

Why hope ?

EXPLORING HOPE

Dr. John Pryor-Jones
Counsellor and Psychotherapist

- A book I must read
- A job I had to do
- A course I must teach
- Personal tragedy
- A client's question

A Client's Question

IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR ME ?

The practitioner as researcher

- "A concern to generate knowledge-in-context rather than seeking to establish generalised 'universal' truths
- A commitment to critical reflexivity, encompassing... the personal, social, cultural, political and moral pre-understandings that inform our research
- A willingness to deploy in research the basic tools of counselling practice: an acceptance of feeling and emotion, the disciplined use of self-in-relation, and the capacity to engage in a dialogical process with others
- The intention to disseminate the results of research in ways that genuinely inform practice and empower users"
- (McLeod,1999)

What I want to know

- I want to discover other counsellor's experience of hope and understand the meaning they give to it.
- I want to know how hope influences their counselling practice
- I want to develop an understanding of my own experience in relation to theirs

The Practitioner

- I have a relational integrated approach

"Relationships are of fundamental importance in:

- The development of personality and a sense of self
- The difficulties clients bring to therapy (Relations with the self and with other people)
- The therapeutic process (the therapy relationship is at the heart of the process)". (Paul & Pelham, 2000)

Hope

- Difficult concept to access
- Present but not always recognised as such
- Hope and hopelessness are a continuum
- Research has highlighted hope's importance for counsellors

What is Hope?

- "Hope" is the Thing with feathers
- That perches in the soul
- And sings the tune without the words
- And never stops
- At all
- Emily Dickinson

Ania Williams (1999)

Sometimes
I have dreams
About another change
Without knowing
What it is

Vaclav Havel (1988) Letters to Olga

Hope is not prognostication...and it is definitely not the same as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out

Ivan V. Lalic

I have experienced the spaces of hope,
The spaces of a moderate mercy, experienced
The places which suddenly set
Into a random form: a lilac garden,
A street in Florence, a morning room,
A sea smeared with silver before the storm,
Or a starless night lit only
By a book on the table. The spaces of hope
Are in time, not linked into
A system of miracles, nor into a unity:
They merely exist. As in Kafkas
At the station; wind in a wild vine
A quarter-century ago: one space of hope.
Another, set somewhere in the future,
Is already destroying the void around it,
Unclear but real. Probable.

In the spaces of hope light grows,
Free of charge, and voices are clearer,
Death has a beautiful shadow, the lilac blooms later,
But for that it looks like its first-ever flower



What is hope ?

- Hope has been defined as – a subjective state that can influence realities yet to come
- Farran & Popovich 1990
- Hope has been considered an essential component of mental health and effective therapy (Frank, 1968, Larsen, 2005,) and viable human life (Frankl, 2004).

What is hope?

-hope is described as continually unfolding and changing in response to life situations
- Herth 1993

What is hope ?

“can be defined as a process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling and relating and is directed toward a future fulfilment that is personally meaningful”

Stephenson 1991:1459

Six Dimensions of Hope

- It is “characterised by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good, which, to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant “
- (Dufault & Martoccio, 1985:380).
- Affective
- Cognitive
- Behavioural
- Affiliate
- Temporal
- contextual

Spheres of Hope

- Generalised hope
- Particularised hope



- “a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally
- derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways
- (planning of ways to meet goals)”
- (Snyder, 1995:335).



- “Hope is something we do with others. Hope is too important-its effects on body and soul too significant-to be left to individuals alone. Hope must be the responsibility of the community”
- (Weingarten, 2000:402).





Hope: Attributes

- Is meaningful to the person
- Involves thoughts, feelings, behaviours and relationships
- Has anticipation
- Has a future orientation, grounded in the present and linked with the past

Antecedents to hope

- If seen as a trait, is always present
- If seen as a state then maybe different levels of hope, not always conscious
- Can arise as a response to a threat or a crisis e.g. loss, life threatening event, hardship or change, a difficult decision, a challenge



Some Distinctions

- Helpless - not being able to help oneself
'Don't know what to do'
- Hopeless - having no hope
'I can't do anything'
- Despair – there is no hope
'I give up'

More Distinctions

- Optimism – things will turn out for the best
- Desire - to long for something
- Wishing - looking forward to something that if obtained would give satisfaction



Concept Analysis of Hope

CLIENT	COUNSELLOR
EXPECTATIONS OF COUNSELLING	AUTHENTIC CONCERN, INTEREST
CONFIDENCE IN COUNSELLOR	LIKES THE CLIENT
EXPERIENCE OF CHANGE/ACHIEVEMENT	DESIRE FOR WHAT IS POSSIBLE
DEVELOP/REDISCOVER VALUES BEYOND SELF	KEEPS GOING DESPITE OBSTACLES
ABILITY TO ABSORB POSITIVE FEELINGS	DESIRE TO MAKE SENSE OF THINGS
DEVELOP A NETWORK OF CARING PEOPLE	HOLD HOPE

- During counselling both client and counsellor “may position (themselves) with either an implicit or explicit focus on hope. Subtle nuances may also begin to become apparent as the relative degrees of explicitness or implicitness in the way in which hope is approached may vary”

• (Larsen et al, 2007:406)

INTERRUPTIONS



What is hope for you?

