



Parts, Patterns, & Perspectives

The BioGraffs Method® in Clinical Practice

**A post-workshop guide for therapists,
counselors, and educators**

Welcome Back

Thank you for spending time with us in Parts, Patterns & Perspective. This guide is designed as a gentle refresher and practical companion to the workshop you just completed.

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What BioGraffs Is

BioGraffs is a visual storytelling method that helps people clarify their inner experience and share it meaningfully. By physically arranging colored cubes on a whiteboard, participants externalize complex thoughts, feelings, and patterns—making them easier to process, gain insight, and communicate.

Clients aren't explaining their experience — they're symbolizing it.

What it is:

- A way to slow things down
- A way to see patterns instead of arguing about content
- A way to create a symbolic “third space” that reduces defensiveness
- An exercise that works within your clinical framework

There are two powerful phases to a BioGraffs session:

- **Think-it-out** A time for creation where participants reflect deeply, sort through their internal landscape, and arrange cubes to represent different “parts” of their experience. During this phase, the clinician may simply witness the process (participants often narrate what they're doing as they work) or take a more active role, gently guiding attention, asking clarifying questions, or supporting the process when someone feels stuck.
- **Talk-it-out** A facilitated sharing phase where participants explain what they've made, often gaining new insight simply by articulating it to someone else. This process is especially valuable for couples and groups, where mutual understanding is essential but often difficult to achieve with words alone. By externalizing experience into a shared visual field, the method supports empathy, active listening, and emotional clarity.

Why BioGraffs Works

Embodied Regulation

Working with hands, color, and spatial arrangement engages the body and nervous system, helping clients stay present with emotionally charged material. The tactile, imaginal process supports containment, reduces overwhelm, and allows difficult material to be approached with greater safety and curiosity.

Makes the Unconscious Visible Through Metaphor

Human experience is organized through metaphor long before it is organized through words. We understand feelings, relationships, and inner conflict spatially—as closeness or distance, balance or tension, movement or blockage. BioGraffs draws on this natural capacity by using spatial metaphor to give form to inner experience. As clients arrange objects in space, pre-verbal and unconscious material becomes visible: inner parts, emotional patterns, and complexes take shape as relationships rather than abstractions. What was previously felt but unnamed can now be seen, reflected on, and worked with directly.

Holds Polarities Without Forcing Resolution

BioGraffs makes it possible to hold opposing inner positions—desire and fear, closeness and distance, longing and protection — side by side without forcing resolution. This both/and stance reflects Jung's view of individuation as the integration of opposites rather than the elimination of tension.

Creates a Third Space

By placing the image between client and therapist (or between partners), BioGraffs shifts the focus from argument, explanation, or self-defense to shared observation. This symbolic container supports reflection rather than enactment.

Enhances Relational Insight and Empathy

When used with couples or in comparison formats, BioGraffs makes differing inner realities immediately visible. Seeing rather than debating perspectives supports empathy, softens projection, and helps clients recognize that conflict often arises from different symbolic worlds rather than ill intent.

Invites Meaning-Making Rather Than Premature Problem-Solving

Instead of rushing toward cognitive insight or behavioral solutions, BioGraffs invites clients into dialogue with their own images. This allows symbols to unfold their meaning over time, fostering depth, reflection, and lasting psychological change.

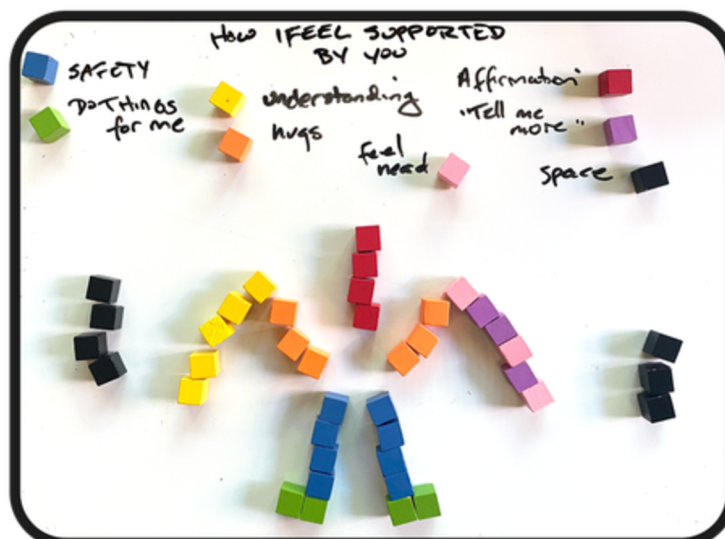
When to Use BioGraffs

BioGraffs is especially useful when a therapeutic process feels stuck, repetitive, or overly verbal. When insight isn't translating into movement, or when words themselves seem to be part of the problem.

You might consider introducing BioGraffs when:

- **Sessions keep circling the same material.** A client or couple can describe the issue clearly, but each session feels like a replay rather than a progression.
- **Language is reinforcing defenses.** Conversations become debates, explanations, or carefully managed narratives rather than lived experience.
- **Emotion is present but hard to access.** Clients say what they think or believe, but have trouble contacting what they feel.
- **Couples get polarized quickly.** One partner talks, the other reacts; meaning collapses into blame, withdrawal, or escalation.
- **Insight isn't integrating.** Clients understand their patterns cognitively, but those patterns remain unchanged in real life.
- **You sense there's something "there," but not yet visible.** Parts, contradictions, desires, fears, or meanings feel implicit rather than explicit.

In these moments, BioGraffs offers a way to change the channel—to move out of linear conversation and into a slower, embodied, imaginal mode of working.



Time Frame for the Exercise

Because creating and talking about a BioGraff typically takes most or all of a 40–50 minute session, it's best to decide before a session that you want to try this with a client. You choose a prompt based on what you already know about the client or couple and intentionally shape the session around the exercise.

Making the Invitation

The invitation matters. It works best when it's simple, transparent, and low-pressure — framed as an experiment rather than a solution.

