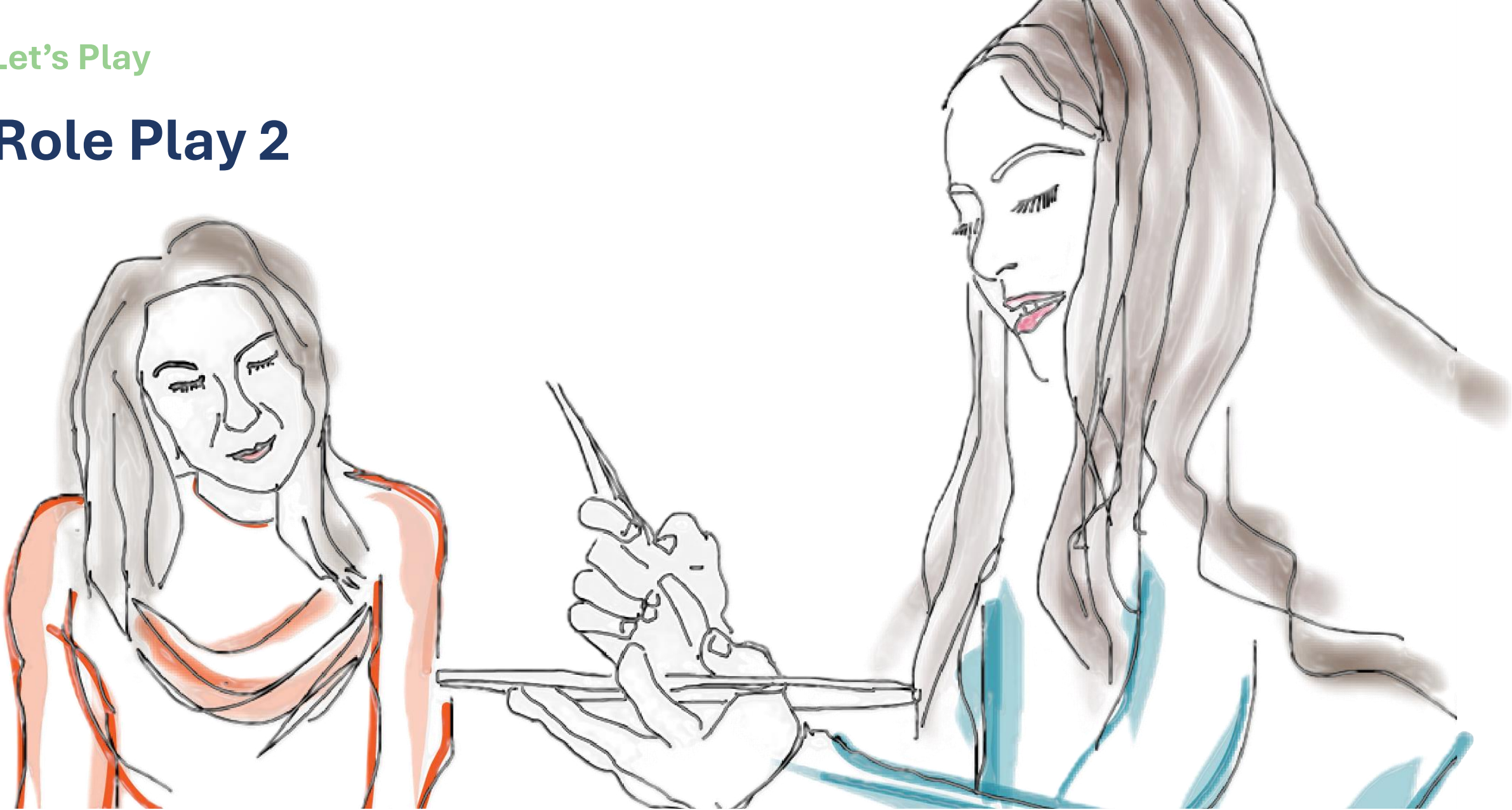
MDV Resistive media and structured tasks support control and agency.

Supervisor role The supervisor moves between educator, mentor, and supporter.



Let's Play

Role Play 2



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DEBRIEF IN PAIR

Repair

Validation comes before problem-solving

Ethics

The supervisor does not abandon evaluation; she makes it transparent

MDV

The task is restructured into smaller, achievable steps

Clinical value

The relationship is strong enough to support difficult feedback



After Role-play 2: What to Notice



Phase 2: Rupture After the First Three Sessions

- A rupture occurs when the supervisor tells Nev that her clinical notes need revision.
- Nev feels profound frustration and considers pausing the internship.
- The supervisor's evaluator role becomes central to the tension.



