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Open Air Therapy New Mexico

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# THE ETHICS OF BEGINNING OUTDOOR THERAPY

# Overview

- My Practice and Journey
  - The Magic
  - Let's get this out of the way (Malpractice/Liability and Insurance Panels)
  - Different ways we therapize outside (Specialties, Cultural Humility)
  - Ethically preparing the client
  - Preparing the space and time
  - Your relationship to this work (ethical authenticity, pouring from a fuller cup)
  - The Map: the ethics of written and verbal consent
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# My Practice and Journey

- Neurodivergence, Insomnia Disorder, Chronic Pain and Illness
  - Childhood neurodivergence, nature was safe and healing
  - Chicago working outdoors with clients
  - Taiwan somatic experiencing in nature for PTSD
  - Naropa wilderness courses
  - Southwestern College ecotherapy courses
  - Mentorships and Trainings, Forest School
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# The magic

- Nature and movement both positively impact mental health
  - 4 therapists, 3 they get to take with them for the rest of their lives
  - Clients report this work is highly beneficial and really buy into the benefits of this way of working together
  - Clients integrate nature into their daily lives and have the body experience of knowing they can be outdoors, they begin to see themselves as someone who is “outdoorsy”
  - Incredibly beneficial for certain populations
  - Just imagining or remembering times in nature can have mental health benefits
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# Malpractice and Liability /Insurance Panels

- Contact your board, Liability Insurance, and individual Insurance Panels
  - Much more common/accepted since pandemic
  - Consent forms: always in writing, sign individual paragraphs
  - Location and services for insurance panels
  - Join professional ecotherapy organizations/do some trainings
  - Specifically speak with claims department and ask what paperwork is recommended
  - Consultation and mentorship
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# The ways we do therapy outdoors

- Walk (or roll) and talk therapy
  - Wilderness Therapy
  - Adventure Therapy
  - Equine and Agricultural Therapies
  - Cultural rituals and healing practices + the ethics of addressing cultural appropriation and racism
  - Where does this practice come from? Is my knowledge and the knowledge of my teachers shallow or deep? Am I holding to the original meaning of this practice? How is the group that this practice comes from oppressed today? Am I profiting off of something that has sacred meaning or definitively belongs to an oppressed people? Am I displacing and marginalizing while profiting? Am I benefitting from this practice in a way that is not accessible to the people it came from? Could I use culturally neutral or my own ancestries cultural practices, and if I don't want to, then why not?
  - Seek paid cultural humility training and consultation from members of that community.
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# Preparing the client

- Ethically assessing client appropriateness
  - Inclusion, disability and accessibility (give client choices), neurodivergence, wheelchair routes: Paseo Del Bosque Trail and Cottonwood Springs Trail CABQ.GOV
  - Initial contact, consents and screenings, sensory screening
  - Trauma
  - Physical and medical appropriateness, bathrooms etc.
  - Their personal and family history to nature
  - Model how to tell us what they need
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# Preparing the space and time

- “Know your space.” Wise words from ecotherapy community
  - Check weather and know times of day, dampness, seasons, NM is a great place to practice outdoors
  - Encourage client autonomy, this is their space too
  - Visit space regularly, practice with friends or family, know events in the area
  - Create a container and foreshadow, as we walk through these trees, we begin...Therapeutic Arch of Session, Getting back to base camp
  - Watch, office in a shoulder bag: first aid, pen and paper, phone, Kleenex, water etc.
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# Your relationship to the work

- What is your relationship to nature, triggers?
  - Modern world overwhelm and disconnectedness, nature connects us to ourselves
  - The ethics of climate change, grief and anxiety
  - Doing outdoor therapy as a client, retreats, experientials
  - Getting to know your land and its' histories, what land is accessible to whom, environmental racism, strengths of the land
  - Pouring from a fuller cup
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# The Map: Written Consent

- For a copy of my consent please e-mail [ivyrisso@gmail.com](mailto:ivyrisso@gmail.com)
  - I can also be contacted at 505-414-9377
  - Thank you!!!! I hope that all of you get to spend some time in nature this weekend.
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