



---

## Your Life Within Me: Learning from a Visual Journal Group after Stillbirth

**Maya Shamai Gronner**

**Metzl Einat**

This presentation will discuss the findings from an exploration of a visual journal six-week art therapy intervention for mothers who experienced stillbirth. Conducted at Rambam Hospital in Israel, a large medical facility in which participants had left empty-handed after stillbirth, the intervention was designed to offer an opportunity to reconnect with their experience and the baby they lost through individual creation and group dialogue. The intervention was grounded in Rubin's Two-Track Model of Bereavement, the process integrated emotional regulation (Track I) with the ongoing internal relationship with the deceased (Track II), embodying the conference theme of repetition and return as cyclical movements of loss, connection, and transformation.

To explore the impact and meaning of the intervention, we used a mixed-methods design, in which the nine mothers completed pre- and post- intervention measures (DERS; TTbQ2-CG31) and participated in art-based interviews. Quantitative trends indicated improved emotional regulation, reduced conflict in the internal relationship with the baby, and enhanced well-being. Qualitative themes revealed that while participants journeyed back and forth between absence and presence, grief and imagination, silence and voice, the art journal offered a place to return to self and emotion (1), they were able to revisit and reshape the inner bond with their deceased through recurring images, textures, and colors, and the hospital and the presence of a supportive group proposed a creative holding environment that validates the continuing bond. In the presentation we will discuss both initial interventions, the findings, and their implications for art therapy practice and ongoing research around stillbirth.

**Keywords:** Stillbirth; art therapy; visual journal; grief; repetition; return; continuing bonds



## Biography

**Maya Gronner Shamai**, PhD Candidate at Bar-Ilan University under the supervision of Prof. Einat Metzl, is an art therapist, lecturer, and researcher. She teaches on the M.A. Art Therapy Program at the Faculty of Arts Therapy, Seminar HaKibbutzim College, Israel, and serves as Vice Chair of YAHAT- The Israeli Association of Creative Arts Therapies, with responsibility for professional development. Her doctoral research focuses on developing and evaluating an art therapy group model using visual art journaling for mothers after stillbirth, integrating the Two-Track Model of Bereavement. Her clinical and academic work bridges personal loss, artistic process, and therapeutic transformation.

**Einat Metzl** is Professor and chair of the Bar-Ilan University graduate art therapy program. She is an art therapist, marital and family therapist, an artist, and a researcher. Her clinical work focuses on couples' work, loss and grief, and foster/ adoption issues. Her research focus includes creativity and resilience post disaster/trauma as the anchor for art therapy, art therapy research methodology, and art as a tool to explore and process loss.

## Recent Publications

Metzl, E., & Shamai, M.G. (2021). **I carry your heart: A dialogue about coping, art, and therapy after a profound loss.** *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 74, 101801.

Shamai, M.G., & Metzl, E. (2025). **Your life within me: Exploring a visual art journal group intervention for women who experienced stillbirth.** *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 93, 102269.

Shamai, M.G., & Metzl, E. (2023). **Your Life Within Me: Initial results from a pilot study of an intervention with mothers who had experienced Stillbirth.** *American Art Therapy Association's Annual Conference. Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> – Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. San Diego, CA, USA.*