

Abstract

The research aim was to focus on the personal experiences of self-discovery regarding the impact from the death of a parent within a process of developmental and relational integrative psychotherapy. Qualitative data was collected by means of Heuristic inquiry into the subjective experience of an emerging sense of self. For ethical considerations the participants in the study were required to have received integrative psychotherapy for a minimum of 18 months, ensuring they had worked through the issues around the loss in therapy. The four co-researchers in this study had accessed therapy as part of their psychotherapy training, their motivation to seek therapy was not specifically related to the childhood bereavement. Participants took part in 50-minute semi structured interviews; the study was interested in exploring experiences from clients in psychotherapy where they had come to realise the impact of early parental death on their sense of self.

The death of a parent is life changing and is felt both within and outside of the self. The age at which the death occurs has a bearing on the capacity to make meaning of the loss; the role of the surviving parent, and the nature the loss, determines how it is assimilated. Through in-depth psychotherapy the process of self-discovery takes place in which the transferential relationship between client and therapist and appears to have significance for the client in order to access a developmentally needed reparative relationship.