

Trainee teaching session: Good and Bad Therapists (and People)

Summary of chapter content:

- It is important to consider our motive for being a therapist – especially a “good” therapist.
- No one can ultimately be a good therapist but, as Winnicott says, we can be a good *enough* therapist – this involves accepting and making use of our imperfections.
- The therapist is the “other person in the space”, with some degree of interpersonal skill and empathy.
- “Messing up” or “doing the wrong thing” is how therapy progresses. What matters is not the *rupture* but the *repair*.
- Being a bad therapist is not about being careless or slapdash.
- The relationship between the therapist and client is like any other relationship – it won’t always be good. It may involve frustration, disappointment, misunderstandings, boredom, neediness, manipulation, avoidance, and despair.
- The relational style is important because it is our relationships which form us.

Humanistic theory perspectives:

- I – Thou, Martin Buber:
 - The most important aspect of the human experience is to be “in relationship” and, through this, become fully human.
 - The relationship is characterised by mutual respect, empathy, and dialogue.
 - The therapist is required to truly ‘show up’ for their clients.
 - In the “I – Thou” relationship, I meet you as you are, and you meet me as I am.
- Person-centred, Carl Rogers:
 - The person-centred approach works on the basis that the client has the tools within themselves to heal – the therapist walks alongside them in this process.
 - The core tenets are empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard.
 - The approach focuses on the relationship between client and therapist, not therapist as expert or analyst.

Attributes of a good enough therapist:

- Humility. Trusting instincts without being arrogant.
- Leaving plenty of space for the client to direct sessions.
- Pace – waiting for the “right” time to challenge clients.
- Connection – prioritising human connection with clients.
- Damage & repair – acknowledging therapists are human and will make mistakes.
- Focusing on the quality of repair rather than striving for “perfection”.

Questions to prompt group discussion:

- What are your experiences of “good” and “bad” therapy?
- How is the Race, Power, and Privilege work informing/changing your idea of a good enough therapist?