

Small Scale Research Project Report

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the experiences of four trainee person-centred and experiential psychotherapists as they reflected on development of 'sense of self' during training. The researcher was motivated by her own experience of balancing academic, practical and life demands while feeling personally impacted by resulting psychological changes. She was keen to explore the unique experiences of others in a similar position and to reflect on how those experiences were influenced by the training process.

A Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) method was employed to analyse transcripts from semi-structured interviews with four co-researchers; data was analysed for semantic and latent meaning, interpretations were made with reference to raw data. Three themes were generated which then formed the basis for the findings of the study.

The study found that person-centred and experiential psychotherapy trainees perceive an elusive 'sense of self' which changes throughout development and becomes more grounded as a foundation for further growth; such growth is perceived as continual and fluid, echoing Rogers' (1959) assertion of movement towards fluidity as crucial for the organism. They encounter challenges within this process and describe emergence of greater self-awareness and self-acceptance as they progress through training. It seems this positively impacts on authenticity in relationships with others and themselves.