Why This Rupture Matters

- Clinical documentation is tied to Nev's first supervision goal.
- The task is cognitively demanding and already linked to shared aversion.
- The rupture tests whether the supervisory bond can hold evaluation, frustration, and repair.



The Supervisor's Repair Response

- Validates Nev's frustration instead of minimizing it
- Acknowledges shared responsibility for not providing earlier support
- Clearly endorses the evaluator role and opens discussion about the rupture
- Breaks the task into smaller steps using the metaphor of “eating an elephant one bite at a time.”



RUPTURE AND REPAIR

Alliance	Rupture is treated as relational information, not failure.
ETC level	A shared symbol makes an overwhelming task more manageable.
Supervisor role	Evaluator and supporter are both present.
Outcome	An aversion begins to transform into mastery and pride.

Functions of the ETC Supervisory Model in Phase 2



Phase 3: Theory into Practice

- In the intermediate sessions, Nev focuses on assessment, intervention, and group facilitation.
- She already understands the ETC theoretically; now she learns to apply it in the school context.
- The main challenge is adapting to children with diverse needs, skills, and preferences.



Theory into Practice: Using MDV with Children's Groups

- Task complexity is adjusted when the group needs fewer or more steps.
- Fluid and resistive materials can be offered for the same therapeutic goal.
- Tasks can become more structured or more open according to age, capacity, and present need.
- Nev does not need to create a whole new program each time; she adapts the intervention through MDV.



CLINICAL APPLICATION

Nev's Flower of Growth

- After the sixth session, Nev uses dry pastel to depict growth.
- The flower includes references to the Franco-Manitoban flag and the colours of her practicum schools.
- The image marks movement from overload toward confidence and development.





