The use of Pictorial metaphors with clients

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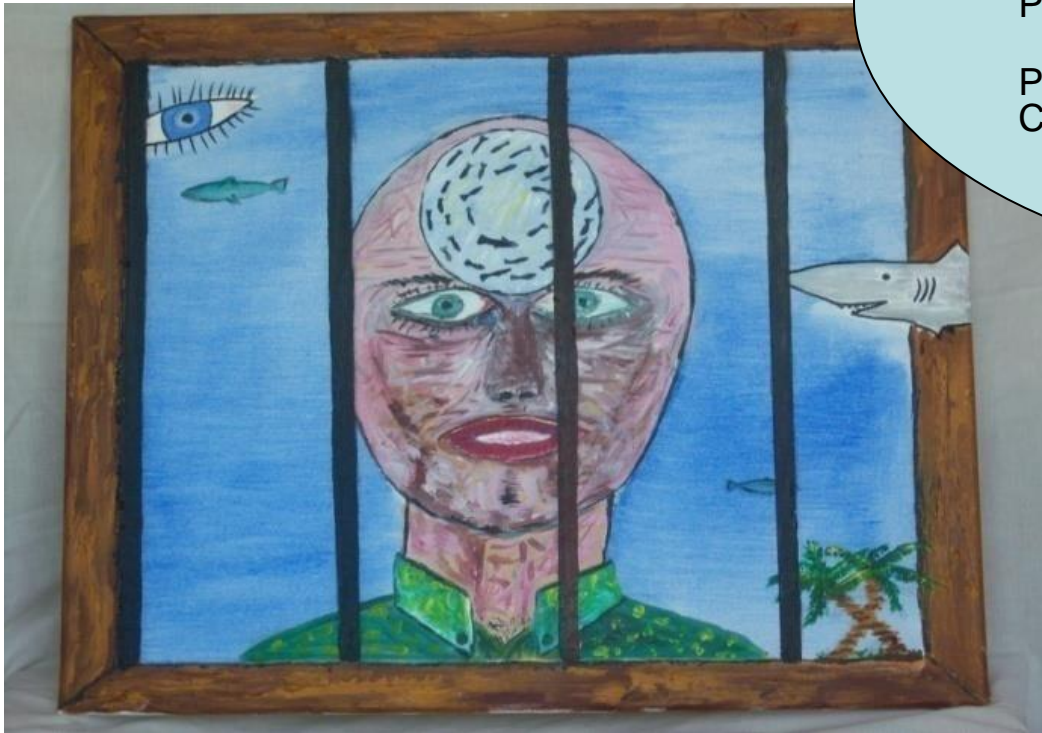
A metaphor and pictorial metaphor technique in therapy for CRUSE Birmingham June 2019

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Exercise

- Turn to your neighbour and discuss what you know about metaphor

- 5mins

Lit review - Metaphor

"a transfer", in rhetoric "transference of a word to a new sense", is language that directly compares seemingly unrelated subjects.

A metaphor is something relatively more concrete or conceivable which stands for something more elusive (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphors tradition
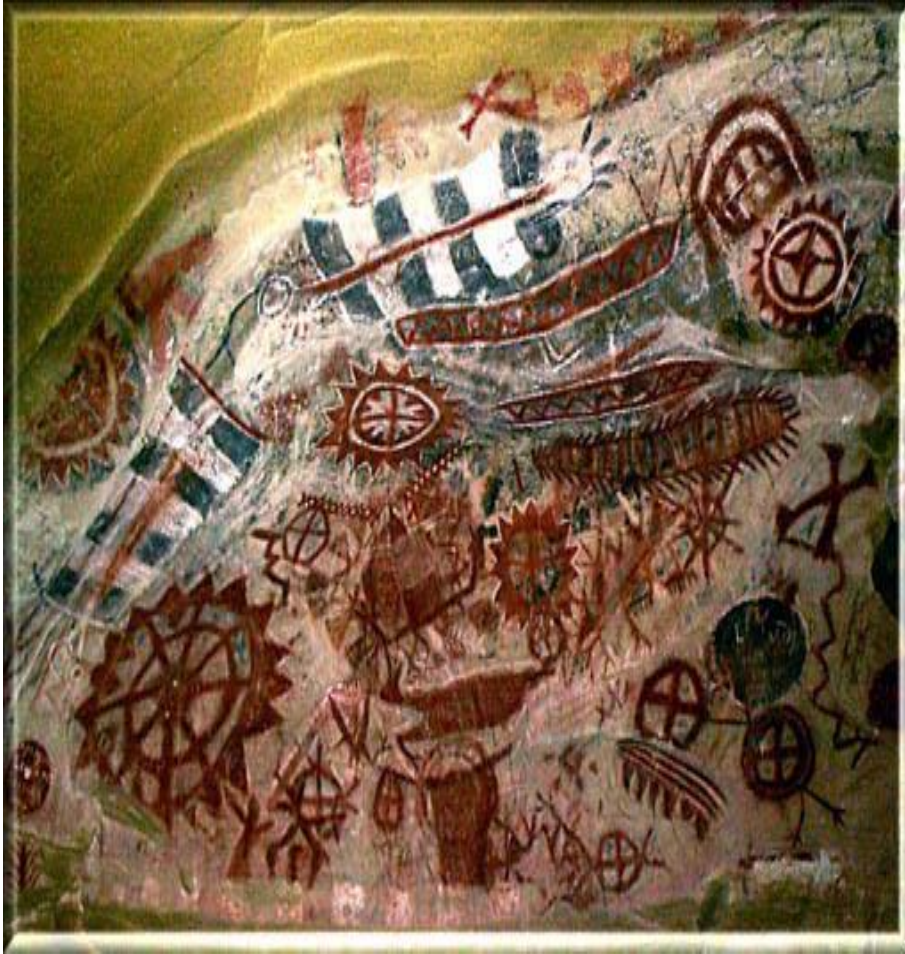
Literature on metaphors seems to consist mainly of case studies and speculation' (Rowan and Thompson 2000)

