

Counselling and Psychotherapy Consultation

I believe the statutory regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists is long overdue. There is a very urgent need for counsellors and psychotherapists to be supported and regulated by a clear and *independent* structure.

Counselling and psychotherapy is a very complicated and intricate area to work effectively in. Clients can be extremely vulnerable, especially in relation to trauma and developmental trauma.

Counselling and psychotherapy can be very helpful to clients but it can also be very damaging. At present there seems to be no discussion about the negative effects of ineffective or harmful 'therapy'.

It seems very naïve to presume that counsellors and psychotherapists only ever work in a way that is 100% beneficial. Mistakes happen, things go wrong and some counsellors and psychotherapists may be poor or abusive practitioners.

I think it would be refreshing to see an honest, level headed and open discussion about all aspects of counselling and psychotherapy, both positive and negative. Also more feedback is needed from clients, as to what they found helpful or unhelpful.

My motivation for writing this piece comes from my own experience of 'therapy'. For the most part the counsellors/psychotherapists I have seen (in the UK and Ireland) ranged from very good to average. I do also recognise that my own level of understanding and ability to engage with the therapist would have also influenced my experience of the therapy.

However I also had an extraordinarily traumatic encounter with one psychotherapist, in Ireland. This individual was practicing within a system (I was in a mandatory, assessed group) and disregarded the normal rules and boundaries of therapy. This psychotherapist used unusual techniques and there was no safety, containment or even permission given by us, for these kinds of psychologically and emotionally risky activities.

When I deteriorated and then began to challenge the psychotherapist, they continued with their belief, that what had occurred was a good experience for me. I, on the other hand, felt my deepest personal boundaries had been violated in an extremely casual and disrespectful way.

Apparently my experience with this psychotherapist is not an isolated one; other people have also experienced severe difficulties too. In fact, it turns out that many counsellors and psychotherapists have heard about and are able to tolerate and accept what went on in the groups run by this psychotherapist. The current system, therefore, does not protect people from harmful therapists.

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