

## **Interview with Paula Petrovic**

### **Author of *Sand Play for the Soul: Awakening the Power of YOU to New Worlds of Possibility***

Reader Views would like to welcome Paula Petrovic, author of “Sand Play for the Soul: Awakening the Power of YOU to New Worlds of Possibility.” Paula is the Creator and Founder of a SandWorks®: Powerful Tools for Creative Solutions, the basis for which her book was written.

**Juanita:** Thanks for talking with us today Paula. Would you first, tell us what Sand Play is and how it was created?

**Paula:** Most of us, at some point in our lives, have played in the sand... some of us still do! It's a form of human expression that dates back thousands of years. As a therapeutic medium, Sand Play is a means in which you are given opportunity to graphically tell your story in a tray filled with sand. You select items which are symbolically important to you, either consciously or subconsciously, place them in the sand tray, and a scene is created- allowing you to express your thoughts and feelings in concrete form. This modality originated with Margaret Lowenfeld, a British Physician, who in the 1920's discovered that children who played with sticks and stones in the sand were able to recover more easily from the traumas of war those than those who did not. Over the decades it evolved into an accepted form of therapy which is now used world-wide.

“Sand Play for the Soul” takes Sand Play to another level of expression. It provides an opportunity for a person to dialogue with an innate resource of infinite intelligence and awareness in a three dimensional form. In my book I refer to this resource as “the knowing place of the Soul.” Back in 1991, I had been working in the human services field for 14 years, in a variety of counseling, educational and consulting capacities, and was ready to expand my personal and professional horizons. In a surprising series of synchronistic events a book about Sand Play came into my possession. After reading the introduction, I was fascinated and decided to explore how to use this therapeutic tool in my private practice. What unfolded in the months to follow, and the powerful, transforming affects it had on my clients, resulted in my embarking an “inner adventure of a life time.” I fell in love with Sand play. By another set of curious events this great adventure was birthed into a book.

**Juanita:** How long have you been facilitating Sand Play sessions?

**Paula:** I have been facilitating Sand Play sessions for fifteen years and still counting, and have had the great fortune to facilitate thousands of people of many ages, from many life backgrounds.

**Juanita:** How does this mode of play, specifically “Sand Play for the Soul”, actually transform a person, and awaken them to new possibilities? What is the personal transformative process?

**Paula:** “Sand Play for the Soul” provides you the opportunity to go on a fun-filled, action packed, soul inspired adventure with a companion of infinite resource and intelligence - one who does not judge, lie or manipulate you. Instead you are supported and guided by a “presence of deep inner knowing” that tells you the truth: Who you really are in the larger scope of your life. This companion is the Soul, an energy force within that knows what needs to be done even when you do not. Communicating with your soul in three-dimensional form in the sand tray allows you the opportunity to dialogue directly with your “knowing place”. I speak at length about this in my book.

By the very nature of being human, we are faced with many life challenges of endless variety. What would it be like to receive pivotal, life-transforming information with great ease, depth and accuracy in a simple and playful manner? Having fun creating a sand tray and receiving vital, meaningful information in this way would sure make serious issues that need to be addressed and resolved in our lives a lot easier to digest.

To discover creative solutions to core problem that hold us back from accomplishing our goals with such unwavering clarity and resolve, and have fun doing it... what is that worth? When we know the full story, and have the means to access ALL our inner resources, doors to “new worlds of possibility” fly open. There are numerous real-life stories in the book of people who discover just how transforming it is when they dialogue with their souls through their Sand Play creations. (My personal story is also included.) The really great part about Sand Play is that dialoguing with the Soul in three-dimensional form can take place on many levels in different forms. It can be accommodated to compliment your life-style and needs. This is also covered in the book.

**Juanita:** What type of benefits can one achieve from the type of Sand Play you do?

**Paula:** When a person dialogues with their soul, the benefits are limitless because he or she is accessing a resource of infinite knowledge and wisdom. It’s during those moments of exchange- all becomes possible.

