

Abstract

This research provides a qualitative exploration into the integrative psychotherapists experience of taking a biophilic lens, specifically animals and/or nature, when working with clients who present with a dominant schizoid adaptation. A review of the literature revealed that whilst research has been conducted around the inclusion of biophilia in psychotherapy, this has not included taking a biophilic lens to working with personality adaptations.

Five experienced integrative psychotherapists who utilize a relational developmental framework, and incorporate biophilia within their practice took part in the study. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the essence of the therapist's experiences. These were audio recorded and transcribed to produce data sets. These were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The analysis revealed multiple subordinate themes that grouped together to form the five super ordinate themes of 'the environment', 'the therapists affect', 'interconnectedness', 'embodiment' and 'co-caring'.

The research discussion illuminates how theoretical knowledge of the schizoid adaptation (Little, 2001), including the flux between the desire for relational connection and fear of engulfment (Erskine, 2023c), can be enhanced by utilizing a biophilic lens that includes nature and animals. Thus offers an additional therapeutic resource when working with clients who present with this adaptation. Suggestions for the incorporation in training and further research are also provided.