

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research explored the psychotherapy client's experience of understanding their life story through listening to their body and its symptoms of chronic pain and fatigue. It aimed to examine, from a humanistic integrative perspective, the essence of relationship which aids understanding and brings about therapeutic change.

Four psychotherapists, three in training and one qualified, took part in semi-structured interviews to capture their subjective experiences. The six-phase heuristic approach was used to provide an in-depth analysis through intuitive knowing. Five themes were identified: life story, body experiences before psychotherapy, relational needs, body experiences within the therapeutic relationship and group experience. Data was presented individually and in a composite depiction of a metaphorical story.

Findings showed the ability to focus holistically on the body as a place of emotional and physical experience allowed participants to make mind-body connections and improve psychological and physical health. The implications for integrative psychotherapy were discussed with a focus on preverbal experiences in infancy and unconscious processes. The importance of emotional expression was highlighted. The limitations of the study and recommendations for further research were also explored. Sociopolitical, healthcare and future training implications were considered.