In this rather helpless state, which can be overwhelming, you may, through being in projective identification with the part of the client dominated by omnipotence, be rendered unavailable to them as a thinking mind that might be able to help them make sense of things. The disaster that can happen in the transference relationship is that the counsellor repeats a situation in which contact with feelings and with painful reality are avoided. So I think my first recommendation in working with a young person in this ‘untouchable’ state is to penetrate their omnipotent defence to stand up to it.

I have noticed in my own caseload, when working with this presentation, that there can exist commonly within the family of origin a relationship between the parents, in which one partner has failed to stand up to the other. It is as if the young person has internalised a relationship in which there are only two positions – controller or controlled, strong person/weak person – and they have little else in their own repertoire with which to make an unconscious identification. For this reason, I think that it is tremendously important when working with this to show that you are not going to collude with this in the therapeutic relationship. They need to know that part of us is actually strong enough and has the authority to stand up to their omnipotence.

Role play – working with the omnipotence

In our workshop, participants were invited to role play a client whom they now had in their mind as we had been discussing omnipotence. Another colleague was to take the part of counsellor, and a third to observe. The role play threw up some rich insights into what it might feel like to be caught in an omnipotent state of mind. What emerged was how much adrenalin and excitement this state could generate for a young person, but also how unsafe it felt, and how much those playing it also wanted – needed – to be given a boundary and be stopped. The examples from the workshop are not available to us here, for confidentiality reasons, but I can give something of an example from my work with Jed.

I would brace myself when Jed began another story about wanting to smash Jack’s face in. Jed despised him for no other reason than that he saw him trying so hard at school. Jack actually cared about it. Jed would describe in horrible detail how and when he would do something to terrify Jack, and I would brace myself, and interrupt him: “Jed I’m going to stop you. When you begin to tell me about wanting to smash Jack’s face in, telling me about Jack and how pathetic he is, you are telling me you have an inside, an inside place where it hurts.” Jed responded with a Kinder version of the story of the breaking of his spirit. And although he cried then, and was comforted, this made so little difference to what happened to Jed, because nobody brought him home, and so he had to harden himself to tender feeling. Jed became psychologically organised around making certain that nobody ever hurt him like that again.

Here we began to uncover the origin of a hurt that had no name: Jed had suffered the trauma of being separated from his home, family and culture before he was in any way able to comprehend what had happened to him. Jed had become a fighter and had hurt others ever since. As our work neared its ending, Jed had a tattoo put on the inside part of his fighting arm, as if marking on the surface something of the scar he felt beneath. I began to realise, with great sadness because we were ending, that the things we talked about had begun to get through.

I wasn’t scared of it, when they did the tattoo – I went in on my own.

Man, it hurt though, I will say that – because of where I had it, right? Because I had it right here on the inside – that’s the place where it hurts the most.

I am not so scared of you now, Jed.

You are telling me you have an inside, an inside place where it hurts.

And, after all that dread of you showing up, I am really going to miss you, Jed.

Note: All details of the case material used have been changed for confidentiality reasons.

References


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Zen and the art of riding the dragon

Meditation and being in the moment – what relationship have these to our client work? And when is it right to make a switch?

Becky Seale shares experience from her practice

A s living beings, we all seek comfort – a little longer in bed in the morning, a biscuit with a cup of tea, a warm spot in the sun. When something happens to us, we do whatever we can to avoid feeling them and do whatever we can to change them. A young person seeking counselling wants help to feel better and change – or overcome – the difficulties they’re experiencing. Yet the process of counselling will often not be a comfortable one. As counsellors, we need to learn to hold this discomfort, with an understanding and hope that the outcome will offer some relief. We will all find different ways of managing this process. For me, one of the ways I find clarity and support is from my meditation practice; a practice that recognises the rewards of working with the discomfort instead of avoiding it.
What is Zen?

Zen is simply the practice of being with whatever is present for us right now, without denying anything to be different. The more we become aware of the more joy we will ultimately experience. We only become disappointed, hurt and upset when things do not meet our expectations, when things are not exactly the way we want them to be. However, when we accept things as they are, we can no longer be disappointed. More than this, we can find real treasures.

