

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to give a critical appreciation of my lived experience of recovery from alcohol addiction. Two treatment modalities provided a focus to my narrative. Firstly, my experience of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and secondly, my experience of Integrative Psychotherapy (IP) as a client. I employed qualitative methodology and the method of autoethnography. I described my experience as a participant and observer and related this to the research literature. I conceptualised my experience using relational-developmental theory making the work relevant to IP. My intent was to inform and invite the reader to evaluate their own understanding of alcohol addiction and its treatment. Five themes were identified as (1) relational re-enactments, (2) addiction as a problem of attachment, (3) trauma, (4) therapy as a vehicle of change, and (5) shame. It was found that recovery from addiction to alcohol is complex and should be supported by professional psychological clinical intervention as evidenced in my case. It is questionable as to whether AA can be seen as a clinical treatment which claims expertise in recovery. The literature makes huge assumptions about the therapeutic nature of AA and further research is needed to interrogate AA's internal processes, especially in relation to vetting, regulation and competence of its members if it is viewed as a clinical intervention.