No matter who you are, where you are, or what is happening on your life’s journey, anyone who is willing to explore and open channels of communication with their Souls can so do. If the Soul guides “new worlds of possibility” open in ways beyond imagined possibility. Sand Play is one way to communicate directly with our souls. It empowers our human selves to understand and resolve what is going on within us at a core level. When you do a Sand Play creation, and experience the facilitation process, it is the knowing YOU dialoguing with your outer self- what you most need to realize and know about your life at this time.

I can not explain how or why, but when a person journeys through their tray scene, with the assistance of the facilitation process, it symbolically comes to life. Magic happens! A voice inside

you awakens and it feels deep and eternal. You discover, “Never before have I seen things so clear and felt so connected to something so alive and aware.” The verbal, visual and sensory experiences taking place allow you to view your world from a whole new perspective. Suddenly what made no sense and seemed impossible to resolve is not so confusing or difficult. You say, with a big smile on your face, “I would never have believed myself so capable and able to resolve my problems so quickly and easily had I not experienced this for myself.”

**Juanita:** What can readers expect from reading your book “Sand Play for the Soul: Awakening the Power of YOU to New Worlds of Possibility”?

**Paula:** You are invited to unlock the mystery behind one of life’s greatest hidden treasures; a “knowing place” within so capable and full of delightful surprise, it makes you feel that “all is possible”. With just the willingness to open yourself to the possibility that there is more to you than you may realize, and the desire to tap into the expanded version of you, an adventure of a lifetime unfolds. Through the wisdoms shared and the real-life stories told, you enter a world where the power of discovery through the wisdom of the Soul takes you on a journey of possibilities and transformation beyond what is thought possible.

You learn how a simple and ancient form of play can awaken an innate knowing in you so empowering and so powerful that no life challenge or obstacle is insurmountable. You will meet people of many ages, from many walks of life, embark on journey of remarkable courage, and transform their lives in powerful ways through profound encounters with their soul. When the “knowing place of the Soul” speaks, and you listen, nothing can hold you back from success. This book confirms this through the unforgettable stories. (My story is also included.) It was my soul, not me per say, who wrote this book. My soul guided and I listened, and to this day I am totally amazed I wrote it. “When my soul and I are in league as one, all becomes possible.”

**Juanita:** Is it possible for deep emotional wounds, and traumatic issues to be relieved through Sand Play? What types of situations bring people to Sand Play?

**Paula:** I will tell you a few stories of clients’ whom I facilitated, and let you decide.

One of the first clients to walk through my studio door was a 5 year old boy who for the first 4 years of his life could not sleep through the night because of horrific nightmares. After one Sand Play session his mother said her son had a sound sleep for the first time in 4 years. Another client from my early days was a physician who had a brain tumor. He dialogued with his tumor symbolically through his tray scene and discovered what he needed to know to recover. Shortly after his cancer became dormant and 14 years later he continues to live a full and healthy life. Another woman, who smoked 3 packs of cigarettes a day, discovered the real reason behind her smoking habit and stopped smoking as a result.

From corporate executives, to teachers, mothers and their children, professionals and layman with all type of life issues and challenges, have come to do Sand Play. After the first few months of witnessing clients’ remarkable breakthroughs, I totally fell in love with Sand Play. 15 years and

thousands of Sand Play sessions later I am more in love than ever. I am still in awe of what unfolds for people when they do Sand Play.

**Juanita:** Can someone read your book “Sand Play for the Soul” and do their own Sand Play?

**Paula:** For themselves, absolutely! The sole purpose of the book is to encourage people to open communications with the “knowing place of their soul.” In the last section, I walk you through the journey, step-by step, so you too can experience a version of this insightful, playful process in the comfort of your own home. Logistics, facilitating your own Sand Play journey, what to do with what unfolds, and how to incorporate it into your daily life, is presented in a simple and practical manner. Safe guards are also in place.

\* For people with serious psychological, physical problems, I recommend they seek out skilled, professional help. Doing Sand Play for yourself, as discussed in this book, is intended only to assist you to go on a fun, insightful, uplifting journey of self-discovery and realization.

**Juanita:** Would you tell us more about the symbolic power behind the figurines used in the sand tray and their role in the Sand Play? Do readers create their own figures?