- Get in touch with an experience of hope
- What did it feel like?
- How do you experience hope ?
- Where do you experience Hope?
- Where do you feel hope in your body?
- Are you aware when hope is absent?



First thoughts about hope

- Rhian
- *Two thoughts really. One was on a very personal level and it did grip me, the subject about hope and the lack or absence of it and the impact that that's had on my life. And when I was looking at hope in the context of my professional practice and where hope came in or was absent within...my work with parents. So it was kind of, my initial thoughts were "Okay, personally what's my experience been?" and professionally, "What is my experience now?" so really when it was personal I was looking backwards and professionally looking in the present (PF.1,1).*

First thoughts about hope

- Eleri
- *I grew up with the idea of....they say "where there's life there's hope" and it was said if anybody was....possibly on their last legs "Oh well, where there's life there's hope and it seemed quite a trite saying but then I got round to wondering if there is a truth in that, because thinking about the actualising tendency and the idea of being born with the instinct to survive rather than die was just somehow suggesting that hope is intrinsic in its broadest sense in human life. (PD.1,1)*
- *The other bit of that...your experiences of hope, and it's the lines of a hymn, but I cannot remember which one, I think it might be Iona, but "when hope is awakened in place of despair" and that's in terms of thinking about it in connection with counselling. It's something about hope being awakened in place of despair. That's part of the process. Just a glimmer. A possibility. (PD.1,2)*

First thoughts about hope

- Gareth
- *The word hope for me has religious connotations and links in with the philosophy of life I have, which fits okay with counselling as well, which is basically about development of hope and potential to work towards the person that I can actually be.....hope along the lines of development, progress (PB.1,1).*



First thoughts about hope

- Nesta
- *The first thing that came to my mind was the idea of I couldn't consider hope without hopelessness in the continuum. So I was interested in both poles rather than just one pole of hope. That was kind of my first...yes playing around with that idea. And what struck me about me personally as opposed to, you know client work, was I live in a world where I stay mainly in the continuum of hope rather than hopeless. I suppose I think if things are bad, well somehow or other they will get better. So I have a kind of belief in I'll move through and out of difficult times. Yes, you know I've got a fairly optimistic outlook on the whole....if I think about my life and what I've done, it definitely enabled me to.....kind of....well achieve quite a lot really. Because I think I can and I expect that I can, so I do. Whereas if I was sitting around the other end of the continuum I would just give up before I'd started if I didn't have a belief that I'd manage (PG.1,1).*

First thoughts about hope

- Aled
- *The general word hope was very different to the word hope I see in a counselling context.in the outside worldhope meant something like a whimsical quality, a vague possibility. There's a song Robbie Williams wrote and it's about "I hope I'm old before I die". And there's no assurance there. There's just this vague "that's what I'd like". I'd would like to be able to see my children grow up.....it would be lovely to be old enough to see my grandchildren. That's how I thought of hope. In that sort of wanting thing but no firm confidence or assurance, just a whimsical sort of plucking at something and saying "Oh yes". For me hope is different from wishing, it's got an expectation.....I separated it into sort of thinking about hope for how a client may see it, and then hope for me as a counsellor. And I think for meif it wasn't for hope I don't think I could counsel, and it is only the fact that I can believe and I can hope that things will come about that change or chosen goals will arrive (PC.1,1-2).*

First thoughts about hope

- Delyth
- *When I thought of hope what immediately came to mind was hopelessness.....so I was sort of fearful and recoiled from it. Hope for me, is only highlighted when I've been close to hopelessness, and other people have held it for me.....there were really hopeless times for me.....where I couldn't see.....any meaning in life and I couldn't see a future that was going to be meaningful, and so I relied on other people to sort of hold that for me....they got me through.....holding me....holding a belief inand my future.....so it was like an exchange of energy. The word hope was never used. But I knew they were holding an alternative view of things...for me....because I couldn't hold it for myself (PE.1,1).*



Hope & Hopelessness

Aled

I've never met a client before or since. ...that had no...there was no love or warmth in that person.....never before have I felt such a coldness and absence of love. Maybe that's about me, maybe love's a big part in my life. But...and I wonder if it's something about I couldn't make a relationship with him and I struggled....I mean I struggled with the whole...I took it to supervision and eventually he didn't come back any more. I struggled more than I struggled with anything...