However…

Metaphors have been an essential feature of human communication from time immemorial (Barker 1985)

Clients in successful therapies develop a core metaphorical theme in relation to the main issues of therapy (Angus 1996); McMullen 1989)

Why focus on metaphor…

- Metaphor might be useful when treatment is impeded by the unwillingness of the clients to accept the ideas the therapist is trying to communicate (Barker 1985, p39)

- Natural metaphors that arise in therapy are used as educational tools. Metaphors begin to extend the boundaries of beliefs about thinking (Abbatielo 2006)

- Metaphor therapy broadens the concept of cognition to include the imaginal and metaphoric forms of cognition. (Kopp 1995, p133)

Lit review Cognitive neuroscience…every contact counts

- Through revisiting experiences that went on to establish attachment in the early years of life new neural pathways and patterns of connectivity in the RH of the brain may be established

- Communication between hemispheres means that experience can then be put into words and processed by the left.

- Left right integration enables the patient to put feelings into words, to think about feelings in the mind rather than experiencing them in the body
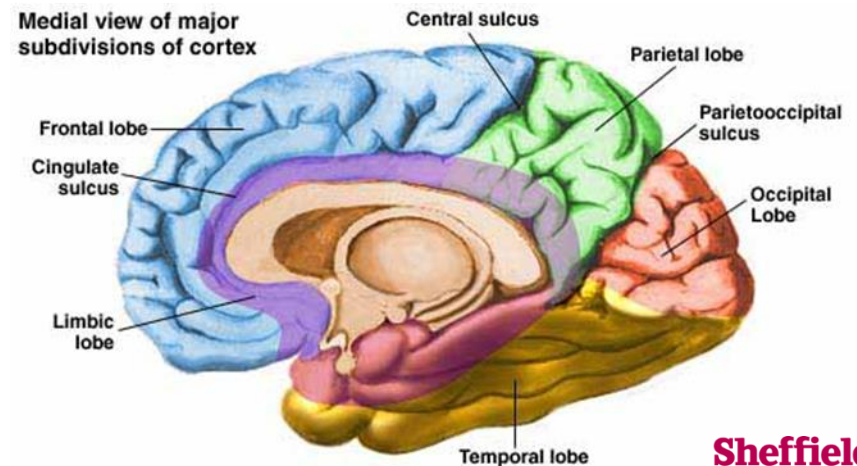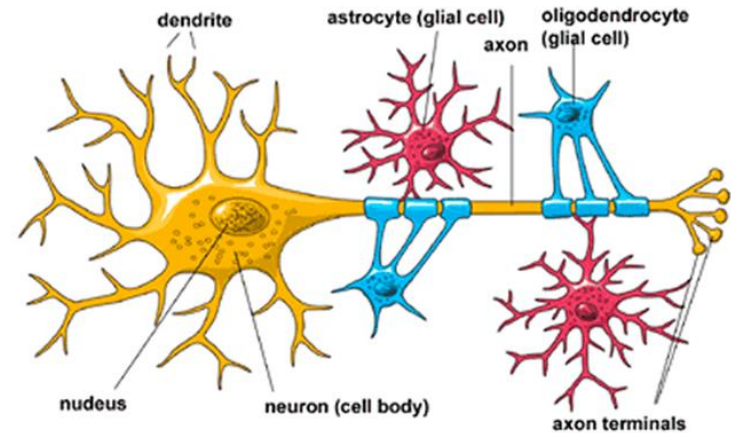
Lit review cognitive neuroscience
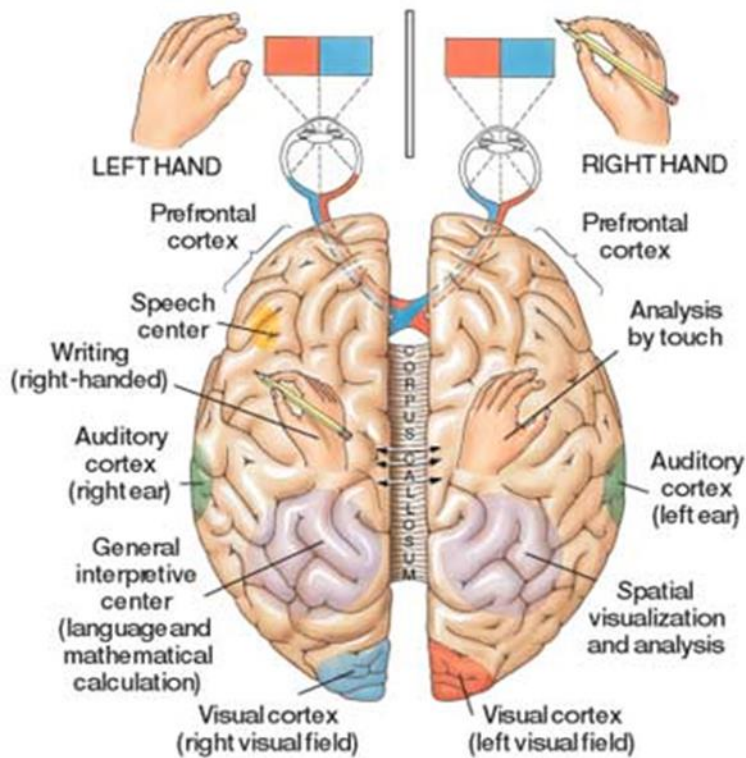
- 'metaphor is the best way to convey feeling and that without it therapists become prey to over-thinking'

