Photographs contain meanings beyond their visual contents, in ways that words alone cannot express. They hold stories and reasons for being taken, posed for, kept, remembered, or mourned if lost. The memories and emotions that photographs unconsciously trigger can be useful in helping individuals explore various aspects of themselves and their lives.

Based on this, PhotoTherapy, Therapeutic Photography and Photo-Art-Therapy techniques have long been used all over the world. With the growth of the internet, practitioners and educators in these fields are increasingly becoming aware of each other's existence. This article is a brief review of some of the work taking place in various countries.

The PhotoTherapy Centre
Founded in 1982 by Judy Weiser, the PhotoTherapy Centre in Vancouver, Canada serves as the worldwide resource base for PhotoTherapy and related fields, such as Photo-Art-Therapy, Therapeutic Photography, VideoTherapy, and Therapeutic Videography (Film-making).

The Centre's library holds hundreds of articles, books, theses, dissertations, photo or video based creations made by clients or trainees (with consent to show for educational purposes), as well as videos used in training or educational workshops. Also available are original photographs taken by or of the early pioneers of PhotoTherapy, many of whom were also professional photographers. The Library also holds all past issues of the PhotoTherapy Journal, which is no longer published, but is still available for reading or purchase.

The Centre also maintains a comprehensive website: PhotoTherapy Techniques in Counseling and Therapy containing several informative pages, including "Who is Doing What, Where", allowing anyone working in these fields to share with others a short paragraph about themselves, along with their contact information. Currently, this page includes numerous listings describing the work and interests of individual practitioners all over the world.

Definitions and practices in various countries
Hundreds of practitioners internationally are using PhotoTherapy, Photo-Art-Therapy and Therapeutic Photography techniques with a wide range of populations. During the past decade, several organizations and individuals have been practicing, educating about and networking in these fields. Examples include England's PhotoTherapy and Psychological Aesthetics of Photographs, Russia's PSYphoto, Finland's Finnish PhotoTherapy Association, Mexico's ILPFOT (Latin American Institute for Psychology and Photography) and Israel's Photo Therapy Institute. Interestingly, only two of the above are run by art therapists.

The above definitions of PhotoTherapy, Therapeutic Photography and Photo-Art-Therapy provided through the links above, were established nearly forty years ago jointly in the U.S. and Canada (Weiser, 1999).

Notwithstanding, when examining practices worldwide, it becomes evident that these terms are not always defined the same way in other countries. For example, in Korea, most of what is considered art therapy (which includes photographic work) is actually activity-based therapeutic art. In Japan, the PhotoTherapy Association discusses photos and their effects, but no therapists were on their organizing committee. In Latvia, art therapy is a formal field following the British art psychotherapy model, while in Russia, art therapy is not a licensed profession. There, various models are taught to a range of mental health and other professionals who then incorporate these skills into their practices. Only recently were PhotoTherapy, Photo-Art-Therapy and Therapeutic Photography techniques begun to be taught there.

In England, while many psychologists and similar professionals are using PhotoTherapy techniques and numerous licensed art psychotherapists are using Photo-Art-Therapy techniques, there is nevertheless a branch of Therapeutic Photography practitioners who insist on calling their work "PhotoTherapy," even though none are trained therapists and their practices are solely photographic.
Similar patterns appear in Israel, where some PhotoTherapy is done by licensed psychologists and other professionals, but most formal PhotoTherapy teaching is subsumed under Expressive Arts Therapies Programs. Thus the techniques are sometimes also used by, and taught to, non-therapists. For example the PhotoTherapy Institute in Jerusalem takes students with backgrounds in fields other than therapy, such as photographers.

In Finland, Italy, and several other EU countries, it is common for the designation “PhotoTherapy” to describe a wide range of both therapeutic and photographic techniques, which are practiced by therapists but also non-therapists as well. Some licensed therapists and psychotherapists are using PhotoTherapy techniques, however, these professionals often teach non-therapists and make no mention of Therapeutic Photography to distinguish the difference between the two practices. In most other EU countries, various photo-based healing activities/practices are gathered under the generalized term PhotoTherapy, even when no therapists are involved in activating the processes.

As most art therapists know, the definition of art therapy differs widely across different countries and sometimes even within them. Similarly, such differences in how PhotoTherapy is defined are not inherently wrong or bad just because they are different. There are simply a variety of educational standards and licensing requirements throughout the world, and these produce a range of different ways to view the same thing.

In my opinion, PhotoTherapy (with Photo-ArtTherapy as a sub-category) and Therapeutic Photography are best viewed as two ends of a single continuum, along which any kind of photo-based exploratory practice can be located: PhotoTherapy (i.e., photography-during-therapy) at one end, and Therapeutic Photography (i.e., photography-as-therapy) at the other.

In considering the above practices of using personal photographs to assist healing, it is important to recognize that most of this also applies to moving pictures because all films and videos are based on photographic imagery. Therefore most of the theory underpinning these practices is similar—and thus a wide variety of VideoTherapy and Therapeutic Videography practices can be found all over the world; most notably in Italy, along with some interesting individual practices in the USA and Canada.

**Conclusion**

Lastly, I want to acknowledge that I have only begun to learn about photo-based therapy and healing practices in countries outside North America during the past decade, and therefore I would be delighted to learn new information (or receive corrections) about how photo-based therapy and healing practices are performed throughout the world—so please contact me if you have updates to share.

**References**


**Judy Weiser, R.Psych, A.T.R.** is a psychologist, art therapist, and an early pioneer of PhotoTherapy techniques. Founder and Director of the PhotoTherapy Centre in Vancouver, Canada, and former Editor of the PhotoTherapy Journal, she has given numerous trainings, workshops, lectures, and Keynote/Plenary addresses internationally. In addition to her book, *PhotoTherapy Techniques: Exploring the Secrets of Personal Snapshots and Family Albums*, she is the author of professional articles, book chapters, and produced an educational video. For more information about training and upcoming workshops, [click here](http://example.com).

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Welcome to FUSION Volume 2, Number 3!

In celebration of Art Therapy Without Borders, Inc. joining the FUSION family, this issue highlights international art therapy initiatives and spotlights some of the exciting news, activities, and global work from art therapists worldwide to bring change and transformation to people’s lives and communities everyday.

We hope you enjoy this new issue and as always, feel free to share this issue of FUSION with your colleagues, students, classmates, and others who are interested in the world of art therapy and can benefit from receiving this free resource!

Be well,

Gretchen Miller, MA, ATR-BC
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