

Abstract

The aim of this qualitative, heuristic research was to explore integrative psychotherapists' experiences of unconscious processes in the therapeutic encounter at a body level. Acknowledging, understanding and working with the concept of unconscious processes is an integral part of integrative psychotherapy. This study brought attention to how the integrative practitioner experiences unconscious processes at a body level.

Methodology involved semi-structured interviews with four integrative psychotherapists, three qualified and one in training. Each consented to take part to discuss their experiences of working with unconscious processes in their therapeutic practice and consider feelings and sensations within their bodies whilst working with clients. A heuristic six-phase approach was used.

Findings from the research demonstrated a variety of experiences at a body level in the integrative therapeutic encounter. Co-researchers expressed their thoughts of making meaning of these experiences and how they form a part of the therapeutic work with each client. The themes identified were: Multisensory awareness, Body as container, Attribution and ownership, Communication and sharing, Caution and Ambivalence, and Self-care.

Implications for integrative psychotherapy were discussed with a focus on depth of contact with self and other in a relational-developmental approach. Strengths, limitations and reflections for future research were considered.