...it got to the point where I thought "I'm going to give up counselling", that's ...the only example I can give where there was no hope at all. I thought. But I'm not quite sure, if I can distinguish where that no hope came from- I think it was something in me, that I couldn't...I couldn't hold out any hope that this man would change because...and again, it's about me because I couldn't see that this man who has no love...he had no conscience. He didn't care what effect his actions had on other people... as long as he was alright. And I found it, found it quite difficult (Pc.5,1).

First thoughts about hope

- Bethan
- *Well I supposeI think most of the work I do is based on hope, but to identify it was hard, and your little questions that you sent, helped what you called your prompts. I hope they feel they can work with me....it's a bit of a mix ...anticipation and expectation, but nevertheless that was the hope (PA.1-3).*

Hope & Hopelessness

Bethan

When I met a client and deep inside I know we're not going to....the word "click" comes to mind...and infect, in my experience where I last worked. I actually did say to one young woman "do you think you're going to be able to work with me"? And that was after the first session. Normally I found that I would know.....and I knew, and she said no, she didn't think so, and I was fortunate I could hand her over to another counsellor (PA.4,2).

I'd never experienced anyone like her before, and I was very slow to realise. She had come for her hour and her hour she was going to get, and that meant she was going to talk all the way through it. It was definitely not a counselling session, and I lost all hope for her. I mean I lost it. Because I had nothing to build on (PA.4,3)

It is feeling, and it's very hard, I find it hard to describe the feeling....All I can say is, when it's not there (hope) I feel empty (PA.5,1).

Hope & Hopelessness

Delyth

'John' (a pseudonym) had a terrible.....terribly abusive childhood. He had grown up in a very hopeless environment or culture. He took that into his experience of life, it became a part of who he is. His mother had tried to kill him as a small child, had set fire to the house he was in. He had been sexually abused by his mother and some of her friends. Just terrible, terrible abuse and his hopelessness was linked to himself, you know.

That sense that "I must be useless. I must be unworthy if this is the way I've been treated by people". And a hopelessness about people, because "This is what people do to me." And a hopelessness about the world, because nobody actually cared, nobody came to help. People must have known but nobody came to help. So it became his view of the world as hopeless. He did not believe that things could change. So he came with a real sense of hopelessness

Hope & Hopelessness

and there would be times when there was this real sense that things could never change, and the struggle between us was immense. I say struggle because it almost became...it felt like a struggle at times...that I was holding something that he actually...he didn't believe in. He didn't believe it. And this was a really difficult piece of work. I was thinking it was really tangible...that my hope was tussling with his hopelessness.

And the one thing I remember about that client was, he was one of the few clients that I actually hugged... it wasn't something I thought about, it was just something that happened. that he was just going through absolute stress, and it was just a risk that I took...to hug him, but I think that made a big difference. I don't think working with this level of hopelessness is easy and I don't think it is easily overcome either. I think that's something that takes a lot of..... I say the word "convincing"... it's

Hope and Hopelessness

Gareth

I saw a woman in her late fifties with a terminally ill adult son. I think I saw her about fourteen times during which time her son deteriorated and she used those sessions to reflect on how she had been a parent to him, about the unfairness of it all and the distress it caused and I felt hopeless. I don't know if it was helpless or hopeless and I still don't know which is worse, and I really became awarehow my feeling hopelessness did not prevent her gaining something from the experience (PB, 3, 1).

I think if I hadn't felt hopeless... I would have tried to fix things for her. I would have been saying have you got the Macmillan nurses in, have you any help, or there's a good organisation I know of that supports, can help with palliative care....I would have got into action mode (PB.4, 1).

Hope & Hopelessness

Delyth

... something like if I'd had that experience I'm not going to believe what you tell me. You need to do a lot of convincing that actually the world is a hopeful place. Was there change? I think there was change, but I don't think it was a massive amount of change, but I think he got a glimpse of something different (PE3, 3-4).

Hope and Hopelessness

Rhian

"I was with a parent in deep despair who wanted to join her child who had died and I think in that moment..... there is no hope for a future for me. There is no hope of this ever being right or I'm not going to survive this". There was a moment. I think when the absence of hope was such that life was not worth living, and that's why I think the absence of hope is a very life threatening situation. To have no grasp of it, for it not to be felt at any level, is a life perhaps not worth living.....I would say it was about holding with that person, I wouldn't have said it was a scary moment, but it was a very significant moment because I felt that my presence was needed there and to hold that, but not to react to it. And I hoped that it was sufficient at that moment for that person to get through.....

it was one of those moments when you are really...forget all your counselling techniques, forget any of all that. You are person to person at a most significant moment in life....I came away feeling... humbled enough that she allowed me to be with her at that moment, to express that and when I left.....the hope that we could continue and that my presence and other things were sufficient for her to get beyond that... It was almost like an instinctive....that was almost like I didn't even have to think about that" (PE4, 3).



