

Abstract

Conceptualisations of 'self' in psychotherapeutic theory vary and are often ambiguous, rarely describing the researcher's own experience of contact with 'self'. This qualitative, phenomenological study explores the experience of "fully connecting with 'me'", aiming to create a language for this experience which can transcend current conceptual psychotherapeutic frameworks. Six psychotherapists from different modalities participated in semi-structured interviews. The responses were digitally recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were analysed according to Psychological Descriptive Phenomenological protocol, producing themes and subthemes which were then synthesised into an exhaustive description. Findings reveal that access to language to describe the experience of fully connecting to 'me' is elusive, but ultimately accessible, enabling the expression of subjective perceptions of a variety of feelings, qualities and states. Experience of connecting to 'me' also carries a sense of connection with wider humanity and the natural environment. 'Me' is conceived as, at one and the same time, a whole 'self', and 'fragmented selves' or 'self-parts'. Contact with both is possible, with interruptions to contact with 'me' being described in the context of adverse relationship with 'other' in the world. Limitations of the study and ideas for future research are discussed, and implications for psychotherapy practice and training considered, before empirical and theoretical conclusions are drawn.