

ABSTRACT

This study set out to discover how the client perceived their therapist's self-disclosure of a mental health condition, what effect it had on them and what effect it had on the therapeutic relationship all within the context of the person-centred modality. The motivation for carrying out this study is the researcher's curiosity as to whether this specific form of self-disclosure can be beneficial for the client and the therapeutic relationship as well as to make a contribution to the continuing destigmatisation of mental health in the counselling and psychotherapy professions.

The study was carried out by recruiting and interviewing voluntary participants who were person-centred practicing therapists and who had an experience of their person-centred therapist self-disclosing a mental health condition. In order to bracket his own experiences of this subject the researcher followed the Duquesne method of interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The study found a rich complexity of themes which can be grouped into 4 overarching themes detailing firstly the effect of the therapist's self-disclosure of a mental health condition on the client and secondly on the therapeutic relationship. Thirdly certain key characteristics of the therapist as they are seen by the client are revealed and finally the continuing and increasing impact of the self-disclosure was discovered.

The study strongly validated the necessary and sufficient conditions, the self-disclosure facilitating the all-important 6th condition, namely the client's perception of their therapist's empathy and unconditional positive regard.