

The Art of Attention: Chronicles Of An **Imagery-Oriented Psychotherapist**

By Jeanette Wright



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The Chronicles from The Art of Attention are about the scientific and aesthetic understanding of human emotion and they are a defense of the practice of psychotherapy as a private and honorable profession.

Thirty years ago I began writing about the absent and the invisible as these related to experiences of loss and separation. This endeavor took me into an indepth study of affect and script psychology and motivated me to apply my understanding of personality development with patients. I offer these Chronicles for psychotherapists as an encouragement along two pathways: first, to sustain attention on the emotional experience of patients so that the expression and motivational force of emotions and scripts becomes an orienting focus of treatment and second, to integrate drawing into talk therapy, that is, to add the act of looking to the act of listening by asking patients to draw about their lives.

The Art of Attention contains four separate books that chronicle my years as a psychotherapist focused on stimulating affect and imagery to create consciousness by engaging patients in the creation of drawn images. In Book One I uncover some disguises of loss, both the necessary losses of illusions and separations and the unthinkable losses of violence and death. When there is loss, some run and hide under the covers, some paint their faces and wear pretty dresses, some wear uniforms that tell of important jobs and some no longer remember who they are. The grieving don't want to see or be seen in their grief, yet many still peek out between fingers with the hope that someone might notice their sadness. To hide but then to look again becomes a creative pattern of loss and repair. I am thinking of times when looking again stirs wordless scenes from an implicit past and fast forwards its echoes through a line of music, the empathy of a friend, a marvel in nature; some of the ways fallible, incomplete and bittersweet memories make their return in search of repair.

The Chronicles may also appeal to lay readers interested in how emotion functions in everyday life.



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Editorial Review

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Jeanette Wright, M.S., A.T.R., is a former associate professor at Drake University and is currently in private practice in Des Moines, Iowa.

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