

Abstract

Fantasy is purposeful. In infancy children creatively invest objects with meaning to achieve developmental goals (Winnicott, 1971). In adulthood, fantasies continue to have a purpose, influencing our reality and vice versa as we attempt to meet developmental needs (Kanfo and Feiner, 2006). Fantasy has been shown to ameliorate psychopathology (Silverman, 1979) but may produce negative effects if fixed (Macrylinkola et al 2017: Lillie and Strelan, 2016). Ornstein (1992) showed processing them in therapy can have a positive outcome and Cassidy et al (2017) revealed the importance of play, a process closely associated with fantasy, in achieving change. However, clients are resistant (Horowitz, 2007). Understanding their experience is necessary for addressing this resistance but their voice is often absent. With the aim of illuminating how integrative psychotherapists may make help clients share their fantasies, this study gave 'voice' to clients. Adopting a qualitative methodology, and using semi-structured interviews and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, it examined four participants' experience of processing fantasies in integrative psychotherapy. Four themes emerged: blocking access through the inhibiting effects of shame and a fear of environmental judgement; the need for a strong therapeutic relationship and active therapist and client for sharing them; the process of change incorporating the emergence of fantasies and clients' growing confidence; and developmental growth via the integration of self and a new way of being. Drawn from the researcher's interpretation of the data, this study is not definitive, but does shed light on the topic.