

Experiences of Learning Emotion-Focused Therapy: A Qualitative Interview Study

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Abstract

Training in Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) is a multifaceted learning process that is grounded in the search for meaningful and fruitful practice. Generating a deep and sustained commitment, EFT training is an immersive process fuelled by experiencing the effectiveness of the approach. This study maps the complexity of the modality, its learning pathways and the overall experience of EFT in action.

Aimed at practicing psychotherapists who had completed a minimum of the four-day, level one EFT training, twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the facilitative factors and challenges of learning EFT. The interview transcripts for all participants were analysed using a qualitative grounded theory method to identify the main learning experiences and themes.

Revealing a continuum driven by therapist motivation, this investigation depicts learning EFT as a synthesis of personal and professional growth. The experiential activity of engaging with EFT in its many forms, promotes a learning process that spans five broad domains of Personal Motivation for Learning & Development, Experiences of Formal EFT Training, Informal Activities, and Learning & Development via both Supervision and Professional Practice.

In addition to mapping the configuration of the various routes to learning, insights gleaned include an array of propositions for the enhancement of the pedagogic delivery of EFT. Whilst participants highlighted its emotionally demanding complexity, dedication and enthusiasm for this model of therapy remained unabated due to 'in practice' observable effects and enhanced understanding of the therapeutic process.

Keywords: emotion-focused therapy; training; qualitative research; therapist development