

ABSTRACT

This research study explores the impact on the Humanistic Person-Centred therapist of therapy with a dying client. Although all clients have a limited life span, the dimension of time takes on special urgency with the dying client. The brief remaining time intensifies the therapy process and work with a dying client can induce intense emotions (Katz, 2006), including death anxiety. There are additional significant challenges when the dying client is of the same age or is younger than the therapist (Gaies & Knox, 1991).

Six therapists who have worked with one or more dying clients were interviewed, using a conversational style technique (Etherington, 2004). This approach was adopted in order to identify the therapists' personal perspectives and lived experiences. Then, using Narrative Analysis, based on the works of Riessman (1993), Bruner (2002) and Bell (1988, 1991), their narratives were treated as the data. Their shared experiences are presented within one narrative, which is discussed and conclusions drawn.

This study offers an insight into therapy with dying clients. It looks at ways in which therapists have been affected and how they have coped and managed. Their experiences could be used to support other therapists currently working, with or considering working with the dying as well as supervisors of such therapists. This study also provides an opportunity for the reader to challenge their own perceptions of work with a dying client.