

Despite our view of ourselves as thinking beings, cognition is but a frail craft floating on a sea of emotion'

Donald Nathanson (1994)

ABSTRACT

The context to this study is the growing body of research which has suggested links between the inhibition of expression of emotion and physical illness such as asthma, cancer and cardiovascular disease; mental ill health and personality disorders. At a personal level the aim of the study was to understand the lived experience of men in Integrative Psychotherapy.

A study was conducted into the experiences of six male Integrative Psychotherapists. Interviews were conducted with participants to explore episodes where they either felt able or inhibited in expressing emotion.

A phenomenological methodology was applied to the data using Edmund Husserl's principles of Phenomenological Reduction, Imaginative Variation and Synthesis which enabled the emergence of key themes from the interview transcripts. A degree of objectivity was introduced by the application of the concept of Epoche.

The findings generally support psychodynamic theory in terms of the impact of positive and negative transference and counter transference on the individual's emotional expressiveness. The findings were similarly consistent with prevailing theory with respect to the nature of the therapeutic relationship; the significance of shame and its interconnected nature with other emotions. The findings also confirmed links between unmet developmental needs and transference which could operate either positively or negatively to influence emotional expressiveness.

The study has highlighted the need for a comprehensive overhaul of theory related to emotion and terminology within Integrative Psychotherapy. Finally, the study raises questions about the way that Integrative psychotherapy informs itself from other disciplines such as psychology and neuroscience.