Belief in the client

- Gareth
- Hope is that they will actually be able to access their inner resources (PB.1.3)
- It's part of my basic philosophy of life, a belief that potentials are there and there's meant to be an improvement. (PB.7.3)
- It's a kind of belief in the present that something can change in the future....might be specific...but also much less specific. Just a sense that things will be different. (PB.12.1).
- By attending to one person.....for up to an hour or longer....that's saying something about the value of that person....It is making explicit something that you believe, that this person is worth attending to....is worth my time....because that's all I've got, isn't it, is now and it's worth attending to this person (PB.9.4).
- Together as a joint enterprise, perhaps we can find a way. (PB.2.5)
- Something will happen, and we will find meaning in it. (PB.2.6)

Belief in the client

- *Nesta*
- *I feel like I hold it...hold the hope for her that things will get better ...I think it really matters for her, as it does for the other client....it's life or death and it keeps them alive. I think if I didn't believe that they could get better, either one or both of them could be dead by now. (PG.3,1).*

Belief in the client

- *Eleri*
- *Where I'm working with somebody where panic is an issue, I will sometimes say "look, it is possible,...I'm not saying it's easy and it won't be instant.....it is possible" (PD.2,2).*

Belief in the client

- *Delyth*
- *I do think it's important to verbalise how positive you feel about what we're doing, you know. And that's been my experience of having personal counselling myself. That when my counsellor verbalises her belief in me, it makes a difference. It really makes a difference (PE.5, 3)*
- *Yes. I believe ...almost " I believe in you. I believe in this person. The person you see is not the person I see. I see something different.....its quite a powerful thing to say " I am enough, I am enough, I am enough"..... you can find almost what the person really needs to hold on to, the belief they need to have about themselves, and that can help in that process of rebuilding hope". (PE.6,1-2)*

Belief in the client

- *Rhian*
- *I am conscious of my thoughts and my hopes for them and I make sure that I deliver them and transfer it, that I make explicit ...about hope, and it comes through them wanting reassurance and again, I can never for definite say how they are going to be because I'm back to that's individual, but, you know, we're back to my experience has been that people come through this time.(PF.6,4-7,1).*
- *I hope that I may be of help to someone. We are starting off with the hope that coming to see me and speaking to me, what they're feeling and what their thoughts are, there is always.... We start with hope, and I can nurture that, if I can help somebody increase that sense of hope, then that's what it is about. So I have to look more closely at hope and how I might help that person develop that sense. We've got no control over what might wipe that away, but we do have control on how we build it up, and it's like having a good store of it, isn't it.*
- *So when these things come along to challenge us, you know we've got a reserve of hope there, and that reserve is very low, then maybe we need to find someone that will help us build it back up. I think it's....very very important.(PF.8,2).*

Belief in the client

- *Bethan*
- *I believed this lady could do this.....and in me I really hoped that she was going to get better and be able to go back to work.PA.2,2)*

Belief in the client

- *Often clients don't see their own achievements. They're very good at seeing what they don't achieve. They're very good at seeing all the nasty things...the nasty way they behave.....but they don't see all the kindness in them, they don't see all the good. Often I'll say to clients "this is the person I see. You may see this and that may be partially true, but what I see is also partially true as well" (PE.9,4).*
- *I held on to him. I held on to a belief in him being just okay. I wasn't going to let go of that because I think that's the case a lot of the time, the clients they come in and try to convince me that they're not okay. I don't believe that they're not okay. I believe you're okay just as you are.(PE.11,1)*
- *A lot of my sense of hope has come from this. It's come from a real belief in everybody's goodness and a real non-judgemental attitude towards everybody and everything.....and a real sense of that when things go wrong.....that there's still an opportunity within that.(PE.11,2)*

Belief in the client

- Aled
- *If she's ready, to want to talk, and wants to work at this, then I can help.... Holding the hope that she could actually get through this. (PC.4,3).*
- *He's going to pull through(PC.6,3).*
- *They believe , have a quiet confidence, that things will change(PC.7,5)*

BAD TEMPERED



Belief in the process

- Gareth
- *It's something I fall back on in cases, when I don't know what to do and when I feel stuck, I say to myself "just stay with the process, stay attentive.....just do that don't do anything else".....I feel in circumstances like that, when anything I could say, anything I could do, would be totally irrelevant to what they are going through.....all I could do was sit there, listen reflect back(PB.3,2).*
- *You're not sure what to do or say, but it doesn't mean to say that hope has gone, because you're holding something within yourself, that says "together we will find meaning or purpose in the future, something will come of this. Can't say what it is. Don't know what it is.....perhaps we can find a way" (PB.2,5).*

