

- ▶ Catherine O'Riordan
- ▶ MSc Integrative Psychotherapy (2013)
- ▶ Private practice



Aims today

- ▶ Share my research findings
- ▶ Implications for clinical practice

Research Focus



- ▶ Understand
- ▶ Reconnecting with hidden aspects or parts of themselves
- ▶ *Within the context of Integrative Psychotherapy*
- ▶ *Client's perspective*

Research Method



- ▶ Qualitative: lived experience
- ▶ Giorgi's (2009) Descriptive Phenomenological Method
- ▶ Aim: identify essential qualities

Research Process

- ▶ 7 self-selecting participants
- ▶ Therapists / in-training
- ▶ Two years plus therapy
- ▶ Hour long semi-structured interviews
- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Participant descriptions

Findings

- ▶ Map out the essential qualities in the process of reconnecting with hidden aspects or parts of Self
- ▶ From the client's experience / participant descriptions



3 Stages / steps:

- ▶ The Liminal
- ▶ The Emergent
- ▶ The Reconnecting

The Liminal Stage

- ▶ A powerful felt-sense of something **IMPORTANT** but not understood
- ▶ Important Record Information For:



- ▶ “I didn’t know what it was I wanted to connect with ... an early sort of sense was in a dream” (P6:38-41)
- ▶ “I’ve always had a sense of there being some other part of me that I haven’t yet understood” (P3:108)

- ▶ “It’s like a sense of absolute certainty that if I didn’t do something ... I was never going to be happy” (P3:108)



Key Feature

- ▶ A profound and unfamiliar felt-sense which feels really PERSONAL and really IMPORTANT

The Emergent Stage

- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Guarded
- ▶ Ambivalence
- ▶ Conflict
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Pain



- ▶ So I went there I suppose knowing I had this part, but wanted to get rid of it, thinking it was wrong” (P1:189-192)
- ▶ “Really hard, secretive, shame, shameful, shaming infused kind of stuff

- ▶ “I was ...very hyper vigilant really and quite protected, I felt quite conflicted” (P6:146-148)
- ▶ “I’m not going to get attached or dependent on you because it’s too much and too painful” (P1:62,163)

Key Feature

- ▶ A profound internal resistance to connecting internally and interpersonally



Reconnecting Stage

- ▶ Inner-conflict
- ▶ Intense affect
- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Vulnerability
- ▶ Regression



- ▶ “I wanted to hide ...and again, felt utter shame and humiliation and just wanted the floor to open up” (P5:302-304)
- ▶ “it’s so hard to get this person out there and actually being in conversation with the therapist ... I know that’s where I need to go, but I’ve got an awful lot invested in, you know, in trying to block that” (P3:316-365)

The client needs:
to feel that what is
IMPORTANT to them

is equally **IMPORTANT** to
the therapist



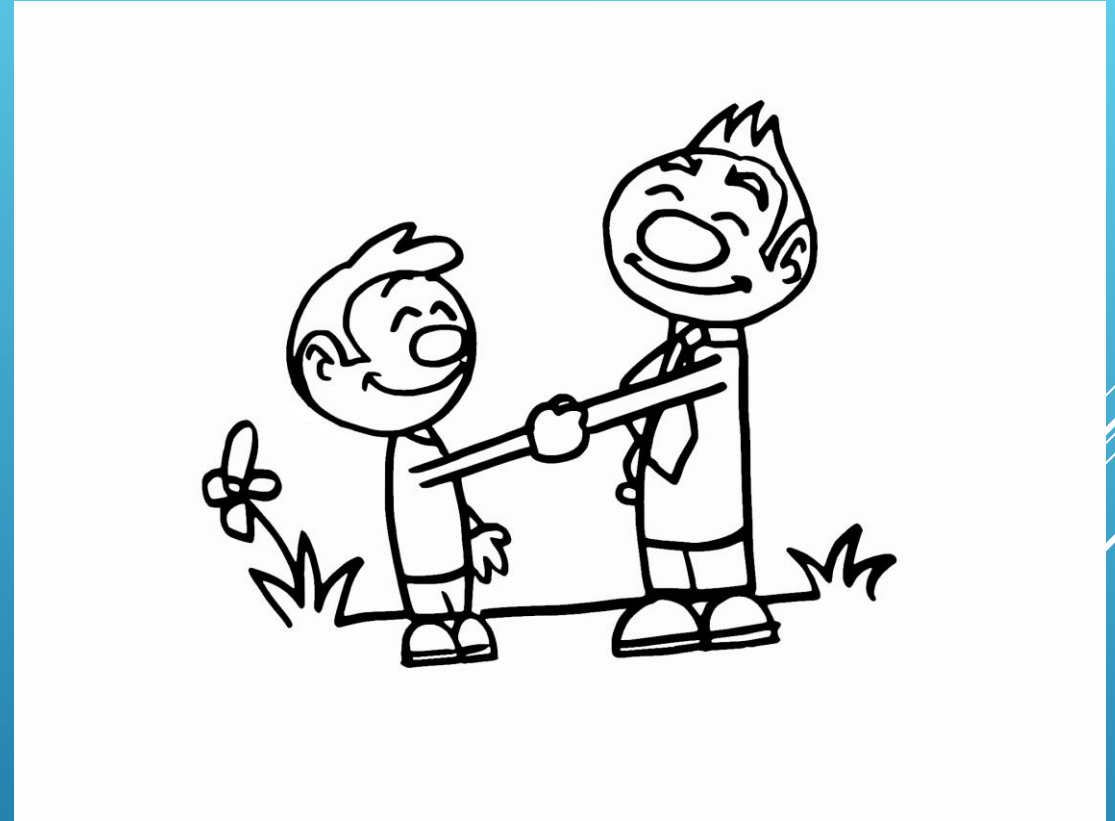
- ▶ “my therapist suggested I bring some photos of myself ... she really wanted me to look at them with care and attention and slowly ... looking at them in that context was really powerful” (P4:567-570)

