

Abstract

This research explores the process of humour in the context of person-centred practice. People frequently engage in humour and yet it is a little understood phenomenon by psychologists or psychotherapists. This small scale qualitative study sought to explore with co-researchers, processes at the heart of humour and how that impacts personally, in relationships, and as clients.

A literature review revealed a paucity of relevant research in person-centred practice and little in other psychotherapies' literature about humour and its process. I chose to undertake this study using a heuristic method, as lack of evidence ruled out using other methods such as grounded theory. The heuristic method was congruent with my own philosophy and process. The reflexive process mirrored my own development as a person-centred practitioner. I did not want to be an objective researcher but deeply immersed in the material which resonated with my own experience.

This study indicates that humour is important for person-centred practice and linked to the actualising tendency, (Rogers 1951:487), the development of the self concept, psychological contact and emotional regulation. In addition, evidence suggests neurobiological implications, (Rothschild, 2000:52-53).

Despite serving important social, cognitive and emotional functions, (Martin 2007: xv), humour has not been taken seriously by psychologists or psychotherapists. Yet important emotional under-currents may lie undiscovered by therapists if humour is perceived to be merely superficial: