

Abstract

This research explores phenomenologically, and thus in a gestalt compatible way, the impact of a traumatic event in the workplace on Social Services staff. Meanings that staff constructed from the event are investigated, together with support that was judged present or absent from the field. The research also considers the implications for gestalt psychotherapy theory and practice. Implications for the organisation are also noted.

The research methodology was qualitative, using semi structured hour long interviews. It was evident that the event had a huge emotional impact on co-researchers, and the need to create meaning from the trauma was paramount. The research concludes with a critique of the methodology, including issues of verifiability and sample size. Finally suggestions as to how the research might be taken further are considered.

The research was encouraged and supported by Sandwell Council (Social Inclusion and Health). It is hoped that the findings will contribute to both individual and organisational development.