

## Abstract

The aim of this study was to capture the essence of the experience of clients receiving a Transitional Object (TO) from their therapist. The study consisted of exploring three different ailments to capture the overall experience; how the TO emerged, the experience of receiving the TO and the impact, if at all on the therapeutic relationship.

Data was collected using a semi-structured interview with five participants all with a background in Integrative psychotherapy. Phenomenological Analysis of the material provided multiple (fifteen) themes which emerged from the horizontalization process of each interview; to create an overall understanding of the experiences. These were then looked at through various angles; imagination variation, to consolidate into composite textural descriptions, and create an overall essence of the experience.

The illuminated themes regarding the clients experience of receiving the TO were; their emergence was at a) a difficult time, b) in a period of regression and c) they knew it was okay to have/receive/ask for the TO. Their experience was of a) trust/mistrust, b) the TO was a need/symbol, there was an experience of c) reduction of fear/defence, it created an d) emotional response, which was deemed e) significant/powerful and thus f) became a part of the client. Furthermore the experience of receiving the TO impacted the therapeutic relationship as it was experienced as a) between the therapist/client, b) a connection in the space between therapy, c) a sense of

being able to remember the therapist, d) feeling cared for by the therapist, e) symbolic of a parental relationship and f) a mirroring of interaction with the TO vs. the experience of the relationship. Participants reflected that they felt enlightened by sharing in this study, as much of the *knowing* of the experience appeared to connect to the *understanding* of the experience. This study is one of the first to explore the personal experience of the receipt of a TO and aims to contribute to integrative practice.