

## **EXTENDED LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

The following topics for reflection and discussion, offer questions that are intended to facilitate further personal consideration of themes and issues addressed within each chapter. These questions can be used in a variety of ways, including private reflection or writing in a learning journal. It is particularly valuable, where possible, to explore topics with a small group of learning partners – such dialogues have the potential to open up different perspectives around a question, thus contributing to a more comprehensive understanding and constructive questioning of one's own assumptions.

Tutors and educators may find it valuable to use or adapt these questions as essay and seminar topics.

### **CHAPTER 3: Working together: the relationship between the client and therapist**

1. Chapter 3 outlines a series of images of the therapy relationship – the relationship as container, as place of authentic meeting, etc. As a therapist, which of these images do you identify with, as being part of your practice? Are there other images that you would wish to learn how to cultivate in future? Why?
2. As a client, which of these images does your own therapist offer you? Are there other possible images that you might prefer?
3. As a therapist, what does the location, furnishing and décor of your office, room or other space where you see clients, convey a sense of who you are as a person, express your values, and invite a particular type of relationship? What words or metaphors would you use to describe your ideal therapy space or office – welcoming, professional, safe, homely...?
4. As a client, what does the location, furnishing and décor of your therapist's office, room or other type of meeting space, convey to you, in terms of who they are as a person, and the type of relationship that they are offering you? What would an ideal therapy space or office look like for you?
5. Think about a person who has helped you to overcome or resolve an emotional issue in your life. How would you describe your relationship with that person? Think about someone you know but from whom you would be very reluctant to seek emotional support. How would you describe this relationship? How well can these personal experiences be explained in terms of the models and images of therapy relationships introduced in this chapter?
6. Has your therapist ever asked you about whether you are satisfied with the relationship between you? What would you say if they did? How honest would you be

willing to be? If your therapist has broached this topic, how useful was the discussion that followed?

7. Have you had experience (as client or therapist) of both online and in-person therapy? How do they differ, in terms of the type, quality or depth of relationship that is possible? Research studies discussed in Chapter 18 may help you to reflect further on this question, by reading about how other therapists and clients have experienced these contrasting modes of working.
8. In what ways do you believe that the increasing use of technology-mediated therapy (apps, online therapy and AI-assisted therapy – see Chapter 18) may impact on the potential for the therapy experience to represent an arena for relational learning (i.e., opportunities for clients becoming more skilled and self-aware in respect of patterns of interpersonal relationships in their life)?
9. Research mentioned in this chapter has shown that a good relationship between therapist and client, in the early stages of therapy, is highly predictive of a good outcome at the end of therapy. Does this finding necessarily mean that the relationship is the *cause* of the eventual outcome? How else might you explain the fact that clients (and therapists) who give positive ratings of the strength of the therapeutic alliance at the third or fourth session of therapy also report, several weeks later, that therapy has been successful?
10. Many counsellors and psychotherapists working in private practice operate a sliding fee system, where what the client pays is adjusted according to their income and circumstances. In some situations, clients may suggest that they pay their therapist in goods and services rather than money. For example, a client who is a farmer may be able to offer produce of a higher value than any possible cash payment that they could afford. What are the potential implications for the therapeutic relationship of establishing a barter contract?
11. In their model of how to repair ruptures in the therapy alliance, Safran and Muran (2001) argue that conflict between a therapist and client almost always reflect what they regard as fundamental dilemmas of human existence: the tension between the need for agency/autonomy and the need for relatedness/connection. They suggest that working through these needs, in the context of therapy, has the potential to transform a client's life. How useful do you find this way of understanding relationships? Reflect on a relationship you have experienced that has been difficult. Was there a tension within that relationship between the need for agency (being in control, following your own purposes and intentions) and the need for relatedness (being in contact) for both you and the other person? Was this tension resolved (or could have been resolved) through a process similar to Safran's model of resolution of therapeutic ruptures?

12. The models of therapeutic relationship discussed in Chapter 3, predominantly reflect a Eurocentric understanding of how people relate with each other. A leading figure in culturally informed practice has argued that that:

“In Eurocentric therapeutic approaches, we’re told that we need to be distanced from those that come to seek our help and that we do not need to have long term relationships with them. When you’re working within an Indigenous context or a minoritised cultural context, however, the people who come to see you are related to you one way or the other or after coming to see you, they will *become* related to you one way or the other.” [Tamasese, K. and Denborough, D., 2024. Research as seeking help: Searching for liberative knowledge: An interview with Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese, *The Qualitative Report*, 29(12)]

What are the implications of this perspective, for you as a client or therapist?