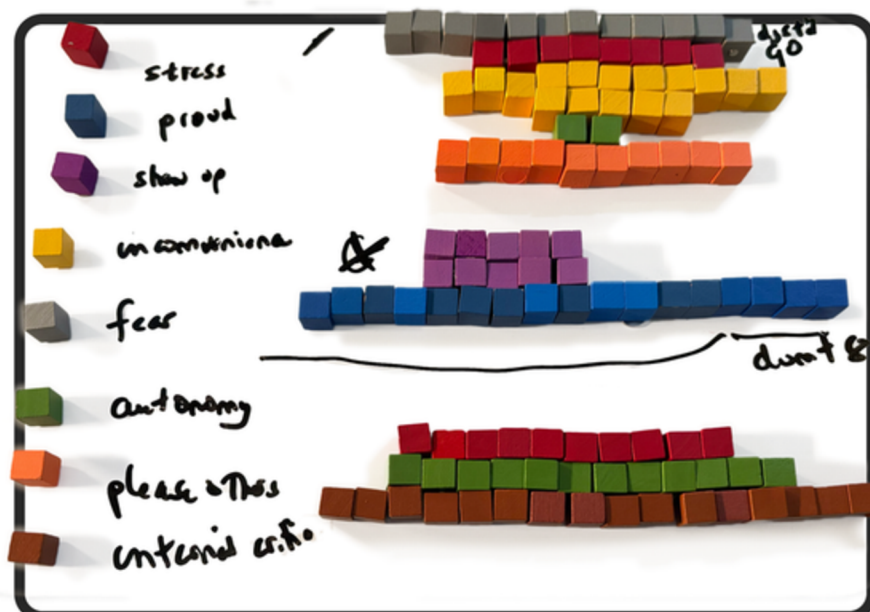
Here's a sample script clinicians often find useful:

I'm noticing that we've been talking about this for a while, and I'm wondering if it might be helpful to try something a little different this session.

I have an exercise that's less word-based and more visual and hands-on. It can help people see what's going on in a new way, rather than just talking about it.

Would you be open to trying that together?"

You're not asking clients to abandon language, just to temporarily set it aside so something else can emerge. For many people, that shift alone brings relief, curiosity, and a renewed sense of engagement.



The Core BioGraffs Process

The 'Think-it-out' Phase

Step 1: The Prompt

The prompt focuses the work. Good prompts are specific enough to ground the exercise and open enough to allow surprise.

Prompts usually arise naturally from the clinical material already present and what you want your client to see more clearly, or slow down and experience fully.

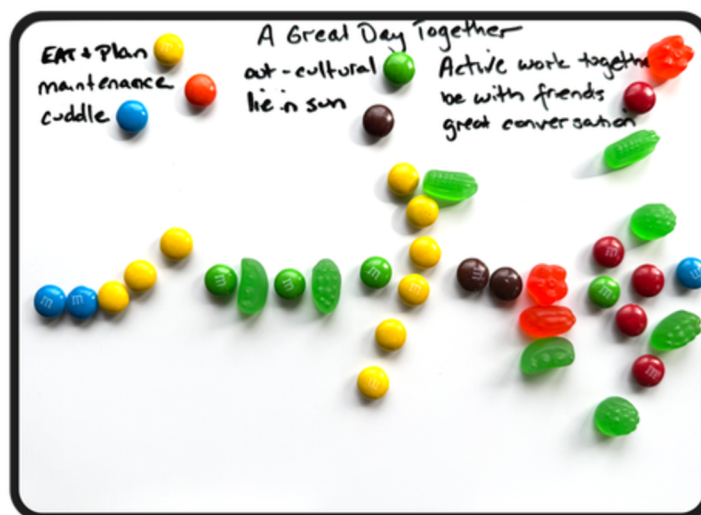
The Three Primary Forms

There are three primary forms people tend to use when creating a BioGraff. These aren't rules or techniques, but **natural visual storytelling patterns** that consistently emerge when people represent experience spatially.

In the following pages of prompt examples, each prompt is paired with one of these BioGraff forms.

Clients don't need to know anything about these forms. They are simply a **clinical lens** for you. Holding them in mind when you craft a prompt helps you shape *how* an experience is externalized. The way a prompt is phrased naturally invites a particular kind of visual story, and each form offers distinct therapeutic value—revealing different aspects of meaning, pattern, and relationship.

The three basic forms of BioGraffs are Timeline, Mosaic, and Comparisons



Timeline-type BioGraff

Timeline Type BioGraffs

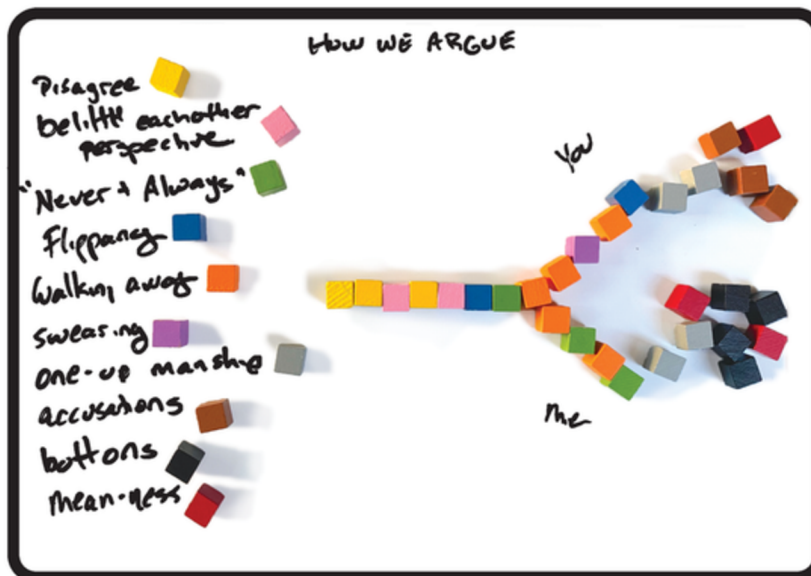
For events that happened, typically happen, or might happen. These are the most 'story-like' of the BioGraffs types. They tend to be read, like a story, from left to right. Something happens first, represented by one object color, then something else happens, represented by another object color. One element leads to another, making sequence, causality, and escalation visible.

