

Embodied Echoes: A Qualitative Exploration into Body Psychotherapy and Trauma

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17 Embodied Echoes: A Qualitative Exploration into Body Psychotherapy and Trauma

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Abstract

Objectives: Although research has consistently shown that childhood trauma can lead to ensuring psychosomatic difficulties, treatment approaches in the United Kingdom remain largely focussed on cognitive and verbal processing. In the context of a growing emphasis on trauma-informed care, there is increasing recognition of the need to attend to embodied dimensions of trauma and recovery. In this presentation, we will share findings from a qualitative study which explored the lived experiences of adults who accessed body psychotherapy for childhood trauma, with a particular focus on how these experiences shaped their understandings and experiences of recovery. **Design:** A qualitative, arts-based design was employed, combining Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with body-mapping to capture embodied aspects of recovery that may be difficult to articulate verbally. **Methods:** Seven participants were invited to individual, semi-structured online interviews which involved a body-mapping exercise. Data were subsequently analysed using IPA. **Findings:** Three superordinate experiential themes were identified, which collectively describe recovery as non-linear, emphasise the embodied storage and release of trauma, and highlight the importance of embodied attunement, validation, and relational safety within psychological therapy. **Conclusions:** Findings highlight the value of body psychotherapy in addressing embodied trauma experiences often overlooked in mainstream services. In a changing health psychology landscape characterised by diverse needs and increasing trauma prevalence, integrating somatic approaches has important theoretical, clinical, and service-level implications. Trauma is lived in the body as well as the mind—recovery requires attending to both.