Belief in the process

- Eleri
- *It's something about not knowing what, how when, but it's some glimmer in the darkness of the present and sometimes it's the counsellor that's holding the candle and the candle might be guttering and nearly going out, but it's just that glimmer-work towards, work with(PD.1,3)*
- *It's something about that which needs to be there. Because if there are two people both despairing, without one of them having some hope.....where despair is the current feeling and you're attempting to be empathic with that despairif hope is not present it becomes sympathy rather than empathy in the sense of sympathy..."sym" being the same as..."em" being amongst the feeling....."sym" being the same as the feeling as if you've got two people, both in the depths of despair, one without any hope ..it becomes sympathy, it becomes enmeshed with them. Empathy of being amongst.(PD.1,4).*

Belief in the process

- *Look it is possible....I'm not saying it is easy and it won't be instant...but it is possible(PD.2,2).*
- *Grounded hope, that's based on experience, personal experience of the way things can sometimes change, despite all evidence to the contrary. But experience and belief in the...counselling process. Because I can think there are some clients and "I can't see how this will work out". But given the core conditions, it's like they can take it and use it for themselves. So it's belief in that kind of process.(PD.4,3).*



Holding hope

- Gareth
- *I know one of the things is a fairly general part of my initial session is a phrase like "what would you like you like to get from counselling", what do you hope to gain from the work that we do together"..... phrases.....which are about an expectation. And sometimes clients will actually say....."well what I want to get from this is"..... And so there's an expectation that something will happen that will enable it to be different. Not necessarily to change external circumstances, but to enable a client to deal with those external circumstances in a different type of way...or think about it in a different way.....so with the expectation there's got to be hope (PB.2,2).*

Holding hope

- *I think the hope moved into "this person can deal with this". I feel awfully sad about this, but "This person will be able to do this" (PB.4,3).*
- *If somebody says "I used to be like this and now I'm like this, and I wish it was different ". So I think I respond by saying "well I wonder how far we will have to go". I think I'm tapping into their sense of hope. if the client doesn't do that....and I'm thinking of somebody who is very depressed and thinking "this is it.. it's always going to be like this". I find that I very deliberately avoid the temptation of saying " oh, I'm sure it could be different" ...Oh lets find...., you know trying to inject some hope in that way. Because I think that could so easily...be experienced by a client as not taking them seriously, as minimising the depth of their feeling, as trivialising it. (PB.8,1).*

Holding hope

- *And to sit feeling helpless. When all I can do is to be here. I can't say anything, I can't do anything, but I can be here, and simply, by being present in the situation and being available to that person.....then that in itself is offering something very strong to that person. And paradoxically I think, when I feel very helpless, then maybe there is something powerful in that helplessness. If that's not too complicated. And I suspect that everybody who works to any depth with people has actually used that. Sometimes I think it comes back in terms of, people will come back later and say "you really helped then". (PB.9,3).*

Holding hope

- *I'm walking in a path that she knows is going to end with the death of her son, and nothing I can say or do is going to change that, but I think what we were doing together, I suppose in theory terms it was pre-bereavement counselling. I suppose what it was doing really was enabling her to access the inner resources she needed to deal with the situation and doing it in a way that she could safely say things that she couldn't say to her partner. Because he was saying things like "it will be okay now. He'll get better". So she could say things she couldn't say to anybody else. So in there, I think from that, she said it helped her(PB.4,2).*



Holding hope

- *Hope is about something that's not there at the moment, isn't it? It was here there wouldn't be hope. So hope is about the future. And it's an expectation that things will be fulfilled, be different, there will be a purpose. But there's always an uncertainty about it because if it was actual you'd have it and you wouldn't need to wonder about it. So there is an uncertainty about it and I think that is where faith comes in, and I think it is a basic optimism about who we are as people and who other people are and the value of all of us and our worth, it will have meaning in the end. I don't think I could express it any other way (PB11,3).*

Holding hope

- *They will be different, yes but also something much less specific. Just a sense that things will be different (PB.12,2).*
- *There's a hope with that...."I might not be able to change something that's happening but the hope is that I can feel differently about it" (PB.12,3).*

Holding hope

- *The client specifically makes a statement like "This is totally hopeless". Then I think that is a very clear placing on the agenda of "I have no hope" and I think that is inviting a gentle challenge.....because if you say "This is hopeless. I have no hope", then the obvious question is "What are you doing here then?" So I think a client making that statement is putting hope or the lack of it on the agenda, but at the same time, by their very presence is effectively saying "But there still might be".(PB.2,1).*
-

