

ABSTRACT

A sample of clients who had experience of Gestalt therapy at an agency working with alcoholism were interviewed about their perceptions of what had been helpful or unhelpful to them in this approach. These co-researchers provided much information on what they had experienced as helpful in Gestalt therapy, but no common themes could be extracted for what they found unhelpful. They spontaneously provided much information on what they had found helpful, and in particular, unhelpful, in other approaches they had experienced. The data was analysed to take all these aspects of the clients' experience into account. It emerged that the quality of relationship between the client and the therapist or staff member was of primary importance to the client. Also, the client found support in exploration and understanding of their own process helpful, while directive and restrictive processes were perceived as unhelpful. Methods of treatment that focused on the symptom (the client's drinking) were seen as unhelpful, while the respect for the whole person that the co-researchers recognized in their experience of Gestalt therapy was seen as helpful.