Timeline-type BioGraffs are for:

- Narratives about events or recurring patterns
- Typical relational or emotional cycles
- Trauma, triggers, and aftermath
- Anticipated or feared scenarios

Example Prompts:

- *A conflict that happened with my partner*
- *A day in the life of my depression*
- *What happens when my anxiety is triggered*



Timeline of a Typical Argument

Mosaic Type BioGraffs

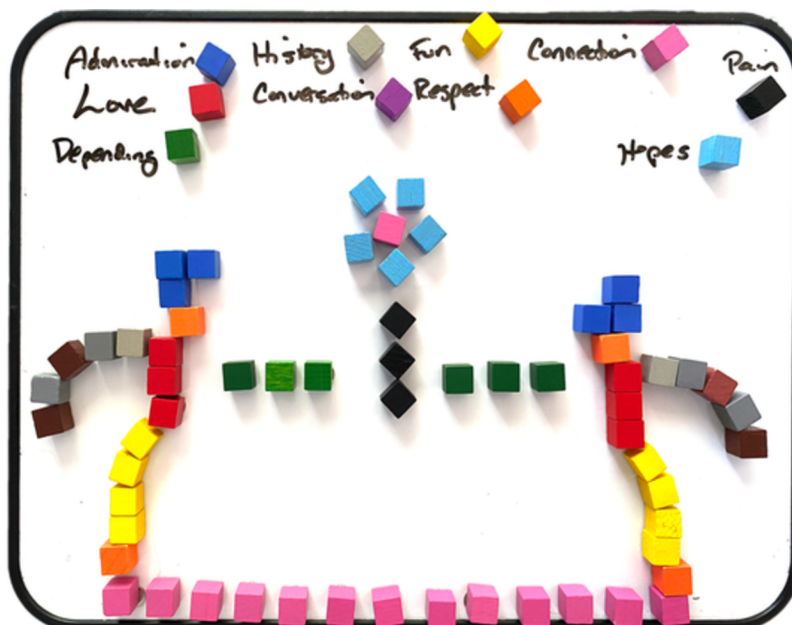
For experiences that are not sequential. Mosaics represent multiple elements of experience that exist at the same time. Instead of a beginning, middle, and end, the BioGraff shows a field of parts, feelings, beliefs, roles, or influences coexisting side by side. They can often values (or anti-values) and how they relate to each other.

Especially useful for:

- Complex internal states
- Parts work and internal conflicts
- Identity, self-concept, or role strain

Example Prompts:

- *What's inside me when I'm overwhelmed*
- *What I Want from my Sexuality*
- *What intimacy a Good Relationship Feels Like*



Mosaic of a Rupture in a Friendship

Comparison Type BioGraffs

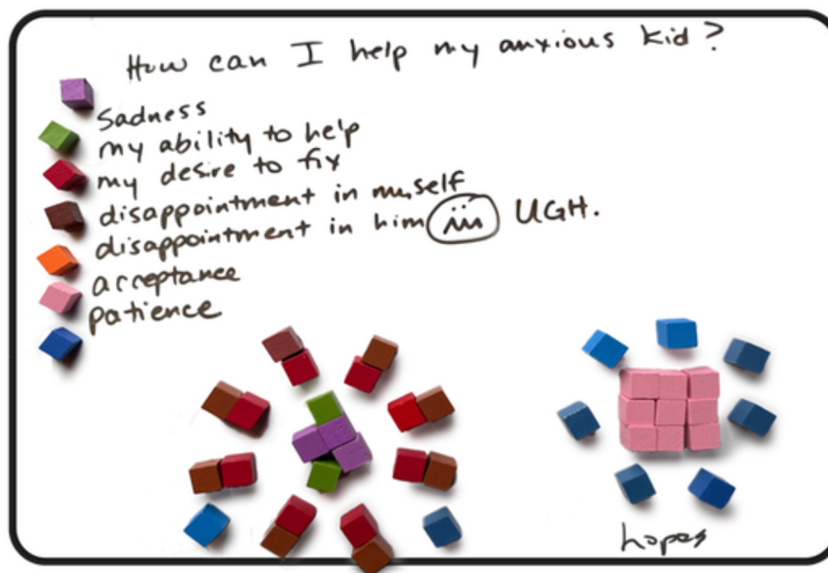
For experiences that involve contrast, tension, or polarity. Comparison BioGraffs place two or more Timelines or Mosaics in relation to one another. These might represent different people, different states, or different versions of the self. They are often values based, as if to show “here are how my values manifest in this situation versus this other situation, or now versus the future. Meaning emerges not just from each arrangement, but from differences between the two clusters.

Especially useful for:

- Ambivalence and inner conflict
- Desire vs. fear, hope vs. expectation
- Past, present, and imagined futures

Example Prompts:

- *How I experience this conflict vs. how my partner does*
- *Me when I'm regulated vs me when I'm triggered*
- *What I Have vs What I Want*



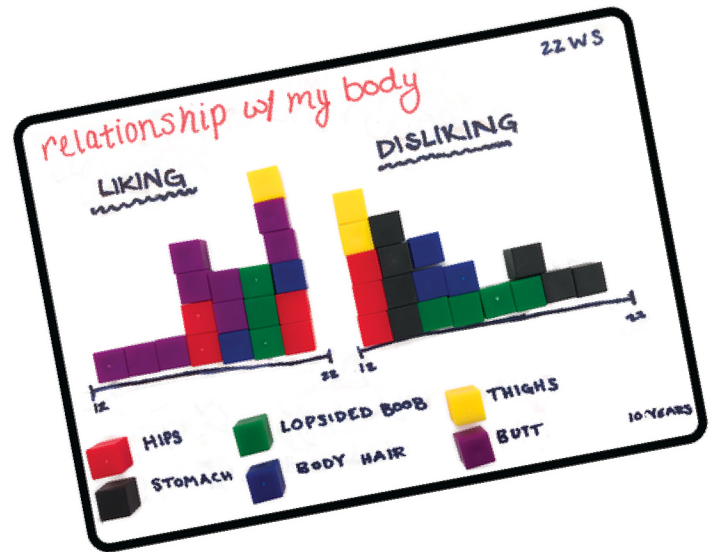
Comparison of a Family
Relationship: Present and Hopes

PROMPT IDEAS

Writing a BioGraffs prompt takes a bit of getting used to. Here are some examples. You can also check out some ideas for prompts on the BioGraffs website, www.biograffs.com/titles