(Dunn 1997)

Lit review Image laden metaphor

- Siegleman (1990) outlines the importance of the 'image laden metaphor' that as novel is usually born out of intense feeling 'the need to communicate something never communicated in that way before, to make others see what you have seen, and often to state psychological states that can only be approximated in words' (p6-7).

Case example:The Cauldron
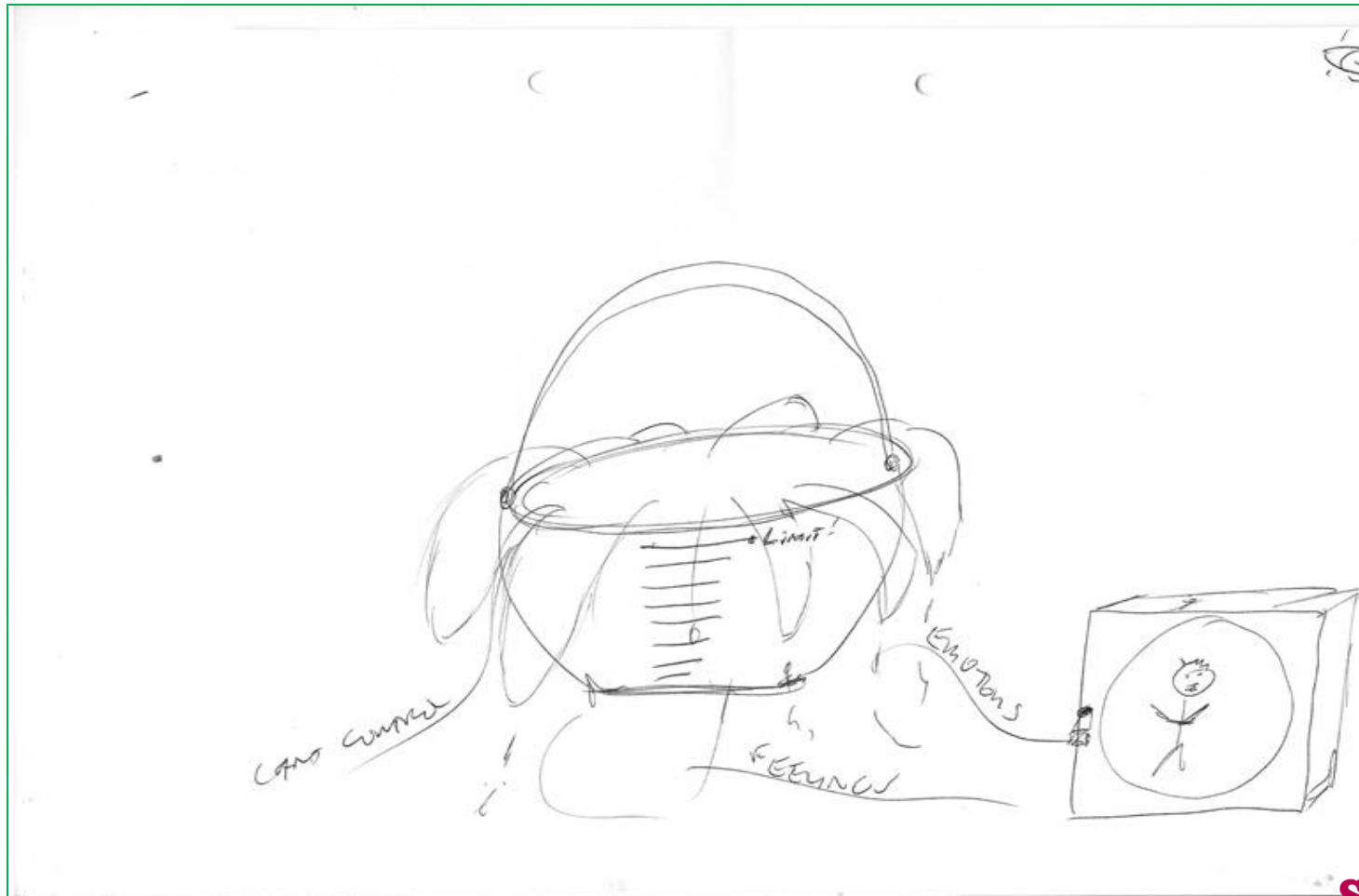
Image laden metaphor

- Bayne (2000) argues a place for pictures and suggest three responses for the therapist;

  - explicating what is implicit in a metaphor;
  - therapeutically extending or modifying
  - the counsellor creating and delivering a 'therapeutic metaphor'.

The ZPD and Grief

- Vygotsky's theory (1962), the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) is…the difference between the child's capacity to solve problems on his own, and his capacity to solve them with assistance.

- This is our role in grief therapy to be the person providing a scaffolding process, providing non-intrusive intervention, or another peer who has already mastered that particular function (Kerr 2001).