**Paula:** The collection miniatures used come in many shapes and sizes and are reflective of the spiritual and symbolic, to the everyday realms of the human, animal and earth kingdoms. These are actual figures people select from my shelves to create their sand tray scene. These reflections of our diverse physical world (i.e. people, buildings, household items, transport vehicles, animals, plants, rocks, mythical, spiritual or religious items, cartoon figures, the list goes on...) are there for you to create your own scene. (Some figures can be hand made by the participant but most figures are already available for use.) How and what you select and place in the tray is at your sole discretion. You are the master creator and the world is yours to form into being. It is through the facilitation process your story comes to life through the “eyes of your soul.” How to find your own collection and sand tray, than create a scene is covered in the “How to do Sand Play” section of the book. It is a simple and fun process to do, and can be done in a variety of ways –complimentary to your life needs- with or without me being present in person. I am, however, very present throughout the book.

**Juanita:** How about people reading your book at home, creating their own Sand Play without you facilitating. Do they create their own miniatures?

**Paula:** They can create a miniature collection of their own quite easily... and even make some of the pieces themselves, if so inclined. In your house you may discover treasures of every variety that can be used to start this collection. It is preferable they are less than 12” in length. (Most of my miniatures are 6” or less in size.) You may find items buried in boxes, dresser drawers, or closets. There may be goodies on your shelves, counter tops, tables, under the bed, or in an old toy box from your childhood or your children’s. Miniatures from your collection should reflect everything and anything representative of the world in which you live, significant to you. The really special treasures can be hand made gifts or presents gifted to you by loved ones, or something you make yourself. Details on how to start your collection and where to go from there i.e. creating your scene, the self-facilitation process, and incorporating your discoveries in daily life are all covered in detail in the book. Creating a Sacred Alter, in the section: Alternative Approaches to Doing Sand Play, can

be equally powerful and may be even more to your liking. There are many ways to dialogue with one's soul in three-dimensional form.

**Juanita:** Is there significance to using sand?

**Paula:** Yes. It represents the solid earth which allows a person to express their higher knowing in concrete form. Our minds can more easily comprehend the abstract through three-dimensional form. After all we live in a three dimensional world and sand makes up a large part of the earth. In the sand tray, normally the base is painted blue to represent water and sky- two other key elements that also make up a large part of the earth. In essence you are literally creating your scene in a mini-world.

**Juanita:** Do you feel the type Sand Play you do is more effective than other therapeutic modalities?

**Paula:** The approaches I use in my private practice and counseling work, especially Sand Play, is not better than other therapeutic modalities -they are simply different.

**Juanita:** What are some of the most common limiting beliefs that people uncover for themselves through the Sand Play?

**Paula:** That's a great question and not a simple one to answer. Perhaps the most common limiting belief uncovered is "that what we thought was going on, in fact is not." In many instances, the truth is, we only know the partial story. If we knew the whole story, not the partial version (which too often is driven by fear, doubt, and lack of information), life would be experienced very differently. Much in our lives and belief systems can cause unnecessary pain, suffering and stress. Too often we are unable to successfully address the pain due to a lack of information about its true origin. What would happen if we knew a more complete version powered by a source of unwavering clarity and integrity: A "knowing" that truly knew who we are and how capable we are of creating the life we are intended to live... the happy story, full of possibility and love?

You'd be amazed how a few miniatures placed in a tray filled with sand could reveal so much... what is possible once we have the information needed to create our desired reality. Feeling that we are not good enough or worthy enough, and that some one else knows better than us is a limiting belief often exposed through Sand Play. People are frequently surprised when they discover that what they thought was going on is not what was going on. When they do realize what has really occurred, they find themselves able to shift their lives in a whole new and positive direction. The stories in the book show what happens when truth and clarity speaks through Sand Play.

**Juanita:** What are some of your most inspired success stories of client's experiences with Sand Play?

**Paula:** There was a boy who wanted to kill himself and his father with a shot gun. After working through his rage and fear in the sand tray over a period of time, he decided in favor of life, and eventually was even able to develop a relationship with his father.

Another inspired story involved a woman, who was devastated by the sudden death of her son, found herself able to communicate with her deceased son symbolically through her tray scene. The messages she received helped her move through the grieving process into a whole new level of healing. I get “goose bumps” every time I read this story! Then there was a man who had endured horrific childhood abuse and was suffering horrendous nightmares as a result. What normally takes a person several years to come to terms with this type of abuse, only took him 18 months to work through and lay to rest.