Identity and Self

- MOSAIC: What's in My Head
- MOSAIC: Who I Am
- TIMELINE: A Really Good Day
- COMPARISON: My Strengths now vs Future
- TIMELINE: Me in a Social Situation
- LIFELINE: The Course of My Life From this Perspective
- MOSAIC: Who I Was in My Family of Origin
- MOSAIC: How I Feel Safe/Loved/Valued
- COMPARISON: What I Have vs What I Want
- MOSAIC: A Guide For Being With Me



Depression & Anxiety

- MOSAIC: How Depression Feels
- TIMELINE: When My Anxiety is Triggered, what happens
- LIFELINE: My Cycle of Depression Over Time
- TIMELINE: A Day in the Life of Depressed Me
- MOSAIC: Who I Would Be Without Depression/Anxiety/Other Mental Health Challenge
- MOSAIC: What I Wish My Loved One/s Understood
- COMPARISON: Me Depressed vs Me Manic

Career & Goals

- TIMELINE: A Day in the Life of My Perfect Job
- COMPARISON: My Job vs My Dream Job
- COMPARISON: Who I Am vs Who I Want To Be
- MOSAIC: What Do I Get From My Job
- TIMELINE: Something I Wish I Handled Better

Trauma and Negative Experience

- TIMELINE: Something bad happened
- TIMELINE: An Alternate Scenario
- MOSAIC: Who I Would Be Without Trauma
- TIMELINE: When I Get Triggered
- COMPARISON: Me Inside vs Outside

Grief

- MOSAIC: What I Miss
- TIMELINE: What Happened
- TIMELINE: A Great Memory
- MOSAIC: The Conflict of My Feelings
- LIFELINE: How My Grief Has Changed

Sexuality

- TIMELINE: A Perfect Intimate Experience
- LIFELINE: My Changing Sex Life
- MOSAIC: What I Want From My Sexuality
- MOSAIC: My Breaks and Accelerators
- TIMELINE: What I Think My Partner Wants
- TIMELINE: When Sex Isn't Good

Step 2: The Legend

The next step for your participants is to think of things that are connected to the prompt — what are the parts of the story? Each part will get a different color to represent it. The legend answers the question: *What are the parts of this story?* Each color represents one element — a feeling, belief, thought, emotion, action, fear, desire, or relational dynamic. A situation. Things people say. Abstractions.

Encourage them to use just a few words for each item: enough to recognize what it represents, but not to fully explain it yet. The meaning can unfold later, once the BioGraff is complete.

You might say to the client: ***“When you think about the prompt, what comes to mind? What would you need in order to tell this story?”***

Invite them to write their words across the top or along the side of the page, placing one color or type of object next to each label. Avoid suggesting elements unless they feel stuck. Give them time to think before jumping in. If support is needed, gentle, open questions can help orient the process: “What happens first?” “What feels most important here?” or “Is there anything else that needs to be included?”

Step 3: Building the BioGraff

Once the legend is in place, invite the client (or couple) to begin building the BioGraff itself. This is a period of quiet, hands-on exploration, where meaning emerges through placement, color, and spatial relationship rather than explanation.

You might introduce this step by saying: ***“Using the colors you’ve chosen, start arranging the cubes in a way that shows how these elements actually live in relation to each other. You can add more cubes to show proportion, intensity, or importance.”***

Let the arrangement do the talking. You don’t need to explain it yet.”

In individual work, clients often narrate what they’re doing as they build—naming decisions, noticing surprises, or adjusting placements as new realizations arise. This spontaneous narration can be informative, but it’s not required. Your role is to witness the process and allow it to unfold, stepping in only if the client feels unsure or stuck.

Building the BioGraff continued

In couples or group work, participants typically build separately and in parallel, working from the same prompt. This preserves individual perspective and prevents early negotiation or explanation. Each person is creating their visual story, not a shared one—at least not yet.

Encourage clients to use **multiple cubes** for elements that contain more time, or are heavier or more intense. Quantity, clustering, distance, and overlap all carry meaning. As the BioGraff takes shape, relationships between elements often become visible in ways that weren't apparent in words: what dominates, what's marginalized, what's protected, what's in conflict, often revealing patterns, tensions, and priorities that the client couldn't have planned in advance.

Inquiry The 'Talk-it-out' Phase

From the moment the exercise is introduced to the completion of the BioGraff, **15–20 minutes** typically elapse. The remainder of the session is devoted to inquiry, reflection, insight and understanding.

Begin by inviting the client to describe what they've made in their own words. Keep the entry point simple and open.

You might say simply ***"Tell me about what you've created."***

If the BioGraff is a **Timeline**, this often unfolds like reading a story—what happens first, what follows, where things intensify or break down. For **Mosaics** or **Comparisons**, clients tend to describe elements in relation to one another, explaining why certain objects are grouped or separated, numerous or few, or why they made a particular part represent the arms of their figure.

Your primary role here is **attentive noticing rather than interpretation**. Listen for what the client already knows and what seems to surprise them as they speak. Areas to stay curious about include:

- What more could be said about the legend items?
- What draws your attention in the arrangement?
- What does **quantity** suggest about importance, intensity, or emotional weight?
- What visual metaphors do you notice? The next page goes into this in more depth.

Seeing Meaning in Metaphor

Simple patterns of objects can tell complex stories. We use and understand these metaphors because they mirror how we experience the world. Think about all the ways happy is 'up' and sad is 'down.' People instinctively do that in a BioGraffs too. Here are some of the common spatial metaphors used in the BioGraffs people create. You might find yourself using them too, or come up with your own metaphors.



Protecting, hiding, oppression, flower, things at the core



Bridges connect things to other things



Houses are common. Roofs protect? Walls contain? What's in the house? What's outside? Basements



Walls blocking things from other things, separation



Body parts can be metaphors for attributes or emotions. Like arms hold things, legs are supportive. Where is the body?

