

Abstract

How do psychotherapists experience the minutes before the client? Do therapists experience any common themes in these minutes? Whilst there are numerous studies and guides detailing how to use these minutes, there is little research describing the therapists' lived experiences in this space.

This qualitative study by an integrative psychotherapy student used Giorgi's Descriptive Phenomenological analysis of semi-structured interviews involving 5 participants. The sample were integrative therapists with a range of clinical experience, enrolled at or graduated from different institutions, working in a range of work settings across a range of client groups with different presenting issues. Participants were interviewed and asked to describe their experience of the minutes before the client.

The study found numerous themes from interviews of participants' pre-session experiences, including journey; focus on direction vs. rejection of that focus; safety of normality and habit; contact vs. isolation; agency vs passivity; and centrality of care. Each theme has sufficient depth to justify further study. Further, it invites therapists and placements to consider how they can use the minutes to maximise their experience of that time. This research also offers a robust critique to invite and inform further integrative study on this experience.