Holding hope

- *So it's a kind of ambivalence, because they are there in some sense they are investing some hope in you and in the counselling but at the same time they are telling you how they feel which has led them to come to you (PB.2,1)*
- *Together as a joint enterprise, perhaps we can find a way (PB.2,5).*
- *"Holding hope" when I hear that phrase I want to say "Ah, true, but that isn't the same as every cloud has a silver lining". In other words it's not just an aphorism that people toss out. "Holding hope", it's a very firm and a very solid thing, it's not a vague platitude at all.(PB.4,1).*

Holding hope

- *Rhian*
- *"Well, the expected life span of somebody with this condition is...you know...no child has survived beyond ten, or whatever". But they can't tell you when, so you have to cope with this diagnosis and never quite knowing. So they've got to manage that somehow, and if hopelessness is despair, they cannot stay in that despair and function properly. So I do believe there is this adaption, this trying to get back some hope.*

Holding hope

- *I picked up last week that there's a parent whose child...the doctors are constantly doing things...you know...operations, talking about different operations and she said to me, "It's this falseness of hope that the doctors seem to be trying to give me, and I'm really cross with it". So she's kind of saying, you know "This is not what I want for my child and there is this falseness of hope and I'm not going along with it because my child is not going to get better. My child is going to die. So stop this" (PF.2,1).*

Holding hope

- *And very quickly we get into "The doctors have no idea what it is like to have a child, to take care of that child, to live with the thoughts and feelings that go with -my child is going to die", and I think the more that the medical team try to put on that hope, the more she is getting quite cross about it. (PF.2,2).*
- *Most parents still have had to manage that loss of hope and get some equilibrium back.....whether that hope is that "We'll keep him as well as possible for as long as possible" is their kind of way of trying to instil some hope back into what is a hopeless kind of situation (PF.2,3).*
- *It's been my experience that they have to do that in order to survive it (PF.2,4)*

Holding hope

- *The nature of hope may change from one of "I want him to stay" to one of "I hope and I want him not to die in pain and I want a peaceful death". So hope is re-framed(PF.3,1).*
- *I think for siblings in this situation, so much attention and hope is put on the ill child, that you know, unfortunately, they can feel... and I'm asked for advice on how to help siblings at this time.....so perhaps the hope is put on to yourself to help the sibling through this stage, so there's hope that they will get through, and often they want reassurance that the sibling will be okay afterward, and "What do I need to do help my child", you know, the sibling to get through this(PF.3,2).*

Holding hope

- *She could see there was movement for her... and therefore the possibility of further movement. Although she hasn't got a sense of where that is or what it would look like because it's alien. So it's like I hold the sense of what that might be for her in a way that she can't do that. So that's what I mean by me holding....it's like I really believe she has got no cognitive embodied...any sense of what might be a more hopeful life. So that's what I mean by I hold that (PG.2).*

Holding hope

- *Oh, like a bit of a relief. It was like.....so I don't have to hold it all..you know, its bloody hard work holding that for six years and thinking "fuck". Yes. And there's many times when I can go to the place I think "Phhh, if someone started to challenge me about how I work with this I'd really start struggling", because it's about, a lot of time, what I'm doing. And a lot of the time I think "Actually, you know what, if I was there I would kill myself". So ...and I really believe that. I'm not sure I could have held on the way that she has, with what she has. Even with my optimistic outlook. I do think I would have given up.(PG.2,3).*



OVER REACTING



Holding hope

- *When we talk about whether she wants to live or die, I really stay with it's a possibility, yes, this client might choose death in preference. She might choose that and I feel really respectful of that, given her circumstances. So the place in me which thinks "There's no way I could survive that" kind of enables me hold that equal balance. So I don't feel invested in keeping her alive actually. From a very personal point of view I don't want her to kill herself. I really care about her and I'd be deeply upset. But if I really stay with her life and what she has I think actually I'm not in a place to be pulling her one way or the other. This really has to be her choice. So I think it kind of supports me to hold that more equally.(PG.3,2)*

Holding hope

- *So she I suppose in the last space of two months, three months probably, cut her wrists four times, overdosed twice. So actively harming. She won't contract from session to session to keep herself alive, so... because she doesn't know if she can do that. So...with her I definitely have the sense that I hold hope that things will get better for her. It's a bit easier for me with her actually, because I also have a sense that she can know of it, in a way that the other one can't, because she has had a life. (she is comparing this client with the one mentioned at PG.2.2-4 above).*
- *It's not been great, but you know she's had friends and a job and so forth. But she is lost and she's had a lot of loss for various reasons... and she's lost sight of that. so in that way I feel like I hold it....hold the hope for her that things will get better for her.....So it's really important , I think. It's life or death and it keeps them alive. Without a doubt. I would absolutely state that. I think if I didn't believe that they could get better, either one or both of them could be dead by now (PG.3,1).*

