

**Marie Adams**

**Abstract**

**Private Lives of Therapists: Challenges for Therapeutic Practice**

This is a qualitative research study focusing on the personal lives of forty therapists across four major traditions; humanistic, integrative, psychoanalytical and cognitive/behavioural. The purpose of the study was to determine if, and how, therapists believe their experience outside the therapy room affects their work with clients and patients. Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews lasting up to an hour were conducted in the UK, Australia and Canada.

Therapists of all persuasions spoke of having to manage the everyday stresses of life, including illness, bereavement and divorce but they also spoke of historical anxieties, including parental and sibling psychosis, abandonment and chronic depression. Within the interviews respondents considered why they had become therapists, and further to that, why they had become the *kinds* of therapists they had. How do these current, and historical, experiences add or detract from psychotherapists' ability to connect with their clients and patients?

The data from these forty interviews prompts questions concerning the provision of care and support for therapists facing personal crisis. The findings may also be of interest to training institutions when considering candidates for psychotherapy training. While a trainee might struggle in training within one modality, they may flourish within another tradition. And further, how psychologically healthy do training candidates need to be *before* they enter training? Are there grounds for considering whether therapy should be a prerequisite in advance of training?