- ▶ “It’s a real sense that she related to this part of me, this younger me and was on my side and was sort of cheering” (P6:286,284)

- ▶ “Probably after about a year, she asked if she could sit next to me and would it be ok to hold my hand, or hold me. And of course that’s what I’d wanted ever since I’d stepped into that office, without really realizing it. So it was a massive moment” (P1:330-333)

- ▶ “There wasn’t a sort of normalizing of sex I think you need permission and encouragement in that place ... maybe that was why it didn’t get done” (P6:417;421-422;426)

- ▶ The client needs to feel the therapist connects
- ▶ With what is **IMPORTANT** to them
- ▶ If not the contact stops
- ▶ Internal
- ▶ interpersonal



Key Feature

- ▶ Visceral defences in action
- ▶ Memories of past traumatic experiences
- ▶ If the therapist is able to keep connected with & respond to the client's felt-sense of something **IMPORTANT** the client is able to work through painful experiences

Linking Research With Practice

- ▶ Research Community
- ▶ Relational developmental approach to Integrative Psychotherapy
- ▶ How to facilitate self-integration: healing + building capacity

- ▶ How can the research findings inform clinical practice?



▶ Do the findings help to better understand what the client is reconnecting with?



- 1) Inner felt-sense
- 2) Relational needs
- 3) Developmental needs
- 4) Visceral defences in action
- 5) Trauma experience

Inner felt-sense

“It is an unfamiliar deep-down level of awareness; it doesn’t come to you in the form of thoughts or words but as a single (though often puzzling and very complex) bodily feeling”



(Gendlin 1978:33)

Client learns:

- ▶ Focussing inwards feels okay
- ▶ Feeling positive feels okay

- ▶ Feeling connected to Self feels good
- ▶ Feeling connected with therapist feels good





- ▶ Utilise
- ▶ Expand safe-ground
- ▶ Engage
- ▶ Explore positive affect, physiology and cognitions
- ▶ Anchor positive relational contact: internal and interpersonal



- ▶ Draw close to the client in this new and unexpected safe-ground
- ▶ Back door approach
- ▶ Side step:
- ▶ Visceral defences in action
- ▶ Shame

From this point of relational contact work
through painful feelings:

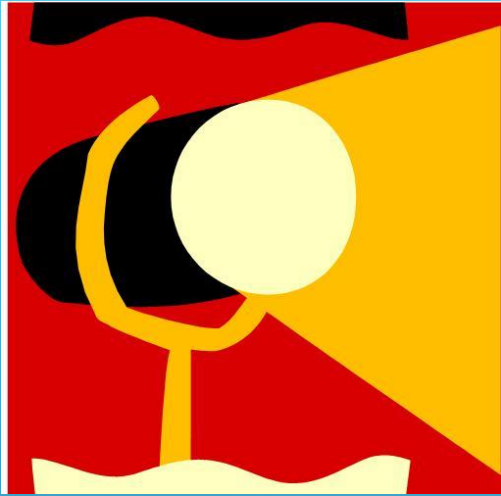
- ▶ defences in action
- ▶ trauma

(see trauma literature)



Reconnecting with your Self

- ▶ Organismic Self (Rogers 1967)
- ▶ True Self (Winnicott 1965)
- ▶ Visceral core (Bowlby 1969)
- ▶ Relational needs
- ▶ Developmental needs



Conclusion

- ▶ Sheds light on the experience of reconnecting with hidden parts or aspects of self
- ▶ The client is in contact with their 'organismic', 'true', and 'visceral core'; as well as their relational and developmental needs

- ▶ Focus interpersonal contact here
- ▶ From here process painful memories
- ▶ Affirm relational / developmental needs
- ▶ Helps side step shame / visceral defences
- ▶ Supports recovery
- ▶ Builds self-esteem, capacity and autonomy