Beth's ZPD example…

..produced a spontaneous metaphor when describing her sudden loss of her 'Nana'...

- 'Dad' she said through her tears…

'its like I have been given a jigsaw but there's a bit missing, as if I have a hole in my heart that will never heal'..

- My own heart ached for her but we discussed how, of course her loss is an absence, but over time her missing piece of jigsaw would remain, but the hole would in fact become smaller. In this way she (we) were making meaning by using a metaphor of her loss.
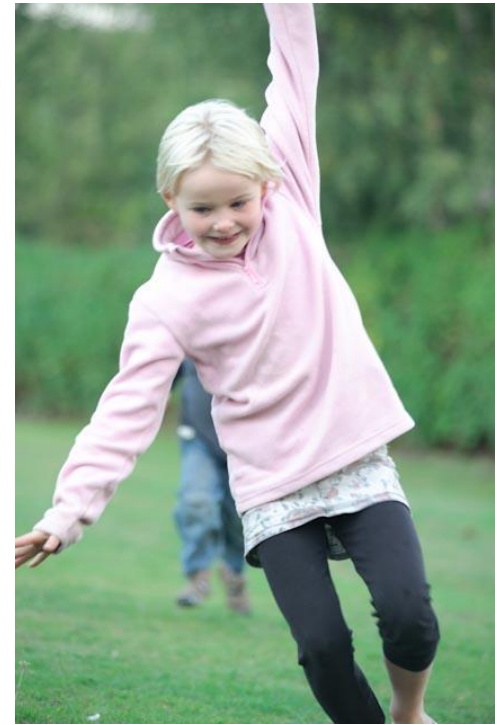
Metaphors and endings

- Our dialogue was a 'narrative and constructivist' response…validating her metaphor but also enabling and extending the metaphor to a newer perspective that could generate healing capacity.

- In using her words and metaphors I was working in her emotional ZPD, as an adult to a nine year old, offering a 'scaffolding of support sequencing, planning, and pacing as well as tools and concepts which are handed over as the child acquires them' (Ryle and Kerr 2002).

Metaphors and endings
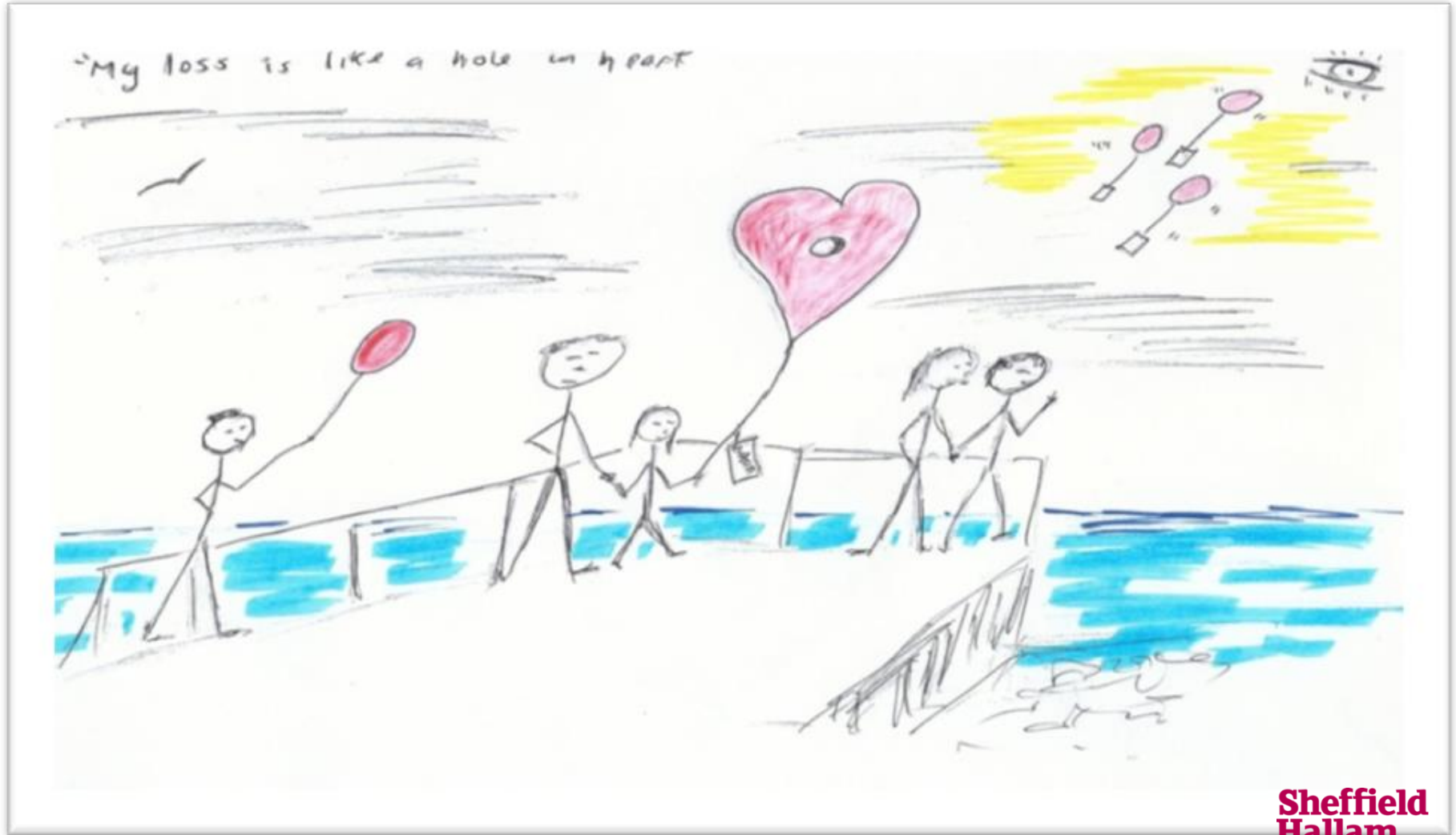
Metaphors and endings

- Whilst this image is resonant and connects to a recent experience, mental images can also represent and make connection with the early life experience.

