

ABSTRACT

This study explored how qualified Gestalt Psychotherapists work with clients who present with depression. The aim was to explore the processes involved to try and discover a model or theme. Very little literature has been found that links Gestalt with the depression and nothing explicit to describe how it might be worked with from this perspective. In addition, this research has shown that Gestalt Psychotherapists prefer not to define their clients in terms of a diagnostic label, finding it depersonalising and anti-therapeutic, Delisle (1991). It is mainly this fact that has made the exploration of the topic so problematic throughout the study. With cases of depression forecast to rise in our society in future years, more research into therapy options would appear to be warranted. A phenomenological methodology was used to explore how ten qualified Gestalt therapists' work with depressed clients. The data was collected via semi-structured interviews and processed using steps advocated by Colaizzi (1978). The participant's responses were presented as themes with descriptive commentary and highlighted by participant quotations ways in which they would work with depressed clients. The following themes emerged that would appear to propose a possible model of how to work with depression from a Gestalt perspective These were: increasing awareness around critical introjects; integration of intrapersonal conflicts; undoing retroreflection by encouraging expression of emotion and resolving interpersonal conflicts involving unfinished business. The findings also highlighted the importance of exploring the impact on the therapist of working with this phenomenon, as it can have a significant impact on their emotional and physical well-being.