More Visual Metaphors

A cube alone on the edge of the board	isolation, loneliness, hiding
Winding path of cubes	aimlessness, adventure, leading somewhere, rollercoaster
Scattered cubes	Chaos, creativity, expansion, confusion
Vertical wall of objects	Blocking, separating, dividing, oppression
Pyramid or orderly stack	Hierarchy, top is important, bottom is supportive
Pile of cubes	Things are buried, confusion, overwhelming quantity
Arching bridge between two cubes	A thing that connects, separation and connection
Vertically stacked cubes	Things go together, one thing supports another
Table shape	Supportive, displaying, bringing together as for a meal
Person or animal shape	What does the head represent? The heart?
Two colors together	Linked things, dependent things
Cubes along the bottom	Sad, depressed, lost, alone, hidden
Cubes above other cubes	Happiness, drifting, detached, expansive, out of reach
Cubes tilted next to straight cubes	Off balance, falling, creative, unusual, twisted, excited
Time moves left to right	Things on left are first, or in the past

Spatial Metaphor Practice



What do you notice?

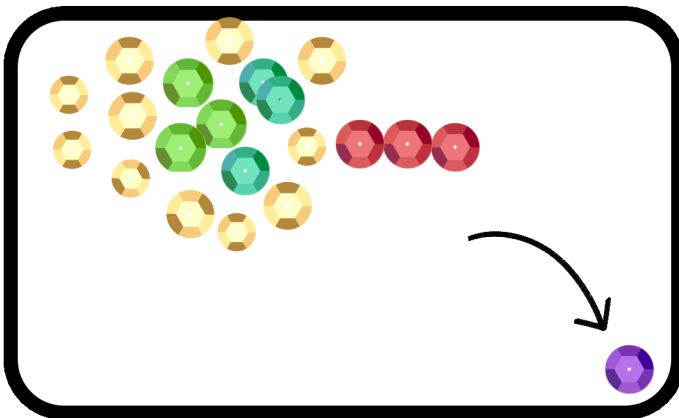
What might it mean that the orange objects are at the bottom?

What does the arch say about the green objects?

Why might some objects be floating at random and others are more regimented?

What does the purple object say to you?

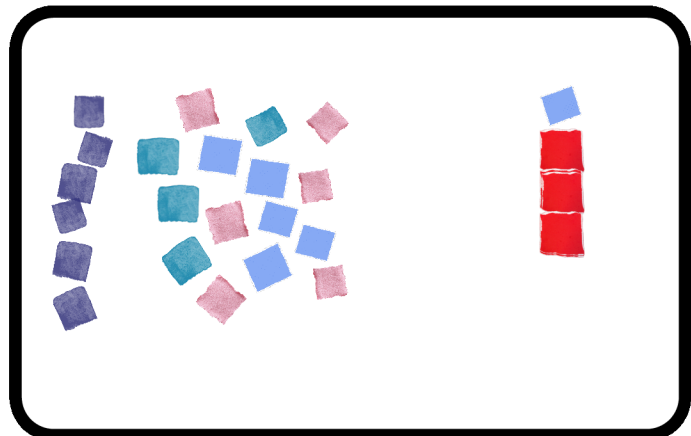
What other arrangements do you see that might carry meaning?



Rather than naming these metaphors for the client, invite reflection by “noticing.”
“I notice these are very far apart. Does that mean anything to you?”

“I notice these are in a kind of line”

Use your clinical instincts and your knowledge of the client: their history, presenting issues and patterns to guide where you inquire and where you simply witness.



Moving into Experiential Interaction:

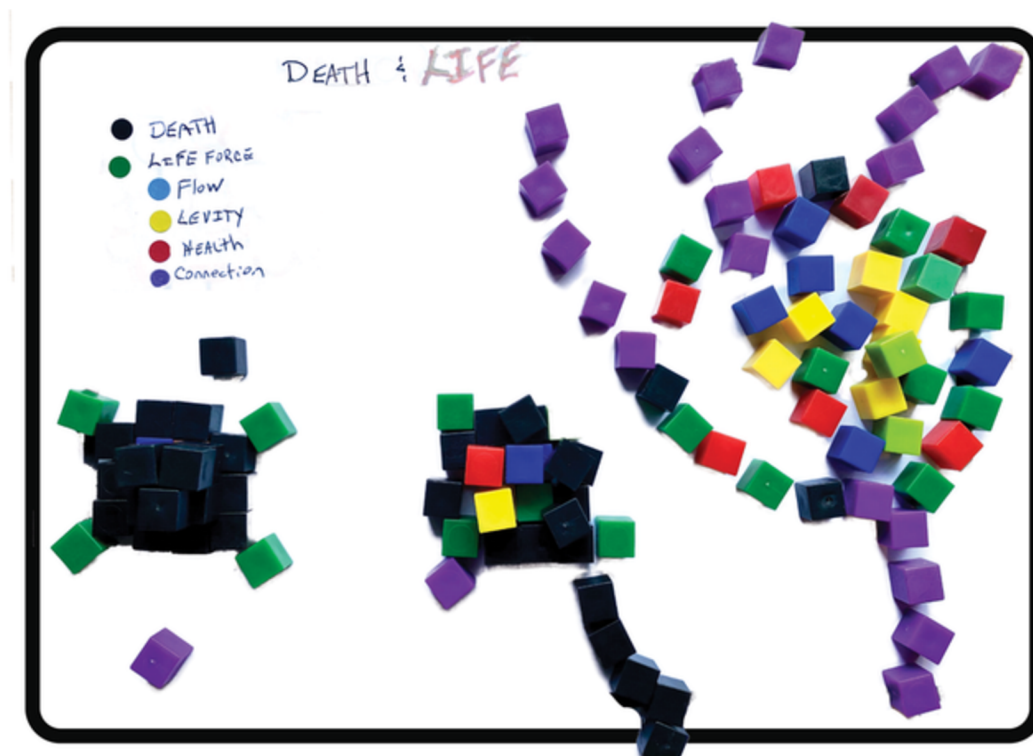
Once the BioGraff has imbued these objects with personal meaning and emotional charge, it becomes a powerful experiential field. This is an opportunity to work not just about the experience, but with it.

At this stage, you may invite gentle experimentation:

- ***“What would it be like to remove this piece?”***
- ***“How does it feel to move this closer—or farther away?”***
- ***“If you were to rebuild this to reflect how you’d like things to be, what would change?”***

These “what if” questions allow clients to explore agency, possibility, and emotional response in real time. Often, even small shifts in the arrangement can evoke strong insights—revealing longings, fears, or constraints that were difficult to articulate verbally.