- This embodiment of experience within the 'image' can support the individuals current self-healing capacity in recalling and working with the image in verbalisation, as if the 'shift from the visual to the linguistic heralds a new capacity for symbolisation' (Wilkinson 2010, p194).

Metaphor 'A solid stone' in grief therapy

Initially the grief and sense of loss is all encompassing and is all we can see as the grief in the form of a black solid stone fills our world. As time progresses other things start to enter our lives and we get involved in other activities, relationships and experiences.

This can be illustrated by showing the grief stone still the same size but there is now another circle outside it showing that our world has expanded to accommodate other aspects of life. Several people find this helpful as some can think that if they get involved in life's activities again following a death it means they do not care that that person is no longer with them (Wilson, 2014).

Grief

Grief

Metaphor example in grief therapy

- Wilson (1992) of a 'waterfall' with various responses to death illustrated by a 'whirlpool, sandbanks and rocks' which the client can use to describe their current situation.

Metaphor example in grief therapy

- Theories by Klass et al (1996), who refer to **continuing bonds** and how the relationship between the bereaved person and the one who died continues after death, and can lessen uncertainty.

Experience based metaphors

- Salka (1997) on experience based metaphors…

- One 'gathers information from a client's telling of his or her direct experience, a specific, individualised story or analogy often emerges...through the clients identification with this metaphor rapport with his or her unconscious mind is deepened' (p23).

Exercise 2 (10 mins)

- In groups of three, one person a client, one a therapist on an observer...

- The therapist enters into a dialogue with the client and listens out for a metaphor that resonant

- Once noticed explore in more depth

- The observer observes

Kopp (1995) Through the looking glass…

Step 1: Notice metaphor (willingness/therapeutic alliance)

Step 2a: Explore the metaphoric image (client derived/shared understanding)
    When you say ….. What image/picture comes to mind?
    What do you see in your minds eye?
    Could you describe?

Step 2a: If client does not respond (collaboration)
    If I were seeing it (the metaphor) the way you see it what would I see?
    May I tell you what image occurs to me?

Step 3: Exploration of the metaphor as sensory image (simplicity/use of ZPD)
    What else can you see?
    Describe the scene?
    What else is going on?
    What are the other people doing/saying?
    What happens next?

The Case for Pictures/images

- When trying to elicit automatic thoughts related to past events or situations …it may be useful to use mental imagery to recreate the situation' (Blackburn and Davidson 1995)

- Creating a picture of what the individual can imagine as a possible positive outcome can instil a sense of hope and provide a tangible road map to achieve their goals. (Dessaur 2010)

- Metaphors of this sort which can be seen as inherently integrative in that they coalesce a number of complex strands of thought into a single memorable image (Holmes and Bateman 2002)

- …the healing process seemed to reside in the image making and therapeutic alliance (Hughes 2007)

- If pictures work use them (Ryle 2012)

Metaphors as Pictures

'Thinking in pictures is…only a very incomplete form of becoming conscious. In some way, too, it stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words, and is unquestionably older than the latter both ontologically and phylogenetically' It follows therefore that thinking in pictures is a medium that can enable a client to express rich emotional material (Freud 1923/1960)

Clients in successful therapies develop a core metaphorical theme in relation to the main issues of therapy (Angus 1996; McMullen 1989 in Levit et al 2000)

Little is known about how metaphors evolve over the course of therapy (Levit et al 2000)

'To understand the specific pathology of this disorder one should not look only for the possible metaphoric meaning of the anorectic behaviour, but for reflective Function itself- the compromised capacity of making mental representations; of metaphorisation' (Skarderund 2007)

Metaphors as pictures

'I identified some images that described my overcoming of this initial 'swimming through' and… these and positioned at the 'other end of the vortex'.

'The image of the fish, for example, came from the idea of a fish that is able to keep on swimming, regardless of difficulties it encounters.'

'The image of an explorer emerged towards the end of the sessions…in this case I perceived myself as being ready to venture into the potentially exciting realm of the unknown, complete with a 'toolkit' that I could use in order to examine and help any psychological problems that I found flaring up in myself.'