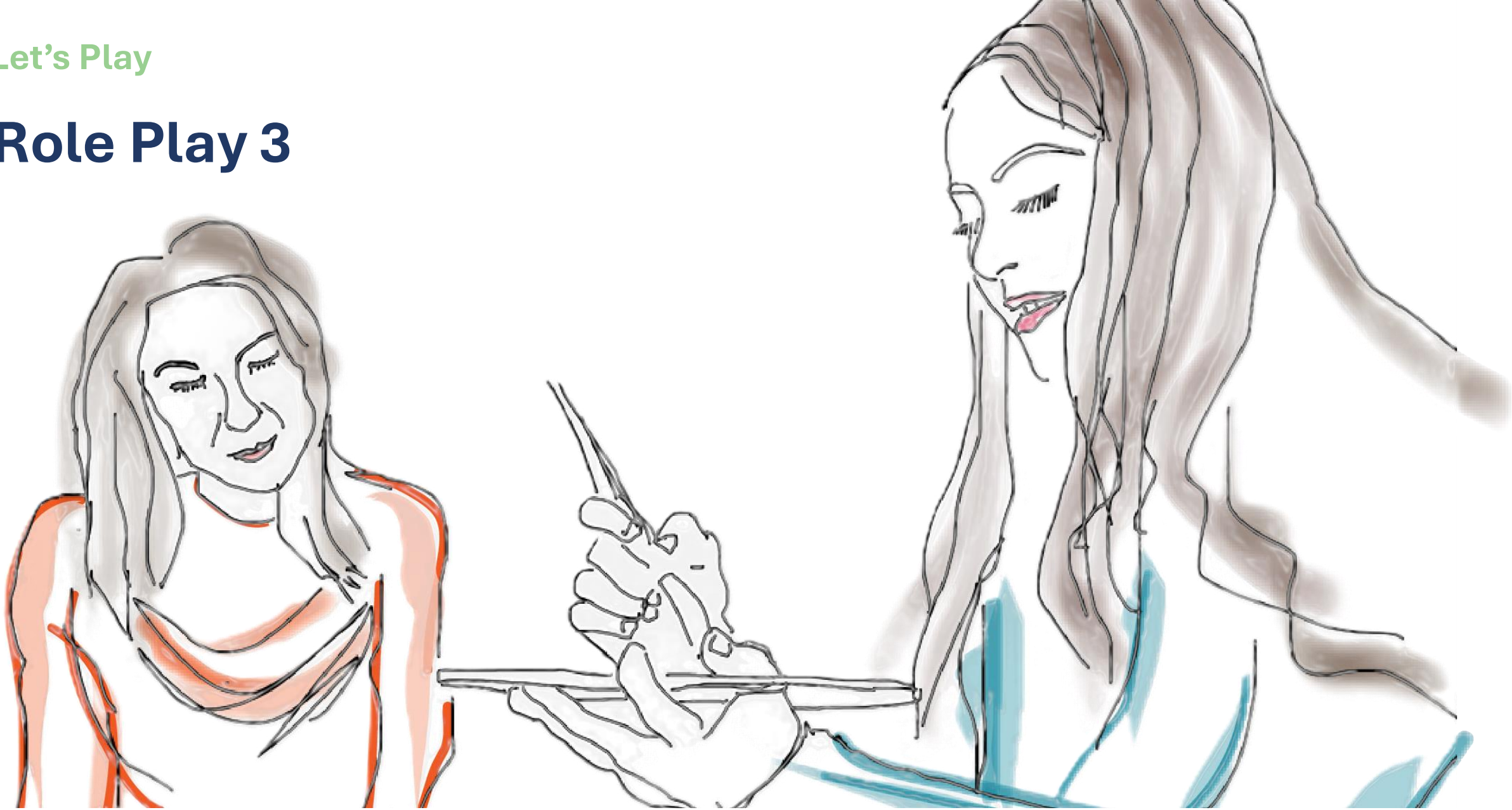
The Supervisor's Field of Possibilities

- The supervisor responds with a field of flowers rather than a corrective image.
- The image mirrors growth and possibility without taking over Nev's meaning.
- Parallel art-making shows attunement to Nev's progress.



Let's Play

Role Play 3



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DEBRIEF IN PAIR

ETSI	Identity work is grounded in image-making, not only verbal reflection.
Creative dimension	Personal, cultural, artistic, and professional facets begin to integrate.
Alliance	The supervisor's response image invites possibility without prescribing it.
Outcome	Nev leaves with a stronger foundation for professional identity.



After Role-play 3: What to Notice



When Art-making Disappeared

- By the seventh session, the dyad notices that art has not been created in supervision.
- Nev is overwhelmed by clinical work, studies, and personal life.
- The supervisor recognizes that creative tasks have been pushed aside and intentionally brings art-making back.

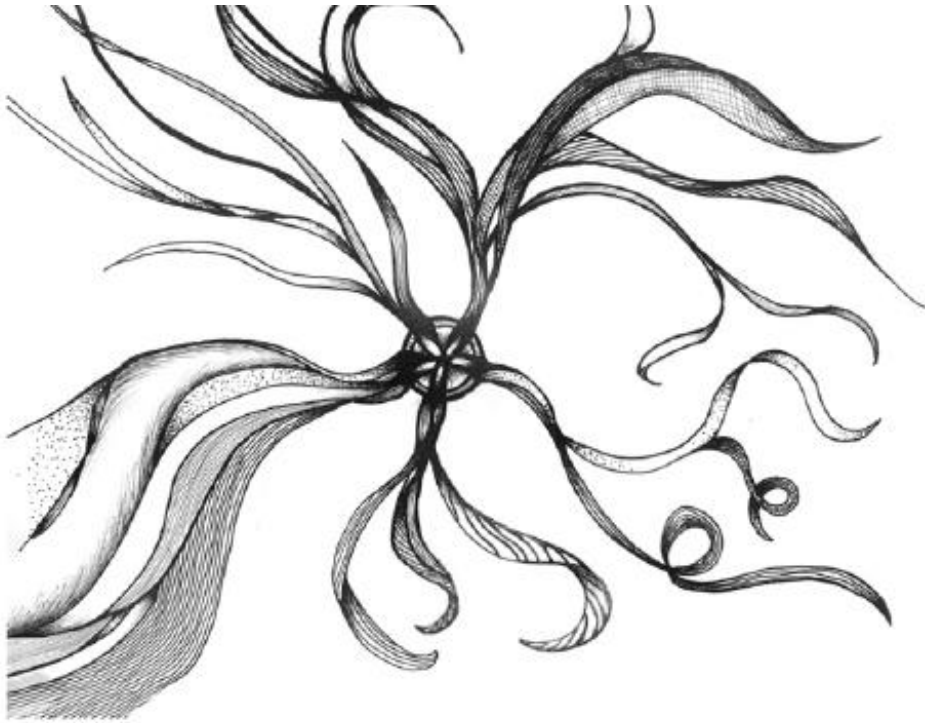


Final Focus: Professional Identity

- The final sessions review the supervision journey and celebrate milestones.
- An arts-based assessment of strengths and challenges is conducted.
- A key challenge remains: Solidifying Nev's professional identity as an art therapist.