Move slowly. Follow the client’s pace. The goal is not resolution, but contact—with experience, pattern, and possibility.



Working with Couples

When working with couples, each partner creates their BioGraff **separately**, responding to the same prompt. This preserves individual perspective and prevents early negotiation or explanation. The real power of the work emerges in how partners **share and listen** to each other's visual stories.

Structure matters here. Invite the couple to take turns.

One partner shares first, while the other listens with curiosity—without interrupting, correcting, defending, or problem-solving. You might frame it this way:

Clinician:

We're going to take turns sharing. One person will speak, and the other will listen with the goal of understanding—not responding.

To the sharing partner:

Take a few minutes to describe your BioGraff. Walk us through it in whatever way feels natural to you.

To the listening partner:

Your job is just to listen while they tell you about their BioGraff

Clinician (After the sharing partner finishes):

Listener, try to bring curiosity to what they just shared with you. Is there anything about their BioGraff you'd like to hear more about or anything you notice about it that they didn't mention?

Listener:

I'm curious about I notice that...

Clinician (to sharing partner):

Would you like to say more about that?

Clinician:

Thank you. Now let's switch roles.

Working with a Couple continued

As the sharing partner describes their BioGraff, encourage them to speak from their own experience, using the visual as an anchor. The listening partner's role is to track, notice, and take in the story as it's being told — often a very different experience from listening to a verbal account alone.

This process is strongly inspired by Imago dialogue, and BioGraffs can be a powerful support for it. The externalized image slows the pace, reduces reactivity, and gives the listener something concrete to orient toward — making it easier to stay present rather than defensive.

As facilitator, your job is to protect the structure. Gently interrupt cross-talk, premature interpretation, or attempts to compare stories too soon. If needed, you can redirect with reminders like:

Let's stay with understanding before responding.

This is about hearing their experience, not explaining yours yet.

Only after both partners have shared and been heard does it become useful to explore similarities, differences, or relational patterns across the two BioGraffs. At that point, the visual field often makes contrasts easier to hold without blame—and common ground easier to see.

Ending a BioGraffs Session or Workshop

Encourage people to take a pictures to refer to it later and reflect. You might want to take a picture as well for future work with them.

As you guide participants through this process, remember that although it seems playful on the surface, the method can bring up powerful emotions. Allow space for those feelings.

At the end of the session, take a moment to check in with each participant. Ask how they're leaving the session, and if anything came up that they want to acknowledge before they go.

A simple check-in not only helps participants feel supported, but also reinforces that their stories and emotions matter.

By closing thoughtfully, you help ensure that the BioGraffs experience leaves them feeling seen, heard, and grounded.

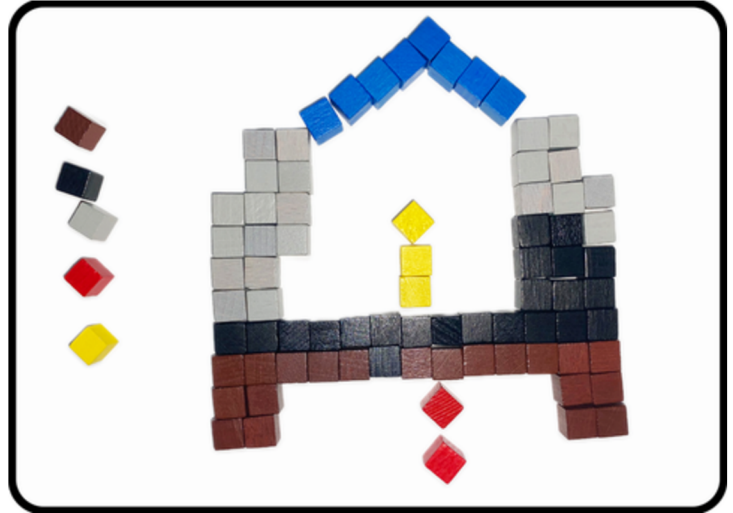
Reproducible Facilitation Materials

The following pages are reproducible materials for handing out to participants in your workshop or private session. They are useful visuals to guide the activity and help you explain it to your clients.

The BioGraffs method, name, and materials were created by Jennifer Beman.

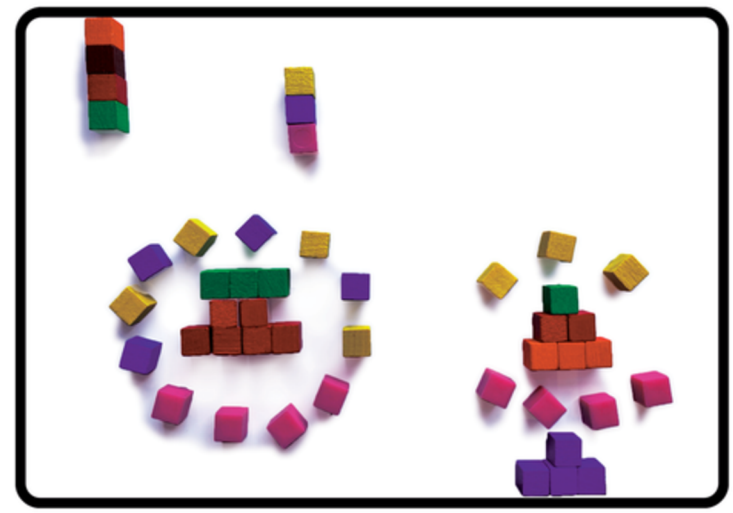
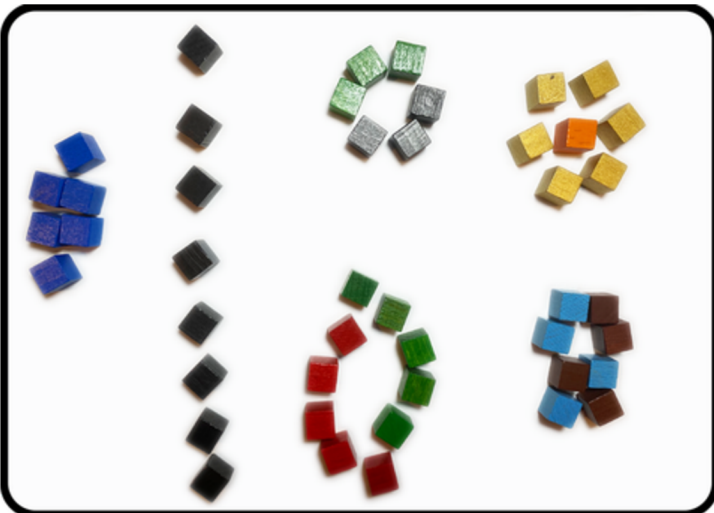
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Inspirations

