

Abstract

The aim of this systematic research study was to understand how affect-regulation interventions in integrative psychotherapy support women who have experienced relational abuse. There are great quantities of literature written about affect-regulation in practice, and this author was specifically interested in exploring the phenomenon from the client's perspective. Whilst providing an opportunity for female survivor's voices to be heard, the goals for this research were to identify an emergent framework, to ground and cement theory, offering the field of psychotherapy more concentrated insight into this vulnerable client group.

Five female integrative psychotherapists who had experience of relational abuse and had been in personal therapy for at least a year participated. Qualitative, semi structured interviews were conducted to explore their experiences of affect-regulation in therapy. Themes emerged and the theory became grounded in a stage approach that facilitated safety and connection, moving on to validation of survival coping mechanisms and finally internalisation of the reparative, developmental therapeutic relationship of the co-regulating other. Recommendations are suggested for future research and implications for Integrative practice and training are also discussed in the light of the findings.