To be honest, all the stories in this book have deeply inspired me in some way. It’s as if the sessions happened yesterday. I have had so many incredible stories to choose from over a 15 year period of facilitating Sand Play sessions. It was really hard to decide which one ended up in the book.

**Juanita:** What do you most enjoyed about your work with Sand Play.

**Paula:** Almost every thing! But my greatest joy is witnessing the remarkable breakthroughs my clients have doing Sand Play and the powerful positive affect it has on their view of themselves and their lives. As a result of dialoguing with their souls in the sand tray, even the most heartbroken and devastated, who felt hopeless and lost, have left with smiles of hope on their faces after doing a Sand Play. That always gives me great joy! When the Soul speaks and we listen, doors open! And that always excites me.

**Juanita:** What do you ultimately want people to understand by reading your book “Sand Play for the Soul: Awakening the Power of You to New Worlds of Possibility?”

**Paula:** Whether it is in your home, at work, in the community, or at my studio... there are no limits to the creation and growth you can achieve when you allow yourself to be led by the “knowing place of the Soul”. The Soul works in mysterious ways, especially when it speaks in the sand tray. Regardless of your age, creed or life situation, you can tap into this infinite resource and intelligence through simple, tangible, playful means. You only have to be present and willing to open up to the possibility there is more to you than you may realize. Even if do not choose to do Sand Play, the wisdoms shared and the stories told in this book can inspire you to dialogue with your soul through other means, and still be privy to wondrous worlds of possibility, even midst extraordinary life challenge.

**Juanita:** How did your career and education lead you to the discovery of Sand Play?

**Paula:** When I first began to include Sand Play in my consulting and counseling work, I had already worked in the Human Services field for several years, and had recently completed my master’s degree in psychology. As a facilitator, consultant, educator, child and family counselor, I had used numerous innovative and experiential therapeutic- including creative visualization, voice dialogue, art and drama therapies. This along with my world travels, work in the performing arts, and passion for exploring and playing in inner and outer worlds of life, adding sand tray play to my repertoire of healing tools was an easy leap to make. How I first discovered Sand Play, and the events that lead up to this discovery, took me completely and totally by surprise. A series of

synchronistic yet unexpected events dropped Sand Play into life and had me instantly falling in love with this unique form of communication. To this day, the journey that unfolded defies logical understanding from my ego's point of view, and yet it makes perfect sense from the perspective of my soul. This was no accident, even though I still shake my head in disbelief that something so simple and fun can so profoundly transform people's lives in less than ninety minutes.

**Juanita:** Where do you facilitate individual and group sessions, and how can readers find out more about you and your endeavors?

**Paula:** I mostly work out of my studio in Sedona, AZ and occasionally travel to other places to do talks and workshops. You can go to my website [www.SandWorks.net](http://www.SandWorks.net) or [www.SandPlayfortheSoul.com](http://www.SandPlayfortheSoul.com) to get the inside scoop on me, my work, the book and the variety of services I offer. For those wishing to contact me can do so through my website. An autographed copy of "Sand Play for the Soul" can be ordered through my website, unsigned copies through other bookstore websites i.e. Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc...

**Juanita:** Thanks for taking the time to talk with us today Paula. Congratulations on the release of your new book, "Sand Play for the Soul." Do you have any last thoughts for your readers today?

**Paula:** If you enjoyed reading this interview, you will most certainly enjoy the book. Throughout this interview are excerpts from "Sand Play for the Soul: Awakening the Power of YOU to New Worlds of Possibility". I won't tell you where. The stories of people's remarkable journeys and the discoveries they made could be yours. There are some sessions facilitated years ago that still give me "goose bumps" or bring me to tears. When the Soul works its magic, doors to new worlds of possibility open wide in the most delightful and surprising ways.

I would like to close with a piece of wisdom compliments of the Soul, "Just say yes, I want to know who I am so that I may walk with my head held high, my arms spread in surrender, and my heart wide open to all that is good, loving and wondrous, being human on planet earth. Do you dare chance miss meeting with the creator of great and wonderful worlds?"