

### **3. Abstract**

This study explores the impact using food as a coping strategy, coined Eating To Cope (EToC), has on the self-concept (Rogers 1959, p.200) of four person-centred therapists. The researcher eats food as a way of coping, and found understanding her "Self" and her different processes invaluable in being more congruent (Rogers 1959, p.205–206) as a therapist. Therefore this study focused on the therapist's "self" as the first step of the personal and professional development process.

Research on EToC tended to focus on how to stop it, rather than on insight into the process itself. There was no detailed phenomenological research about EToC from a Person-Centred/Experiential (PCE) perspective at the time of writing. This study aimed to start to fill this gap. The method used for this study was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and thematic analysis was carried out on transcribed semi-structured interviews of participants.

Three themes emerged from the interview analysis; a) the nature of coping, b) the unintended impact on the organism, and c) coping with the fallout. The study found that using food as a coping strategy (specifically by eating more than the participants felt they required) negatively impacted both their self-concept (Rogers 1959, p.200) and the wider aspects of their organism. However, the focus of support tended to be centred on weight-loss. The psychological support specifically for the impact of EToC on the self-concept wasn't evident. Recommendations for further studies in this area are made.