

Shared Visibilities – an exploration of the client's use of imagery on the road to unconditional positive self-regard

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The client offers an image...

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was given by an ethics committee of tutors and peers. All participants gave informed consent, including for publication.

Additional layers of conceptual analysis, reflexivity and supervision were used to ensure that potential researcher bias was held and used as part of the analysis, rather than being excluded or becoming overly dominant.



The image is explored in relationship...

Results and findings

Following the interviews, the transcripts were analysed and those interpretative statements also analysed to determine central themes, the most prominent being 'UPSR and the self'. Re-listening to and revisiting the original recordings and reflections showed that theme as present and valid in creating insight into this phenomenon.

Imagery use forms part of a mechanism for developing UPSR, alongside and beyond the therapeutic relationship. By using client language, the therapist can focus on what the client sees about themselves, and by sharing in the shifts in imagery and their understanding of them, the client can receive UPR offered, and work on developing their own UPSR. By using their own imagery in therapy, the client creates a measurable benchmark for their own change, building on an understanding of self from descriptive to metamorphosis.

My participant's voices – experiencing imagery work in therapy

"By playing with an image it feels safer...less abstract...it allows me to come outside of myself and look at it in a more objective way... I guess that's where my understanding moved."

"In that...increased congruence, there's more space for self-regard...the [use of imagery] in therapy has given voice to something that was part of me that...didn't necessarily fit...it's made it ok to be like that."

"I can feel it...and I can see it but we don't have to put a big summary to it...you can have as much exploration as you want in the safety...of your own head... – the word I would use would be acceptance."

"I'm going to... visualise an image,... there's jaggedness there's softness and so actually it really helps me to understand that my whole self and all of my experiences are different textures...and just realising that actually its ok...to be all of these things is so lovely because it allows me to just be more of my organic self with myself."

Conclusions

Changes in client language symbolise change in the client. Using the client's own concept of themselves enables UPR to be applied at source, maintaining focus on the client and their capacity for growth and UPSR.

Therapists need to be aware of their role in interpretation of client images, and of introducing their own imagery.

Limitations

As an IPA study, this work gives insight into a phenomenon but can't state conclusions about how the use of imagery has an impact on therapeutic practice.



Images are held and understood; complex, beautiful, unique

"I cannot know the phenomenon from the perspective of another, only draw conclusions on my interpretation of a shared phenomenon in the description of another's experience. My understanding is ...that the hidden qualities of the person are expressed through the metaphors they use, and that by studying them, we and they can learn much about how to love ourselves better." (Goldsmith, T ; 2019)

Aims and purpose

Research question: What impact does imagery shared within the therapeutic relationship have on client UPSR?

My aim was to explore how client language works to make the self visible, and then reimagined as acceptable. The purpose was to explore a personal phenomenon from the perspective of other trainee Person-centred psychotherapists in order to further understand the phenomenon and its impact in the development of UPSR from the client perspective.

UPSR, the indication of the client's acceptance of the self, is a marker of therapeutic progress.



Understanding and insight grow from exploration...

Design methodology

I conducted a small-scale, qualitative study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, forming part of my final year MSc research. I conducted 4 semi-structured interviews, and then explored them through layers of hermeneutic analysis and personal reflexivity, ensuring a balance between participant words and my interpretation, Person-centred theory and new insight. Research journals also formed part of the data and were used to identify key themes in the creation of a master table.