Brazier suggests that 'to grow pearls, there has to be some grit in the oyster,' and claims that 'by working with our grit, we become a “true pearl”, a “true pearl”.

Zen is of a highly practical nature. The image of a newly enlightened Zen monk is of someone who simply shrugs and goes on with life. However, as Brazier points out, there is to be some grit in the oyster, and that means that there is something we have to confront.

The more I can allow my clients the whole room, as when on the meditation cushion, the more I can allow my clients the whole room, as when on the meditation cushion, the more we can then see the patterns of our lives and confront the issues that may be causing us suffering.

What if the action has already happened?

Brazier’s study on counselling mediators also found that these counsellors valued their ‘willingness to stay with discomfort and the “ability, fortified by meditation, to stay with the client’s discomfort is invaluable to a therapist who values the ethical principle of non-directiveness.”

I don’t know how I would do this work without my meditation practice, and in many ways, I consider my work in the counselling room to be a continuation of my meditation practice.

Brazier suggests that ‘space in our heads as therapists is essential to creating space for our clients. Space in our heads certainly enables me to create space in the counselling room; enables me to be with the pleasant and the unpleasant, the comfortable and the uncomfortable experiences of both me as listener and the client I am listening to.’

Mindfulness is not only for CBT

As a humanistic, person-centred, meditating counsellor, I feel a little miffed that ‘mindfulness’ appears these days to be the ‘in’ thing, with many therapists wanting to get ‘on board’. This can mean that we miss its wider applications, namely a deep inquiry into the existential dilemma of the human condition.’

As Frankl7 says: ‘Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing the last of human freedoms to be taken from anyone, the freedom to choose one’s own way.’

‘Zen, by contrast,’ he goes on to say, ‘offers a way to choose one’s own way’.

Courage to change the things I can, and to accept the things I cannot change.

Mindfulness is an approach to treating mental health issues, which can help people to develop greater awareness of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and to cultivate a more accepting and compassionate attitude towards themselves and others.

Riding the dragon

Many adults, in the face of a child’s suffering, do everything they can to alleviate it – from offering sweets when they hurt a knee or telling them ‘It’s not that bad!’ to trying to protect them from the realities of disease and death. As Nick Luomo says, ‘Young people think and worry about death far more than adults would like to believe.’ These things become dragons that we would rather hide in a cave from young eyes. Yet we counsellors have a real opportunity to enable young clients to face up to the reality of the human condition and show them how, instead, they can learn to ride on the dragon’s back.

As Frankl says: ‘Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing: the last of human freedoms to be taken from anyone, the freedom to choose one’s own way.’ And it is this hope of existential freedom that is the precious thing we can offer our clients, regardless of their current lack of power to change things.

The more I am able to be with others, the more I can allow my clients to do so, and vice versa. At the other end of the spectrum, however, another tension exists in making the shift from an image of a Buddhist monk sitting in serene meditation, to the image of monks setting off to perform activities, such as burning straw. It is in this way, my Zen practice becomes one not only of sitting and being, but very much one of doing and taking action, when needed.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of being aware of what is happening in the present moment, without judgment or attachment. It involves paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and physical experiences, and accepting them as they are, without trying to change them.

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ZEN Care Shopping protection. 0% fees Shopping with no fees. Features. Multicurrency account Many currencies for all your needs. Cards ZEN Mastercard® for shopping enlightenment. Pricing. Take a look at the available ZEN plans. Knowing the price is nice, but what is even better is the fact that ZEN practically pays for itself. Inside the app, you will find one screen that tells you how much you’ve saved just by having ZEN. You can change or cancel them at any time if you need to. Still not sure? Yandex Zen is a personal recommendation service. Zen helps internet postings find their audience. Postings can either get posted automatically in recommendation feeds from the author's site, or an author can create content directly in Yandex Zen. Any companies, internet publications, or independent authors can create their own channels in Yandex Zen. Yandex Zen gradually adapts the feed to your interests. It analyzes your interaction with the feed (subscriptions, ratings, blocks), search queries, browser history, and other data about your online preferences. You don't need to worry about privacy because the data is stored in a depersonalized format. As a result, you receive personalized recommendations that include materials from sites you haven't visited yet. If your interests change, the Yandex Zen feed adjusts to them after a while.