PATIENT E

THE YOUNG (JUNG) ME   WORKING LIFE

SOCIAL LIFE   HOME LIFE (EMOTION) ANXIOUS

VIGILANCE

MON
TUES
WED ✓
THUR ✓
FRI
SAT
SUN

Pictures as metaphors

A

Observing 'I'

A safe place

Subpersonalities, loss and abandonment

The bear…violence ..self self and self other

The railings represent anxiety

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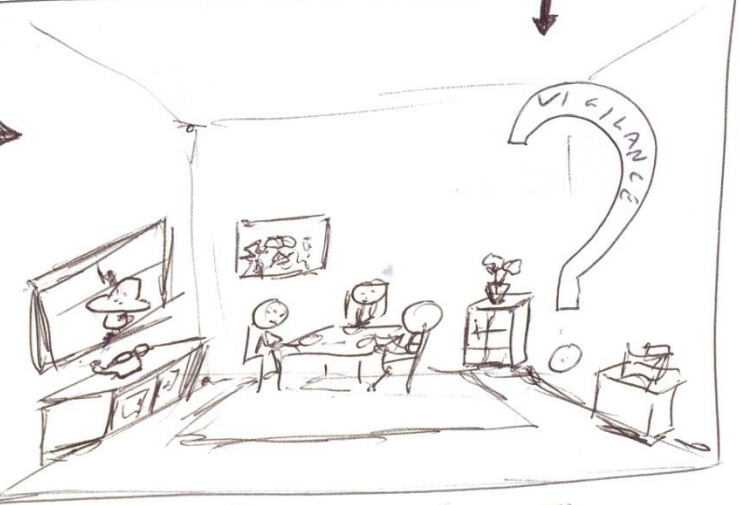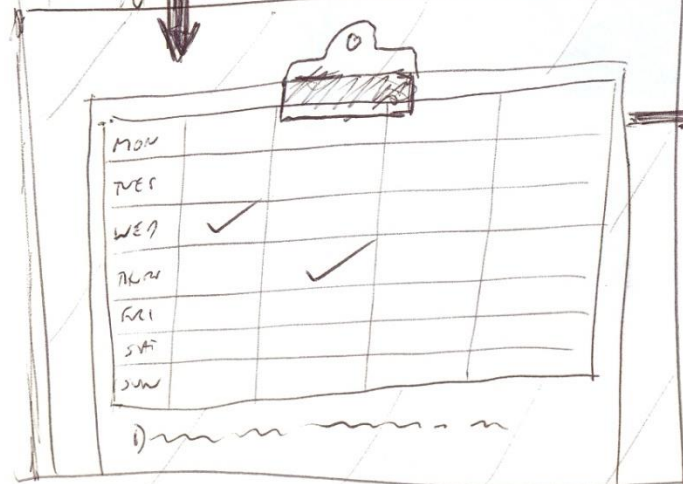