Holding hope

- *I think it does, because then I think she knows that I get it. How much she wants to die and how important that is to her and how desperate that is. I think, otherwise, if I was trying to pull her into the living place, well then we get in danger...which is something I am interested in hope as well, that I think it can also go on. Is that if I over-invest in her living she could get over-invested in her dying and whereas, with some clients with hope I think I absolutely would not hold the hope pole. Because I think they would then hold the hopeless pole and we'd just get caught in that kind of impasse of no movement(PG.3,3).*

Holding hope

- *If you get a client with quite low energy....sort of entrenched in their depression and hopeless place. I do feel sometimes with those clients if I think about the pole, so that they can disown the part of themselves which might hold hope and be hopeful and be energised and engaged....or...if they disown that part and I hold it, so I might take it on as a projection or counter transference. So then I'd think " Okay, so you know, I'm going to hold the place of this could get better for you" and you know,"Come on" kind of pulling them up almost(PG.4,1).*

Holding hope

- *I might be hopeful about the work I do with them I suppose...but I would I would keep them very private and very much to myself. I mean.....yes....I think that is probably more challenging for me to do. To really....to really stay with a deeply hopeless place without feeling the urge to pull them out of it (PG.4,4).*

Holding hope

- *I've thoughts about times when hope was difficult.....when the client's narrative becomes circular. When the process is going round and round and they become repetitive and I somehow get caught up in that repetitiveness. So hope sometimes means standing back not getting caught up in the client's process. Not getting caught up in the client's hopelessness and that can be difficult when it snags my hopeless place(PE.3,2).*

Holding hope

- *So if I get someone saying "Oh I want to be happy", I think "Well, you're not happy, so let's start with where you are and get to know about where you are". So the paradoxical theory of change really is about stay with what you have and really get to know that and once you really know that, well you might choose or not choose to do something different(PG.4,5).*

Holding hope

- *I was hungry for it.....there were no words spoken about it, I wanted it, I needed it. And to be in a hopeless place, it's so bleak, so dark. It's frightening. My experience of it was real fear.....and to have somebody hold the possibility of not being frightened and of there being something more meaningful, was....and again it wasn't spoken, but there was something about....there was a present orientation about it, and there was a future orientation too. So it was holding....me in the present supporting me in the present, but in doing that it was sort of somehow leading me into a different future(PE.1,2).*

Relational Depth

A state of profound contact and engagement between two people, in which each person is fully real with the Other, and able to understand and value the Other's experiences at a high level.

Mearns & Cooper, 2005

Holding Hope & Hopelessness

Aled

I've never met a client before or since ...that had no...there was no love or warmth in that person.....never before have I felt such a coldness and absence of love. Maybe that's about me, maybe love's a big part in my life. But...and I wonder if it's something about I couldn't make a relationship with him and I struggled....I mean I struggled with the whole...I took it to supervision and eventually he didn't come back any more. I struggled more than I struggled with anything...

...it got to the point where I thought "I'm going to give up counselling", that's ...the only example I can give where there was no hope at all. I thought. But I'm not quite sure, if I can distinguish where that no hope came from- I think it was something in me, that I couldn't...I couldn't hold out any hope that this man would change because...and again, it's about me because I couldn't see that this man who has no love...he had no conscience. He didn't care what effect his actions had on other people... as long as he was alright. And I found it, found it quite difficult (Pc.5,1).

Holding hope

- *They can't see where the path is leading and I think as a counsellor, I sort of hold that hope, because of my experience. I've seen people come through there. In bereavement counselling there is a process that happens. I can hold onto that and no matter how bad it might seem for that client I can know that I can see a way out and if I can hold on to that for them(PC.1,2-2,1).*

Features of relational depth and working with hope

- Bringing more of self into the relationship
 - Such as their vulnerable part
 - Feeling touched, moved, affected, influenced
 - By their clients, a moment of change for them
 - Feeling safer working at this level, not so
 - Frightened of the client's material
 - Acting spontaneously

Holding Hope & Hopelessness

Bethan

When I meet a client and deep inside I know we're not going to....the word "click" comes to mind...and in fact, in my experience where I last worked, I actually did say to one young woman "do you think you're going to be able to work with me"? And that was after the first session. Normally I found that I would know....and I knew, and she said no, she didn't think so, and I was fortunate I could hand her over to another counsellor (PA.4,2).

