

Relational Integrative Psychotherapy

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Counsellors and psychotherapists alike increasingly seek a holistic approach to practice. In the UK at least, “project integration” offers an increasingly divided profession the opportunity to build a bridge between “fluid, intuitive approaches acceptable in private practice...and empirically-substantiated evidenced-based practice” more commonly encountered in the NHS. Finlay offers us here an inevitably personal approach to integrating several key modalities based upon a core belief – which I share - that it is “the relationship that heals”. The text is divided into two sections which usefully provides a framework for both trainees, and perhaps those considering accreditation, to construct a coherent integrative approach focussing on both “process and content”. Section 1 addresses the “process”, or core relational element of the approach, the “being and doing” of practice. Activities in which the practitioner engages, such as beginnings, the therapeutic alliance, the process of empathy, holding boundaries, activating resources, challenge, and the use of imagery, and of course endings are covered here. The author enlivens the narrative with illuminating and often poignant vignettes and case illustrations.

Just as the human eye sees more effectively when it can gather information from across the continuum of the visible spectrum, so Finlay uses the relational “lense” for the second part of her book, to synthesise a coherent, personalised approach drawing upon the continuum offered by six core modalities. Each of the associated six chapters addresses the core theoretical ideas from each, and importantly illuminates their meaning for relationally-oriented practice. For the seasoned, perhaps more narrowly focussed practitioner this section usefully provides an introduction into what’s on offer. Both gestalt and existential phenomenology are fairly obvious choices to include here. The author acknowledges some of the key fundamental philosophical differences between existential and person-centred approaches, recognising how they can profoundly impact upon practice. I’m personally pleased to see the inclusion of a systems perspective: “attempting to do therapy without transforming context may at best be slow, at worst futile”. As “all therapist work cognitively” Finlay argues, then CBT-oriented approaches have a justifiable place in “holistically, relationally, mindfully” oriented practice. Psychoanalytic and TA approaches are too big to cover in detail, but sufficient coverage is provided to ensure awareness of and acceptance of all the different parts of us which emerge in our intersubjective relating. I love what this book seeks to achieve – a cure for our professional colour blindness!

James Costello PhD, is a registered MBACP (accredited) counsellor who teaches counselling in the Department of Psychology, University of the West of England, Bristol.