

Busting the Therapy Myth



By Chris Wallwork

I remember when I had first decided to explore the possibility of attending my own personal therapy, even before I had made any enquiries, I had a number of fears/concerns/questions (call them what you will) about what I was going to face when I walked in to the therapy room for the first time. In my own head I had built up an image of how a therapist's room might look, what the therapist themselves would be like, and even dress like!

I had pictured a sparse room, with two confrontationally placed tatty chairs, a box of tissues on a desk, and some plastic cups full of water. Also, I had imagined that there would be some of those corporate motivational posters on the wall, the ones that say 'SUCCESS' in big letters, followed by some catchy tag line, and an unrelated picture of a humpback whale hovering above the 'encouraging' words.

I had pictured my therapist to be female, likely to have a penchant for wearing linen clothing and large jewelry, and a scarf – most definitely a scarf!

I had imagined that my therapist would be motivated by the fact I would be paying by the hour to be there, would be clock watching, potentially not really listening, and yet I had a sense that they would be doing their job if I cried during the sessions.

I reckon (well, I know) I was scared of opening up. I was putting judgements and obstacles in the way of allowing myself the time and space I needed to explore what I had going on inside my head.

After researching counselling on the internet, and stumbling upon various websites, I was fortunate for my first time in therapy to find a therapist who was BACP registered, this gave me peace of mind that they had undertaken qualifications, training, and would be accountable to me and to a supervisor (accountability was important to my process). I was shocked to discover that anyone can call themselves a therapist or counsellor, but not everyone is qualified! I remember being nervous sat in the waiting room, even though there was no motivational poster in sight! I was met by my therapist and taken to the therapy room.

My therapy felt successful. I was afforded time and space to unpack my own process, I was listened to, I never once felt judged, and I certainly didn't feel like my therapist was clock watching. I actually ended up looking forward to going to therapy!

It was important to me in my own practice that I remembered my pre-judgements in relation to therapy, and modelled my working around ensuring that I offered the type of service I would want to go to. That is how Counselling for Blokes operates today.

Now, I don't know what your pre-judgements are in relation to therapy, and therapists – but I highly recommend putting them to one side and taking the plunge if you're looking for support. There may well be some therapists who fulfil my judgement criteria, ultimately it doesn't matter one bit – they were manifestations of my fears, effectively about my own process. Provided your therapist is qualified and registered to a professional body, the rest is up to you!