

Abstract

This autoethnographic study explores how a queer trainee person-centred and experiential (PCE) psychotherapist conceptualises and experiences their non-directive attitude in the context of their work with people diagnosed with functional neurological disorder (FND) within a trauma-informed neurology psychotherapy service. The study was designed to enhance the author's therapeutic practice and to improve understanding of PCE ways of working with FND. Data was gathered in the form of reflective journal entries over a two-week period while on placement within the service, enabling the author to explore their non-directive attitude as a facet of their culturally- and relationally-situated subjectivity.

Thematic analysis of the data resulted in six theme stories, revealing that the author views their non-directive attitude as a foundational aspect of their practice that emerges from their queerness and their childhood experiences in a cult, addresses power in the therapeutic relationship and involves an intention to centre, value and trust the client while experiencing acceptant empathic understanding of their frame of reference. The author's non-directive attitude is experienced as particular sensations and forms while in session with clients and includes a trauma-informed responsiveness to the client's agenda as a patient within a specialist service seeking to understand, manage and treat their FND. The author suggests that their non-directive attitude may help FND patients by creating a sense of relational safety and allowing them to connect with and process their experiencing, but finds that it can be challenging to maintain and act in accordance with their non-directive values in this setting.