

# Flying blind in the psychotic storm

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## **Abstract**

Therapeutic interventions in psychotic patients remain for many both a controversial and confusing area of clinical work. This paper aims to explore the therapist's experience of countertransference when working with psychosis. More specifically, how the therapist's experience of both the patient's and his own psychotic parts leads to a disturbance and a momentary fragmentation of the therapist's self-reflective capacity, and how this stands to influence the therapeutic process. Although there exists a vast body of psychodynamic literature on the nature and development of the psychoses, there are very few experience-near accounts of the therapist's countertransference. In this paper I attempt to represent something of my own experiences of countertransference when working with a psychotic man in twice-a-week therapy over four months, and how this affected my interventions, through the use of case material included in the paper. I draw heavily on the fundamental psychodynamic theorists to help elucidate my experiences, and supplement them with more contemporary views on the nature of psychotic illness. The case material is followed by a focus on key themes chosen to represent the intersection of the patient's madness and my own as understood via my countertransference. These themes include: the use of language in psychosis, psychotic transference within the therapeutic relationship, dreaming as talking, and adding value – the therapist's need. I conclude the paper by arguing that working with psychotic patients via one's countertransference opens the therapist up to self-reflective failure, and that these disturbances represent an important part of the work.