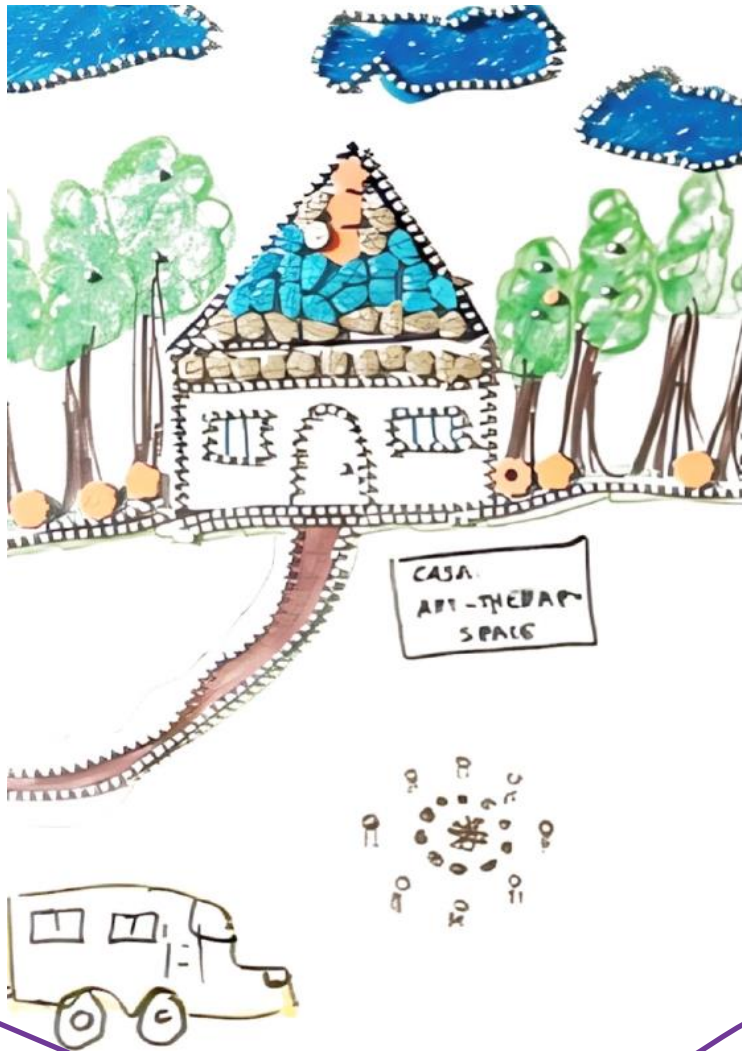


New Explores Professional Identity



- A central flower represents core values and connection to her grandfather's craftsmanship.
- Radiating lines represent roles and identities: mother, nature lover, Métis woman, artist, and art therapist.
- The process moves toward Cognitive/Symbolic meaning and integration through the Creative dimension.





The Supervisor Responds with a Possible Future

- The supervisor creates a house as an art therapy space for individuals and groups.
- The van suggests travel, exploration, and future projects.
- Nev recognizes resonances with her own home and a previously imagined travelling art therapy service.



Functions of ETC Supervisory Model in Phase 3



MDV

Nev learns to adjust structure, complexity, and media without losing therapeutic purpose.

ETC movement

The pastel images engage sensory, affective, perceptual, and symbolic material.

Alliance

The dyad functions at similar ETC levels, supporting mutual understanding.

Professional growth

Nev's creativity becomes connected to clinical decision-making.



Outcomes After Ten Supervision Sessions

- Nev shows stronger competence in documentation related to the ETC framework.
- She demonstrates greater confidence in assessment and interventions.
- She develops clinical skills for group facilitation.
- The alliance is strengthened through parallel art-making and shared reflection.



The Case Demonstrates

- The case does not simply illustrate art-making; it shows how art-making organizes supervision.
- Each phase of Nev's case activates a different part of the model: plan, MDV, ETSI, role flexibility, and alliance repair.
- The model remains educational and clinically focused while still making emotion, identity, and relationship visible.



Strengths of the ETC Supervisory Model

- It offers structure without rigidity.
- It simultaneously supports developing clinical skills, self-awareness, and professional identity.
- It gives supervisors a way to work with rupture, power, and emotion without abandoning learning goals.
- It invites cultural humility because meanings are co-constructed rather than imposed.



Limitations and Cautions

- Supervisors need competence in the ETC and in a range of art media.
- Beginners may worry that art-making distracts from learning concrete skills.
- Role clarity can be difficult in interdisciplinary contexts.
- The model is promising, but the authors note that it still needs further empirical research.



Conclusion

The ETC supervisory model turns art-making into a structured, ethical and relational method for learning supervision

In Nev's case, the model supported clinical skills, rupture repair, and the development of an artistic-therapist identity.



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