



## Drawing on hope: A virtual reality project workshop

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*I find myself sitting in a cave, a scary, unknown place.  
There is no light down here, nothing to comfort me...  
There are terrifying sounds, creeping into my essence...  
There are foul smells, taking my breath away...  
I find myself curling up on the floor, protecting my head, my heart, my soul...  
Please, let it be over already...  
This is too hard...  
My curled-up self, this tight ball...  
Tears running down her face...  
Breathing breathless breaths...  
She needs something... She needs light... She needs...  
A fluttery susurrus in the air...  
She can't see... Can't feel... Can only sense its presence...  
Curled-up self holds her breath...  
Susurrus flutters...  
Next to her...  
There is a sweet promise...  
An orange-blossom scent in the air...  
Curled-up self looks up, cautiously...  
Maybe...  
Maybe there is hope after all...*

### Abstract

'Drawing on hope: A virtual reality project' was a conference presentation with two main intents: to discuss the role of hope and the dialectic between hope and despair, and to introduce the participatory virtual reality artwork shown in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Germany. This report traces the main concepts and ideas presented to the audience at the 2017 ANZATA conference in Melbourne.

### Keywords

Participatory artwork, art as therapy, trauma, virtual reality, hope, role of therapist, narrative therapy.

Clients seek therapeutic support when they find themselves in situations of uncertainty and/or adversity. Connecting with hope assists the process of healing; without sufficient hope, a person's recovery is delayed or even blocked (Larsen, Edey, & Lemay, 2007). It is crucial that not only the client, but first and foremost the therapist, believes in hope and possible change, so that clients might in turn believe in a better future (Larsen, Edey, & Lemay, 2007).

Hope has been studied and researched for some time. Hope can heal the brain (Counts, Gillam, Perico, & Eggers, 2017) and can help people "to construe benefits from adversity: [a] hopeful view of the future may well stem from a positive

interpretation of the present" (Affleck & Tennen, 1996, p.908). Merolla (2014) further explains how hope is consequential in nature, in that it "not only shapes people's likelihood of personal achievement, but it also factors into their physical and mental health" (p.366).

Snyder (Snyder et al., 1991) developed a model focusing not just purely on hope, but also on goals, pathways and agency. He divided the process into these three components (Counts, Gillam, Perico, & Eggers, 2017; Geiger & Kwon, 2010): goals, the meaningful targets that clients desire to accomplish via a variety of pathways (plans, adjusted for obstacles) and agency, the willpower needed when pursuing stated goals (which, in turn, provides

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