

Abbreviations

BACP: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

UKCP: United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy

SPTI: Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute

MBCT: Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

MBSR: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Abstract

This Research asked 'What is the Impact of Mindful Practice on the Therapeutic Presence of the Person-Centred Practitioner?' It set out to examine in detail what the potential was for the relationship between mindfulness and presence, and particularly, whether the former could enhance the latter.

The stimulus for this was twofold. In the first place, there was the researcher's burgeoning interest in the various aspects and forms of mindfulness. In the second, there was a curiosity about the concept of presence as set out towards the end of his life, and picked up by other writers (Geller, Greenberg, 2012). These two areas of interest seemed to coalesce to form the question.

The researcher set out to examine the question using a heuristic methodology (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher immersed himself in the study and practice of mindfulness, while journaling his responses. Three person-centred practitioners were then interviewed about their own perspectives on, and experiences of the influence of mindfulness on their presence, before the researcher himself was interviewed. The data was then analysed and synthesised in line with the stages set out by Moustakas (1990).

The researcher found that there was a rich potential for the role of mindfulness in enhancing the therapist's presence, promoting their self-development and nourishing their self-care. All participants felt that this ultimately benefitted the therapeutic relationship. While further research may be needed, and the possible risks should be attended to, the research highlights among other things potential benefits of integrating mindfulness practices into psychotherapy and counselling training.

Introduction

The research was undertaken as part of an MSc in Person-Centred and Experiential Psychotherapy, and came at a time when the researcher was starting to explore his professional identity. At the instigation of the study, I was happy to describe my practice as being rooted in what I identified as the core of Rogers' theory – namely, the provision of the therapeutic conditions which fostered therapeutic growth (Rogers, 1957). Nevertheless, while such conditions felt necessary, there was a growing sense that they may not be entirely sufficient; there was a curiosity about the possible contribution of other modalities and fields of study to my clinical practice. This coincided with some discomfort about the viability of breaking down the therapist's attitude into distinctive components (as Rogers had seemed to do in the paper referenced above).

As such, the discovery of Rogers' later writing on presence within Shari Geller's chapter on the subject (Cooper et al, 2013) felt nothing less than revelatory, providing the spark which instigated this study. At the same time, there was an