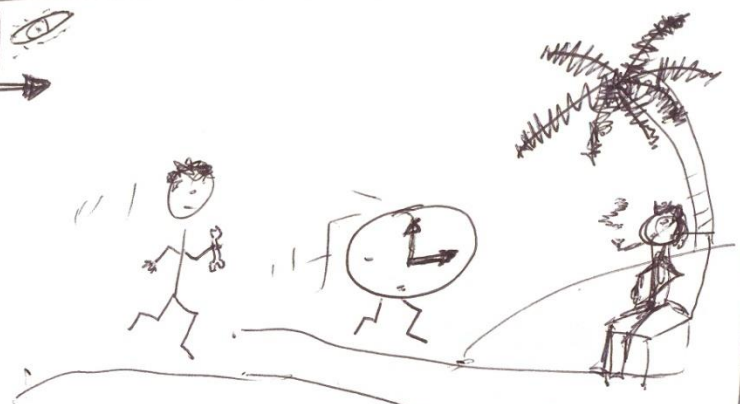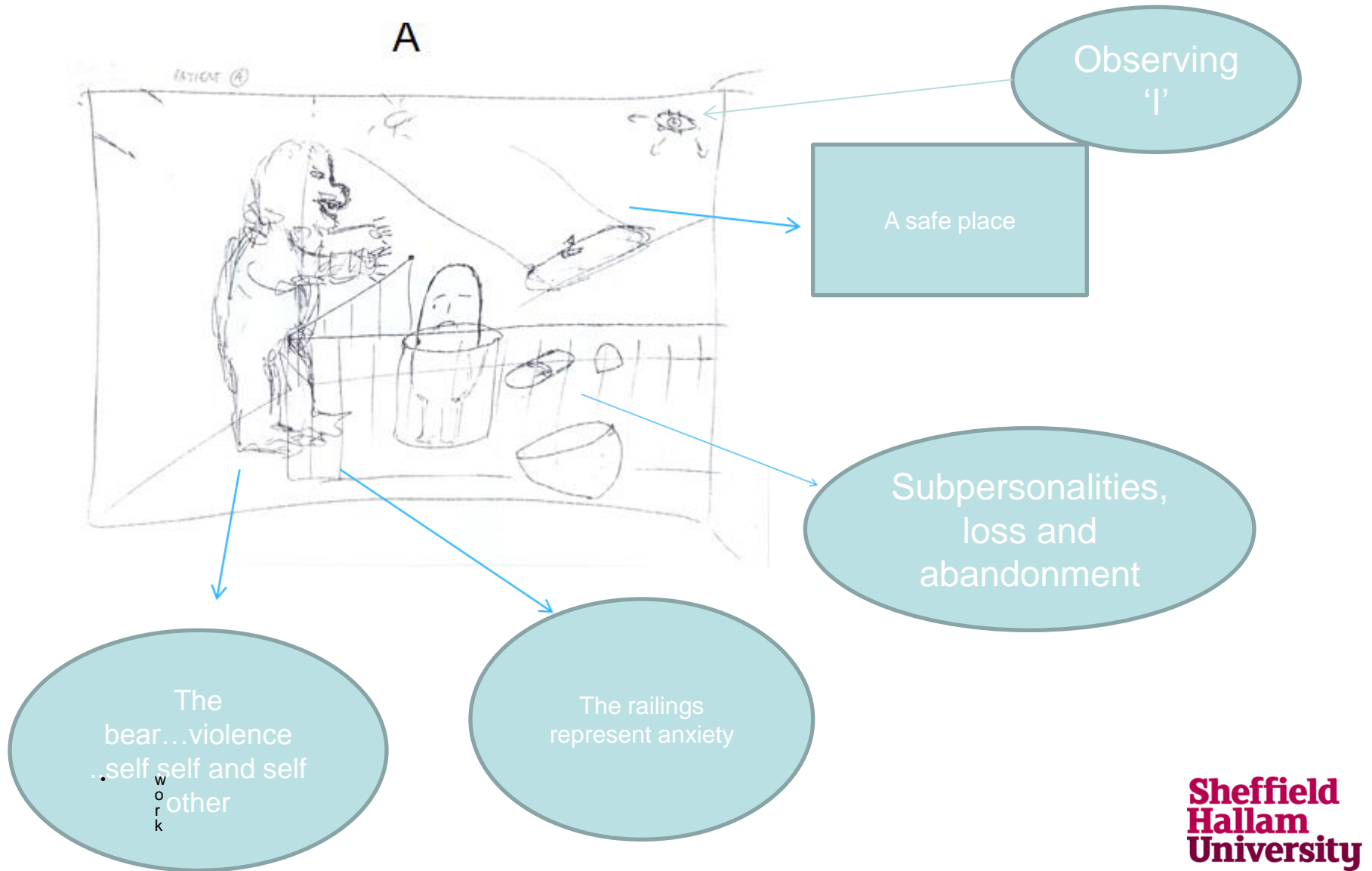
Pictures as metaphor
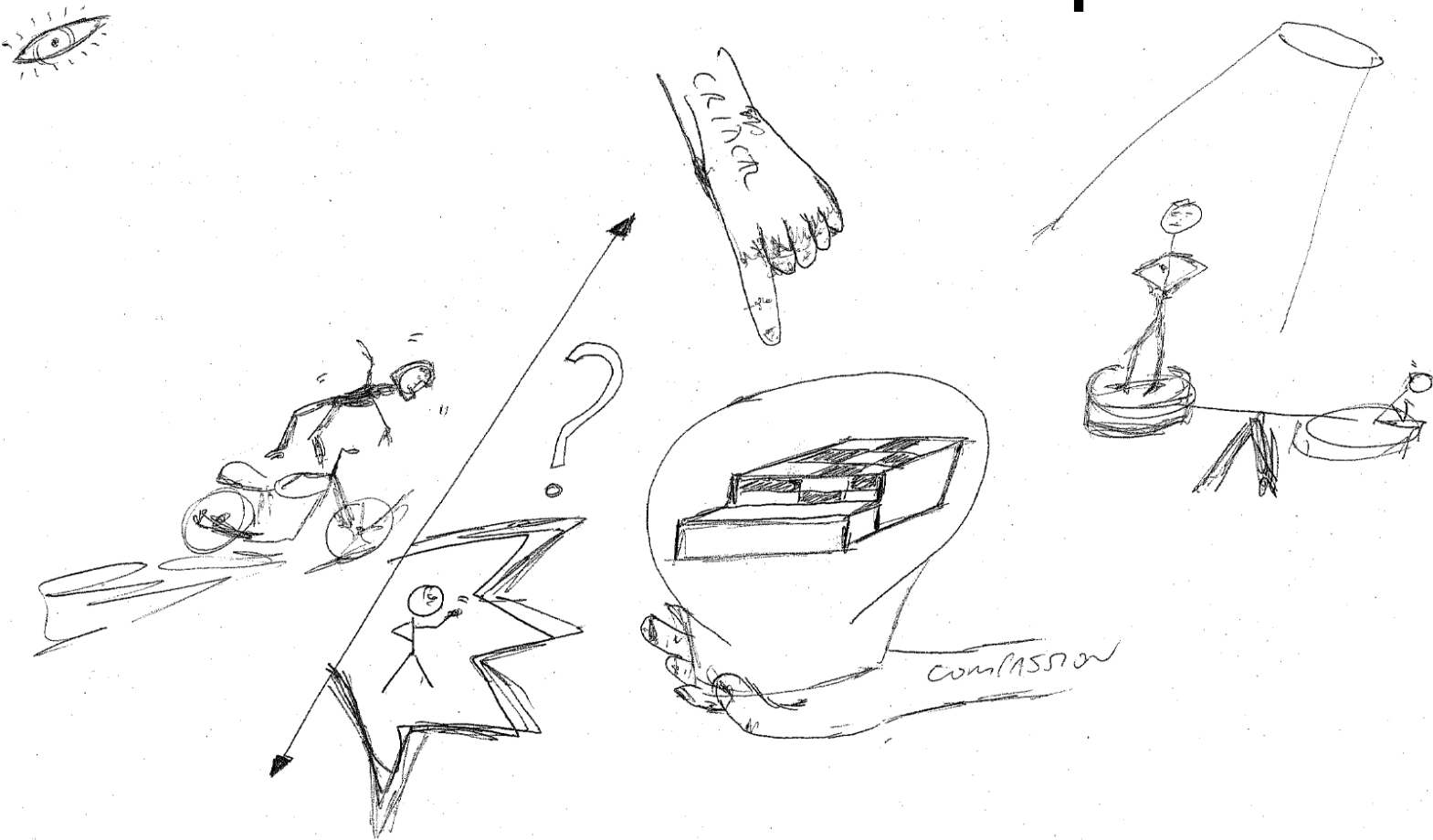
'A glance at the picture reminds me of all the major points and the relevant thought behind them. It summarises the important findings that I need to keep fresh, clear and forward in my mind. The picture gives me a precise, practical view of the therapy, why it was required and the outcomes it produced.'

