

DARK ROOM WORK

The sea of human emotions is vast, complex and runs very deep, within its depths there are countless currents generating an immense and powerful force within each of us. Some of these currents flow harmoniously in the same direction creating stability, insight, and clarity within us, whilst others flow in opposing directions offering only confusion, contradiction, and anxiety.

Our emotions are the result of our life experiences, which often (particularly in childhood) get woven together in an illogical fashion. In other words, experiences, which have no real connection to each other, as a result of our faulty and sometimes misguided thinking and perception get wrongly bound together. This is why at times emotions are reasonable and rational whilst at other times they seem to have no sanity or reason about them. Working with our emotions is a fascinating challenge as there ‘appears’ to be no logical pattern or laws governing their activity, it is as if there is a state of anarchy and chaos, but this is not really the case. If we walk along the corridors of our mind into the maze of emotions, we will discover there is some pattern and meaning and our work in the dark will help us in this pursuit.

To take on the challenge of dark room work which involves sailing through both the calm and turbulent waters of our emotions we need to have: 1) a willingness to take the risks presented by such a voyage, we also need to have: 2) some understanding of the changing nature of the emotions we are facing so we can respond appropriately. Finally, we need to: 3) draw on the external support and resources that lend themselves to our cause, because none of us can make it to our destination without help of some kind at different points along the way.

Dark room work is the final frontier, it is the point where after some preliminary work has been done the individual meets their emotions head-on. It leaves us with no option but to face the truth about ourselves. As the term implies the process is carried out in the dark, with our eyes closed accompanied only by one's counsellor/therapist. There are several reasons for submerging ourselves into our emotions via the medium of the dark. 1) The dark for most of us is a place we would rather not be, it represents fear and the unknown and both these things need to be faced to help us heal. 2) We cannot see in the dark and in losing our visual experience of the world we are forced to rely on our other means of experiencing and interacting with our environment, which are exactly the conditions we seek to create in order that we can make real contact with what is going on inside of us. 3) Once we are immersed in the dark in this way, the emotions that are continually there and yet simply get overlooked or pass us by, begin to come into focus. In fact, we have a different experience altogether of the landscape of our inner world, ‘it’ is then able to communicate its messages to us more clearly and profoundly offering us a whole new perspective of that age-old question ‘who am I?’

Dark room work is a process carried out over several months and is only ever engaged in after a healthy and meaningful relationship has been established with the counsellor who is accompanying you on this journey. With a relationship of trust, sincerity, support and honesty, dark room work will offer the individual immense treasures, previously unavailable to him/her simply because they had never looked for them in this way before. Although there may be some anxiety and concern about confronting oneself in this way, that is to be expected and is part of the process, which eventually disappears after taking the plunge. The dark is the doorway to understanding what is called the ‘absurd logic’ of our emotions - within that absurd logic lie many of the answers to the mystery of the self.