



Pathways of Transformation: Neuroaesthetics of the Relational Embodied Journey in Creative Arts Therapies

נתיבי טרנספורמציה: ניורואסתטיקה של המסע ההתייחסותי המוגפן בטיפול באמנויות

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Aesthetic experiences unfold as a living, relational process, vital for human development and mental health. Within the arts therapies, such experiences emerge through embodied encounters that interlace expression and impression, movement and symbolization, bridging inner and outer worlds. Neuroscientific research describes this through the interplay of sensory-motor, emotion-valuation, and meaning-making brain systems, including the somatosensory and sensorimotor cortices, salience, reward and default-mode networks.

This presentation invites participants to explore the aesthetic experience and aesthetic reciprocity from an integrative perspective that unfolds ideas and insights from the field of neuroscience, examining their significance within the therapeutic domain. Aesthetic moments are charged with ambiguity and tension between what is outwardly perceived and what remains hidden and needs to be inferred, the 'enigmatic inside' of the appearing body movement, visual image, sounds or words, aligning with the Predictive Processing framework, a prominent mechanism of brain function. These encounters generate prediction errors, surprises which stimulate curiosity, have epistemic value or affordance, opening opportunities for action. In relational contexts, this dynamic offers both the potential for profound connection to the self and the other and the important challenge of tolerating uncertainty. Through embodied aesthetic engagement, individuals may experience aesthetic emotions such as being moved, which activate bodily resonance, memory, and imagination, fostering neuroplasticity and psychological transformation. Activating intra- and inter-personal dynamics, aesthetic practices uncover repeating cycles and the return of repressed or archetypal contents, enabling recognition of patterns as resurfacing motifs and themes that



shape and reshape internal models of the body in the world, expanding the sense of self and supporting autobiographical memory reconsolidation.

Framing the arts therapies as a continuous journey, we will explore how engagement in relational aesthetic processes can cultivate empathic relationships, resilience, integration and transformation, for individuals, groups and communities, within a practice grounded in state-of-the-art knowledge of brain-body-mind relations.

Biography

Sharon Vaisvaser, PhD, is a Dance/Movement Therapist and supervisor, and heads the DMT program at the School of Society and the Arts, Ono Academic College, Israel. She gives workshops on the brain-body-mind in primitive mental states in the Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy program for Arts Therapists at Tel-Aviv University. Co-Editor of *The Arts Therapies and Neuroscience* Frontiers special issue.

She works with diverse populations across a range of mental health conditions and survivors of the October 7th music festivals massacre (SafeHeart); supervises therapists at 'Oti' (Israeli Autism Association). Sharon completed her PhD in neuroscience at Tel Aviv University, Sagol Brain Institute, Tel-Aviv Medical Center, specializing in stress, trauma, and emotional memory. Her current research focuses on integrating neuroscience and creative arts psychotherapy. Additionally, she is a contemporary dancer, choreographer, and teacher; she has worked with people from around the world in Dance-Journey programs (Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company and the Jewish Agency).

Recent publications and conference presentations:

Vaisvaser, S., King, J.L., Orkibi, H., & Aleem, H. (2024). **Neurodynamics of Relational Aesthetic Engagement in Creative Arts Therapies**. *Review of General Psychology*, 28(3), 203-218.

Vaisvaser, S. (2024). **Meeting the multidimensional self: fostering selfhood at the interface of Creative Arts Therapies and neuroscience**. *Frontiers in Psychology* 15, 1417035.



Vaisvaser, S. (2025). **The Multidimensional Self in Motion: the Neurodynamics of Dance Movement Therapy.** *5th European Association Dance Movement Therapy (EADMT) conference* (2025, Lithuania).

Vaisvaser, S. (2024) **Neurodynamics of embodied resistance.** *17th European Arts Therapies conference (ECArTE)*, Belgium.