

Abstract

I have often wondered why we return to what hurts us, an invisible pull overshadowing what we may view as logic. My dissertation explores how repetition compulsion in relationships can be viewed through a Humanistic and Relational Lens, moving away from pathology and deterministic values toward the real human experience. Grounded in my rationale and my therapeutic stance of relational healing, I will extend this through my literature review. Tracing the roots of repetition compulsion, I will journey from Freud's Death Drive (1920) toward humanistic and relational understandings, pulling from contemporary, embodied, and integrative theory. I will follow with a clinical case study of my therapeutic journey with a client, feeling our way through repeated emotional abandonment and rejection from self and others. The therapeutic relationship became a space for healing not through fixing but through co-regulation, attunement, and meeting her pain. I conclude with my personal and professional reflections on the importance of humanistic, integrative, and relational insight and values within the therapy room, allowing us to see repetition not as a trap but as a signal, a place to be met differently.