

Abstract

This study reports on the experience of retraining as a psychotherapist after previously having had a career in teaching. The aim was to understand the motivation behind the decision to retrain as a psychotherapist. The research was prompted by the lack of information on the experience of psychotherapists as they train. The literature review identified that most research had focused on the motivations of psychotherapists to train and not the experience when they do.

A heuristic research method was employed to allow for deep engagement with the participants in order to explore their subjective experiences. Four participants all training or having trained in a Humanistic approach took part in semi-structured interviews. The heuristic method allowed for engagement with the participants and immersion in the resulting data.

Themes emerged from the immersion of the data and a creative synthesis was drawn up to represent these themes. Whilst each experience was unique, there were some key themes that emerged common to all participants such as: boundaries, relationships, environment, identity, responsibility, influence, transferable skills and the future.

All participants had a shared belief in the power of relationship but were wary of feeling isolated themselves as they were now working more in isolation. They believed that at times their boundaries could be flexible and the difference in environments between teaching and psychotherapy was starkly contrasting. Participants found themselves

freer when working as psychotherapists and this allowed the participants to embrace their congruent selves.