

Abstract

This pragmatic case study explored bearing witness¹ (Rutherford, 2007, Figley, 2012, p5, Neimeyer, 2019, p27) in the context of Person-Centred Psychotherapy. A holistic analysis was used to better understand the uniqueness and complexity of this case (Cresswell, 2007) utilizing a range of methods: including formal and informal measures, along with client feedback. The therapeutic relationship was explored in relation to how the conditions (Rogers, 1959) could be extended or communicated in a way that facilitated an environment for the client to explore their material and tell their story. A particular focus was on client flow (which included considering the use of silence), accepting presence and genuineness, along with attention to the client's stage of process. The main emphasis was on one session mid-way through a therapeutic relationship. However, this was not looked at in isolation; the overall course of therapy was considered. Due regard was given throughout to relational ethics and ethical practice.

Findings included the importance of the client being able to express herself fully without interruption and be listened and responded to. The therapist's ability to sit with and bear witness to all the layers of communication had been paramount. Additionally, this case study documents the ongoing development of a trainee psychotherapist and explores how bearing witness became a foundational part of this.

¹ Bearing witness is a term used by many different writers in different contexts. Here I am simply referencing examples of where the term has been used in a therapy context.