

## **Abstract**

This exploratory study reports on an inquiry into the self-care needs of Integrative psychotherapists in private practice. The research was motivated by concerns over the impact of this work on the helper. The literature review identified numerous risks to practitioners' well-being, especially the use of empathy and self. Self-care was recognised to be a complex, personal phenomenon.

In accordance with the researcher's philosophical assumptions and the nature of the topic, a small-scale qualitative study was designed. The heuristic method was chosen for its capacity to capture authentic experiences. Semi-structured interviews were carried out and analysed. Ethical thinking and reflexivity improved the research.

Three themes were found, namely needs, strategies and implicit concepts. The discussion evaluated the participants' self-care as successful. Some overlap with the literature regarding needs and strategies was demonstrated. Features characteristic for the Integrative participants were a focus on subjective experiencing, extensive self-knowledge, and seeking out help from others. The implicit concepts found were regulation and congruence which fits well with Integrative thinking about the relational self. Recommendations for therapist self-care, client work, supervision and training were made.

The study's applicability was critiqued as limited. The creative synthesis took the form of two poems.

It was concluded that regulation and congruence are the essences of effective self-care for Integrative psychotherapists in private practice.