

Abstract

This research is set in the context of the researcher's experience of discovering the creative potential of metaphor from nature in personal therapy. It aimed to explore dual-dynamics of clients' relationship with nature and use of metaphor, discovering qualities and meanings relevant to Integrative Psychotherapy. The heuristic method allowed the experience of four participants to remain visible. Qualities and meanings inherent in the phenomenon were grouped into themes: childhood memories; restorative and strengthening effects of nature; metaphor about growth and development; bringing metaphor from nature into the therapeutic encounter. The researcher's personal knowledge was re-integrated in a creative synthesis presented as images and metaphors encapsulating the experience as a whole.

Findings suggested participants' connection with nature was part of a sense of self forming in early relationships and evolving in a wider relational matrix. Metaphor from nature was used in creative ways to bring aspects of self-experience into the therapeutic space. There was evidence of strong emotions emerging and change and growth accompanied by transformation of metaphor. Flow between outdoor encounters with nature and working therapeutically with metaphor indoors was discovered. The study concluded that bringing human-nature encounters into the therapeutic relationship of Integrative Psychotherapy is a simple yet profound concept.