I'd never experienced anyone like her before, and I was very slow to realise. She had come for her hour and her hour she was going to get, and that meant she was going to talk all the way through it. It was definitely not a counselling session, and I lost all hope for her. I mean I lost it. Because I had nothing to build on (PA.4,3)

It is feeling, and it's very hard. I find it hard to describe the feeling....All I can say is, when it's not there (hope) I feel empty (PA.5,1).

Holding Hope & Hopelessness

Delyth

'John' (a pseudonym) had a terrible.....terribly abusive childhood. He had grown up in a very hopeless environment or culture. He took that into his experience of life, it became a part of who he is. His mother had tried to kill him as a small child, had set fire to the house he was in. He had been sexually abused by his mother and some of her friends. Just terrible, terrible abuse and his hopelessness was linked to himself, you know.

That sense that "I must be useless. I must be unworthy if this is the way I've been treated by people". And a hopelessness about people, because "This is what people do to me". And a hopelessness about the world, because nobody actually cared, nobody came to help. People must have known but nobody came to help. So it became his view of the world as hopeless. He did not believe that things could change. So he came with a real sense of hopelessness

Holding Hope & Hopelessness

and there would be times when there was this real sense that things could never change, and the struggle between us was immense. I say struggle because it almost became...it felt like a struggle at times...that I was holding something that he actually...he didn't believe in. He didn't believe it. And this was a really difficult piece of work. I was thinking it was really tangible...that my hope was tussling with his hopelessness.

And the one thing I remember about that client was, he was one of the few clients that I actually hugged... it wasn't something I thought about, it was just something that happened, that he was just going through absolute stress, and it was just a risk that I took...to hug him, but I think that made a big difference. I don't think working with this level of hopelessness is easy and I don't think it is easily overcome either. I think that's something that takes a lot of..... I say the word "convincing"...it's

Characteristics of Hope

Hope is often a liminal experience which requires patient waiting for what is unknown to emerge and vulnerability to be open to the possibility of failure. It requires letting go of the need to be in control. Participants hold their client's feelings of hopelessness and their own of hope often waiting for some time. It engages participants personally and professionally.

Hope paradoxically comes into awareness when it is absent in adversity and has antecedents of loss, threat, uncertainty of outcome, acute and chronic suffering. It also sustains and supports participants when no action is possible.

Hope can co-exist with hopelessness in a dialogue experienced intermittently, by both participant and client, and can be felt as a struggle leading to a loss of hope. It is seen to fluctuate during a counselling session. Participants carry different levels of hope and hopelessness in different parts of their being.

Hope can be experienced in any dimension of the human person in present and past events in life depending on the context. Hope or hopes can change adapting to circumstances as the person engages with their changing and emerging reality.

Hope is felt as an embodied experience in self and seen in clients, which energises and motivates. It is a relational and personal experience shared between participant and client. It seems to involve an orientation of the personality of the counsellor, to themselves, others, to the world and life.

Hope appears as an experience common to human beings but experienced differently. Hope can be a personal disposition to life, a trait which gives meaning. It has origins in personal or religious beliefs, or from a deeply informed humanity. It is seen as a quality people share not a system or a model, more of a shared process

Hope has an active expectant quality towards the future and can be directed to self or to others. It gives purpose to intentions, striving, thoughts, and actions and is felt. Hopes can be experienced as unrealistic and false.

Some conclusions

Hope seems to be a way of looking at life with a capacity to live at more than one level, being open with all the senses to what can be experienced arising from a sense of what is greater and beyond present human experience. In this sense it has in my view a spiritual quality, though this is not explicit in the data.

- Hope and hopelessness are central to the mutual encounter between client and counsellor
- In this encounter client and counsellor influence each other, not always consciously
- This is a dynamic process we know very little about from research
- It suggests a depth to the therapeutic relationship with feelings of connection, intimacy and encounter, which are physical, emotional, mental, and visceral
- The research process has highlighted for participants the importance for them of hope and hopelessness in their work



Bibliography

Dufault, K & Martocchio, B (1985) Hope: Its Spheres and Dimensions, *Nursing Clinics of North America*, 20,(2), 379-391

Kvale, S. (1983) The Qualitative Research Interview: A phenomenological and a hermeneutical mode of understanding. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 14:2.

McLeod, J. (1999) *Practitioner Research in Counselling*, Sage, London.

Paul, S & Pelham, G. (2000) A Relational Approach to Therapy in Integrative & Eclectic Counselling & Psychotherapy, Palmer, S. & Woolfe, R (eds) Sage, London.

Rodgers, B. (1989) Concepts, analysis and the development of nursing knowledge: the evolutionary cycle. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 14, 330-335.

Snyder, C. (1995) Conceptualising, Measuring and Nurturing Hope, *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 73(3) 355-360

Stephenson, C. (1991) The Concept of hope revisited for nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 16, 1456-1461.