

Abstract

When considering narcissism there is a natural turn towards formal diagnosis, client presentations, and 'how to' guidance for therapists working with narcissistic clients. However, little is known about narcissism in Psychotherapists and how this impacts their offer of a therapeutic relationship. This research aimed to offer an in-depth understanding of this experience from Integrative Psychotherapists. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews provided four first-hand accounts of this experience from which Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis produced four super-ordinate themes: 'understanding of narcissism', 'focus on the therapeutic relationship', 'self-perception', and 'defences'. The diversity of themes evidenced the complexity of the topic, society's negative perception, the vulnerability of association with narcissism, and the emergence of narcissistic 'needs' in clinical settings. Findings are placed in the context of current literature and implications of the research are suggested for training and supervision purposes as well as future research.