

Abstract

This study explored the therapeutic practices of eco-psychotherapists working in natural environments with adult clients presenting with relational trauma. Background research highlighted the profound beneficial connection between human well-being and the natural environment. This study aimed to capture the experiences of professional eco-psychotherapists, examining how their connection to nature facilitates therapeutic healing.

Adopting an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, findings revealed three superordinate themes: the ecosystem as an entity, the therapeutic relationship with nature, and future guidance for practice. Participants described a deep, visceral connection with the natural environment including the significance of relationship with self, other and nature in facilitating relational healing, the therapeutic benefits of nature's unpredictability, and the importance of ethical considerations in taking therapy outdoors. A correlation with the relational and developmental approach of Integrative Psychotherapy was identified throughout the study.

The findings support the integration of an eco-systemic relationship into conventional psychotherapy practice and training, highlighting the need for awareness of historical, social, and indigenous contexts. The research provides valuable insights and suggests avenues for future research contributing to the growing body of knowledge on the delights and challenges of eco-psychotherapeutic practice. This study concludes that significant therapeutic potential exists particularly in healing clients presenting with relational trauma.