

Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore how female gestalt therapists work with touch within the therapeutic relationship. Due to the lack of literature and research on touch from a gestalt perspective, the literature review was widened to include research studies and writers from other modalities on touch. A phenomenological method was adopted as a route of enquiry which is consistent with the process of gestalt psychotherapy. Interviews were held with eight female gestalt practitioners. Transcripts were analysed by using the six steps of data analysis identified by Creswell (1988). The themes fell into the two key categories of the therapeutic relationship, which comprised eight sub themes, and support for the therapist with two sub themes. These encompassed the sub-themes of consent, boundaries, the non-verbal process, gestalt experimentation, the therapist's history of touch, whose need is being met, rescuing and reparenting, support, supervision and training

The findings indicated that female gestalt psychotherapists do work with touch within the therapeutic relationship in an informed and ethical way. The study also identified the potential pitfalls of working with touch, and identified implications for training and support of both the clients and therapists.