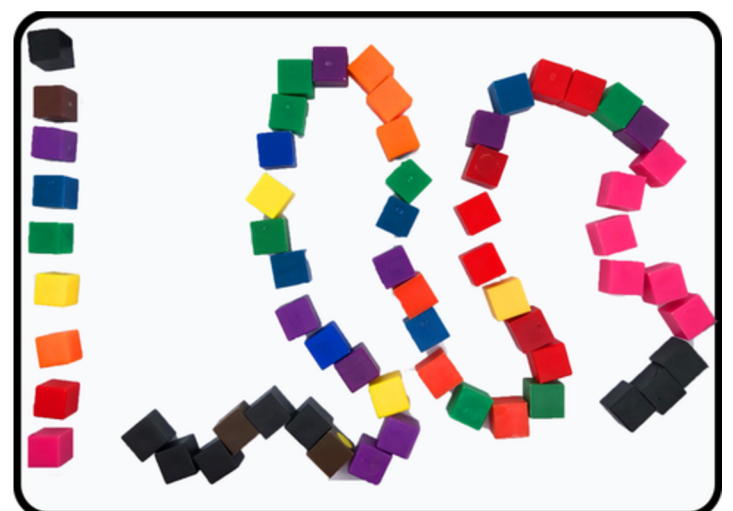
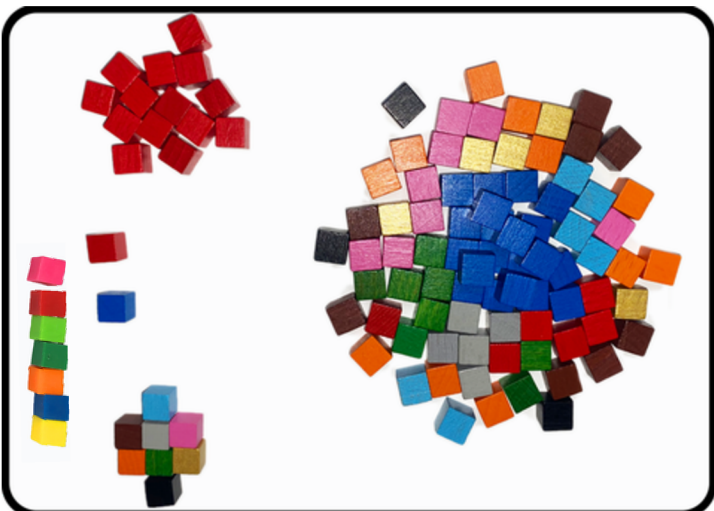
A way to lay your thoughts and feelings on the table

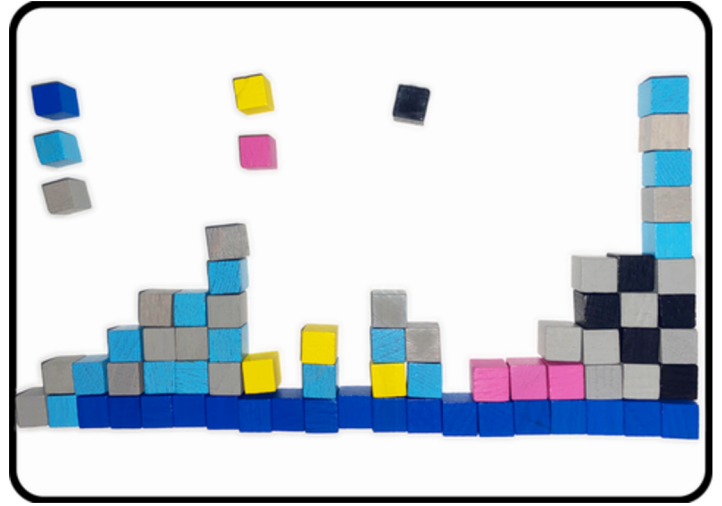
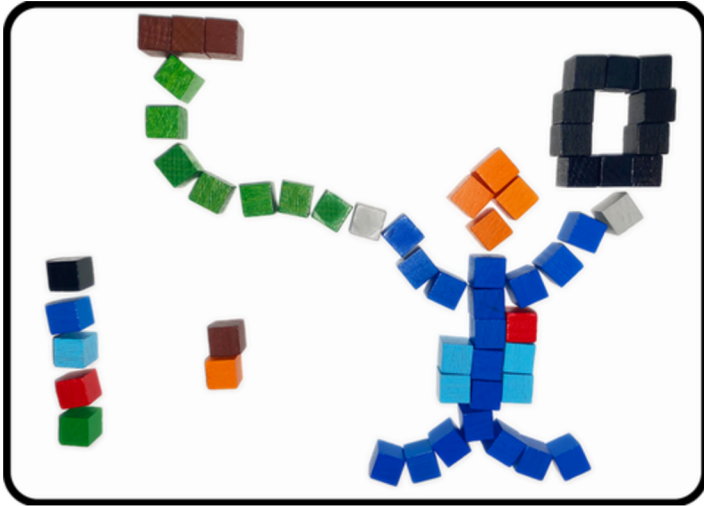


In these actual user-made BioGraffs. The words defining each cube's meaning have been removed.



