

REVIEW:

Cracking Up and Back Again

Book Review Arts in Psychotherapy. 35(2)

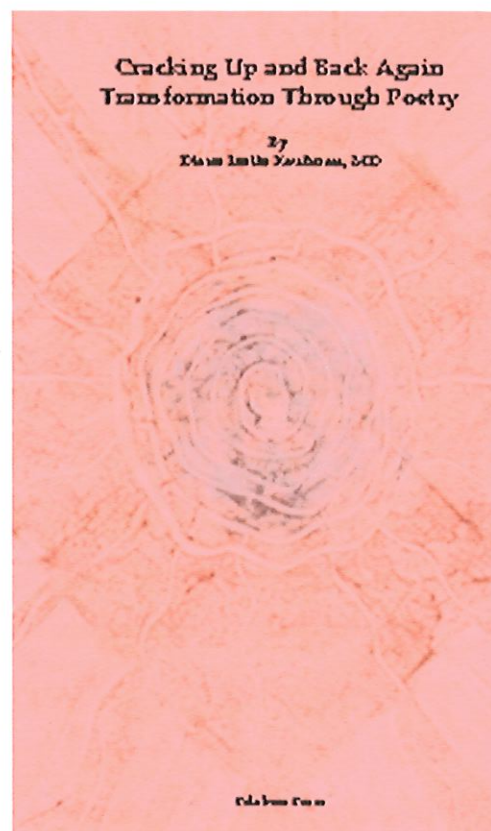
Cracking Up and Back Again: Transformation Through Poetry, written by Diane Leslie Kaufman, MD, is an unusual contribution to the creative arts therapy literature. Dr. Kaufman is a seasoned psychiatrist and professor of psychiatry. She has practiced at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey with children and adults for 21 years. In this volume of 15 poems, Dr. Kaufman writes and shares poems that convey universal themes, themes that she herself obviously resonates with and themes that her clients have related to and will continue to relate to.

Themes presented in the poetry include loss of emotional and mental control, self-loathing, co-dependency, child abuse, concepts regarding love from others as well as love of self, addictive behavior, forgiveness, spiritual rebirth, ambition, self-transformation, and the power of one. Adjacent to each page of written poetry are self-seeking questions written by Dr. Kaufman, questions that illuminate and guide the reader toward self-discovery. Given this format, patients can self-guide or be guided through a curative process.

It is no surprise that this work was originally put together as a workbook for residents of Integrity House, a residential drug treatment program in Newark, NJ. The result of this "workbook" type of presentation is a process designed to bring the humanistic doctor/artist, which Dr. Kaufman is, a step closer to providing healing through poetry.

This type of humanism in psychiatry stands in striking contrast to the more typical psychopharmacological model we are accustomed to lately. Dr. Kaufman writes in her preface, "As a physician and poet, I believe that psychiatry is in danger of limiting understanding of being human to a sum total of chemical parts, when its exclusive focus is on the body. Poetry illuminates the deeper human being."

In effect, Dr. Kaufman has forged a new model of writing poetry, a poetry that works more generously for the reader and serves as a healing tool....the poetry has a universal appeal to different client populations and also, conceivably, could be used in conjunction with music and art therapy for clinical and educational purposes.



As a heartfelt contribution to the world of creative arts therapies, Dr. Kaufman has created a series of poems in a workbook format, which will help stir the hearts and minds of patients and therapists in many worlds.

~ Karen D. Goodman, M.S., R.M.T., L.C.A.T. *Associate Professor and Graduate Coordinator, Music Therapy, Montclair State University*