

The psychoanalytic petticoats of a Rogerian group process

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Abstract

LifeLine Western Cape is a non-profit organisation in the under-resourced mental healthcare sector which provides an invaluable contribution, both in terms of service delivery and cost-effective training. It makes use of a facilitated, experiential, small closed-group process to offer training to prospective volunteer counsellors. In this article I employ an experience-near vantage point based on my involvement as a facilitator, to reflect critically on LifeLine's person-centred training methodology. I draw on Bion's notion of containment, Winnicott's holding, and Kohut's empathy as well as fundamental psychoanalytic concepts including the unconscious, the frame and countertransference, to reflect on the training process. I suggest that the value of using psychoanalytic ideas to understand the group process may lie chiefly in the containment it provides for the facilitator. Furthermore I propose that there is perhaps more congruence between these two apparently very different theoretical approaches, than initially meets the eye.