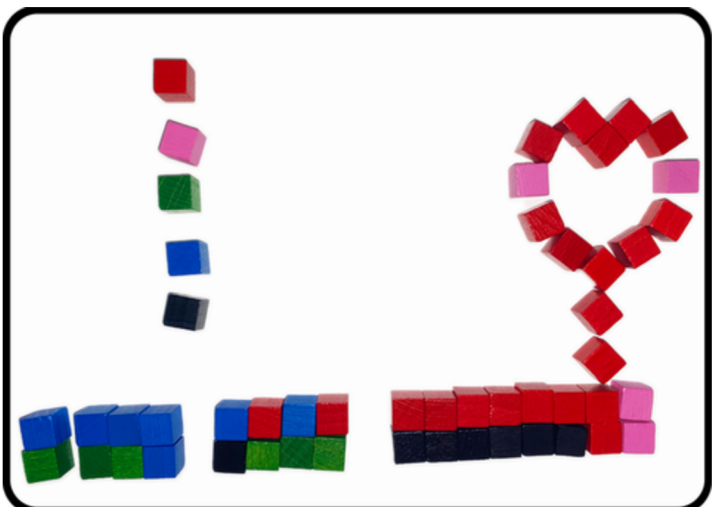
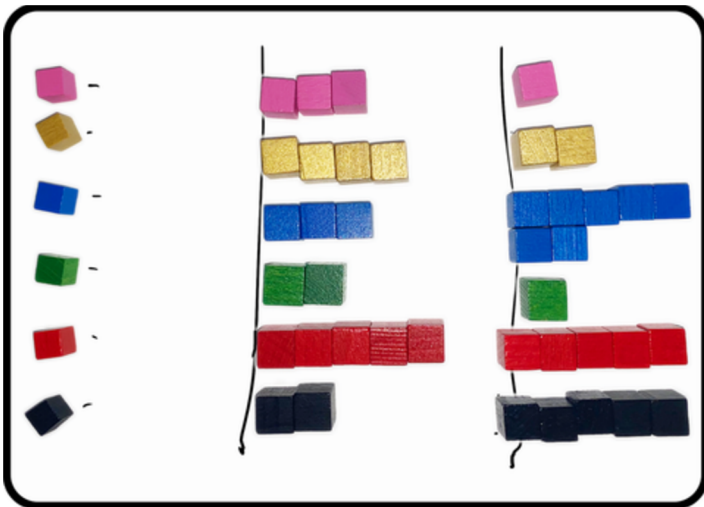
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Inspirations

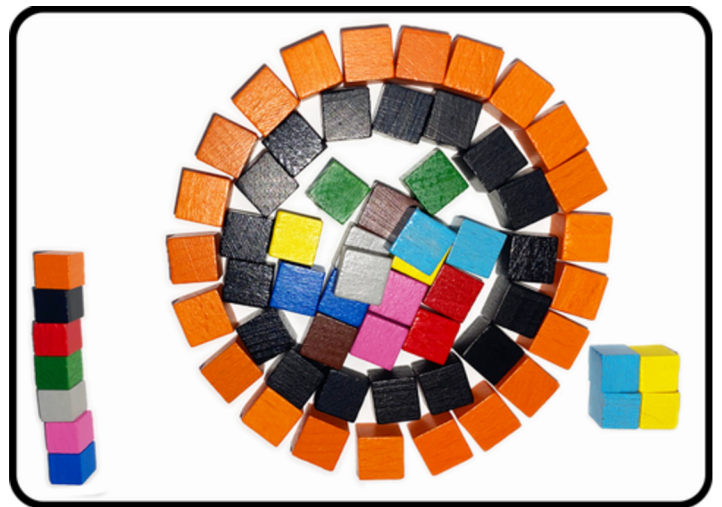
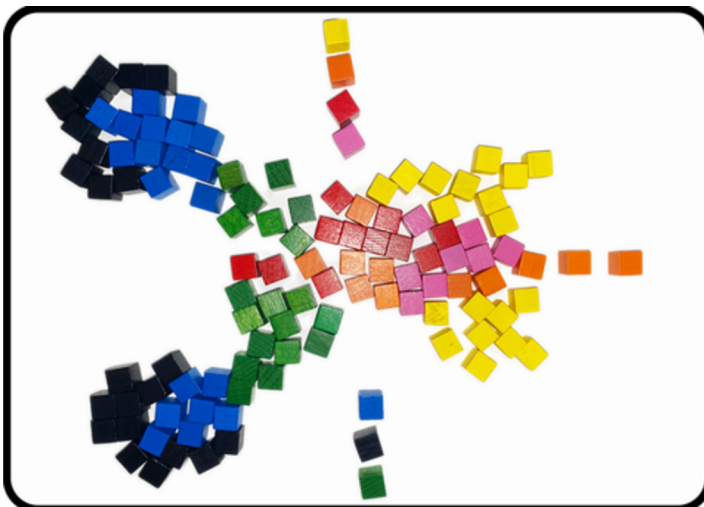
There's a million ways to make your BioGraff. Explore your meaning.



In these actual user-made BioGraffs. The words defining each cube's meaning have been removed.



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DIY BioGraffs

What you need to put together your own BioGraffs package

At its core, BioGraffs is the process of imbuing small objects with big ideas like emotions and thoughts, and then arranging them to add more meaning through an experiential process.

You can do this yourself by buying a quantity of small objects in multiple colors. Keep this in mind as you look for appropriate objects.

- You want about 150 per person
- There should be at least 10 colors
- Around 1cm is a good size, and something that doesn't roll
- Not too thin or light

Ideas for Objects

- Kindergarten counting manipulatives
- Mosaic tiles
- Nuts, beans, or dried fruit
- Various candy, like M&Ms and Skittles
- Cut up foam sheets
- Rhinestones or other bling

Other Things You Need

- 9 x 12 Dry erase lapboard for each person
- OR**
- Plain white paper - and something sturdy for each person to put under their paper, to move it around. Chipboard is good, or large books
 - Pens
 - 1/4" sticker dots are a good addition to expand the number of legend items
 - A bowl for each person to put their objects
 - Printouts of the reproducibles in this pdf

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Quick Reference

Remember the three step process:

- **Decide on a prompt**
 - **Create the legend (think of the parts)**
 - **Build the BioGraff**
-
- Remind your clients that there's no "right way"
 - Creating the legend is often the challenging part. Suggestions from you can help
 - Silence is powerful—give people time
 - Remember to center curiosity, in yourself and in your clients
 - Take photos (with permission) for further work or future comparison
 - Suggest people take their own picture for reflection later



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