

ABSTRACT

Research and theory identify the therapeutic relationship, therapist qualities, and pivotal events as powerful change drivers. Expressing meaning through words is intrinsic to psychotherapy, yet no literature was located regarding so-called Lightbulb Moments triggered by a therapist voicing a word or phrase that explicates profound personal meaning. This qualitative, heuristic study aimed to richly depict clients' intersubjective and relational experiences of such events. Visual materials or descriptive imagery symbolising participating co-researchers' experiences supplemented semi-structured interview data. Four co-researchers had undertaken at least two years of ongoing personal therapy (Integrative, Humanistic or Person-centred), or had completed such within the past year. All were qualified therapists in one of those modalities, or at least third year students from recognised institutions. Researcher indwelling and tacit knowing facilitated explication of individual experiences and universal meaning essences. Thematic analysis uncovered complexity not anticipated from its positioning in literature. This evidenced enduring relationship, insight and growth type gains, the importance of lived self- and relational-experiencing, and the powerfully evocative nature of combined symbolisation - words, imagery and metaphor. A rich depiction of the phenomenon is presented via narrative and researcher's artistic rendering. The identification of this new type of significant event and its huge potentiality has far-reaching implications for Integrative psychotherapy and relational, experiential modalities.