Exercise 3

- In groups of three, one person a client, one a therapist on an observer...

- The therapist reengages the dialogue with the client and returns to the metaphor

- *Do you mind if I draw this?*

- All spend a short time drawing what they see as the metaphor(s) for the discussion.

Kopp (1995) Through the looking glass…

Step 4: Explore and define feeling in relation to the metaphoric image (accessible image/simplicity/non judgemental)

    Drawing image – agree not to intrude but to create and explore

Step 5: Revision (ongoing/moving on)

    If you could change the image in any way how would you change it?

    What if the e.g. 'x' part of the metaphor were an '?'

    What would the image look like if you were feeling better?

    What do you need to do to get there, what shall I draw on the picture to represent this 'exit'

Step 6: Back to the tea party (work within the ZPD)

    What parallel's do you see between the image of picture and original picture/metaphor?

Research results: Study 1 summary

- Initial issues arose as to whether the picture was to be '*therapist led or client led drawing of picture*?' and a '*Therapist led drawing might lead to an enactment of client wanting to please therapist*'

- '*I feel metaphors can give us new ways to describe things/patterns*' and their '*Creative use can lead to expansion of understanding*'.

- Not all tools work for all problems, therefore what is important is that one has a range of tools

Research results: Study 2 Summary

- Be open to the opportunity
- Collaboration and co-construction
- Therapists ok to draw
- Therapist can offer metaphor if it is resonant
- Be prepared to abandon
- Not too many
- Central theme
- Creative and playful

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Study 3 examples

Feels like you are going to explode?
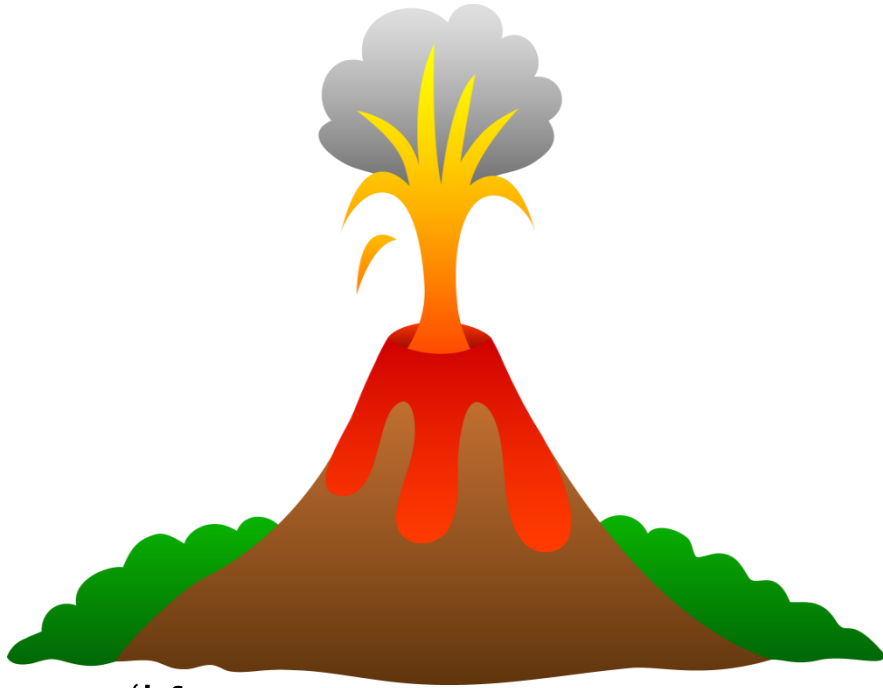
What if you could control the lava?

'I found pictures of a volcano's, one erupting and one where the flow was directed to one area. I used the metaphor anger as the volcano and being able to direct the lava as a way of controlling the anger. I suppose it was cheating a bit not drawing the picture but the visual worked.' (306)

Study 3 summary

About the therapeutic relationship…

- **Willingness:** I was thinking if I could find a way pictorially to communicate what roles or self' (304) but also respect the clients decision to decline (305).

- **Technique:** a new 'habit' of 'listening to speakers to see how many metaphors they use…It's surprising.' Intuition had improved (307), and drawing out the metaphor, in 301's case a circle where each layer was explored as representing different emotional states.

- **Client voice:** facilitating the client 'speaking in his own way' about metaphor.

- **Shared Language**: the client needs to 'connect with metaphor of the image' (304) and the therapist gains a sense of 'knowing my client at a much deeper level and what he/she is experiencing' (301), and 'I think the fact that the client could see anger as a material thing made the session positive' (306).

- **Central Theme:** they 'can form the basis for the whole therapy or be a transitory illustration during the session' (responder 046)

Study 4 – PM analysis

Fig127: Pictorial metaphor

On Pictorial Metaphors

	F 1	F 2	F 3	F 4	F 5	F 6	F 7	F 8	F 9	F 10	F 11	F 12	F 13	F 14
Round 1	12	16	18	15	5	4	13	13	11	12	16	15	21	6
Round 2	39	43	48	41	46	29	46	41	47	35	42	38	31	15
% Change	225%	169%	167%	173%	820%	625%	254%	215%	327%	192%	163%	153%	48%	150%
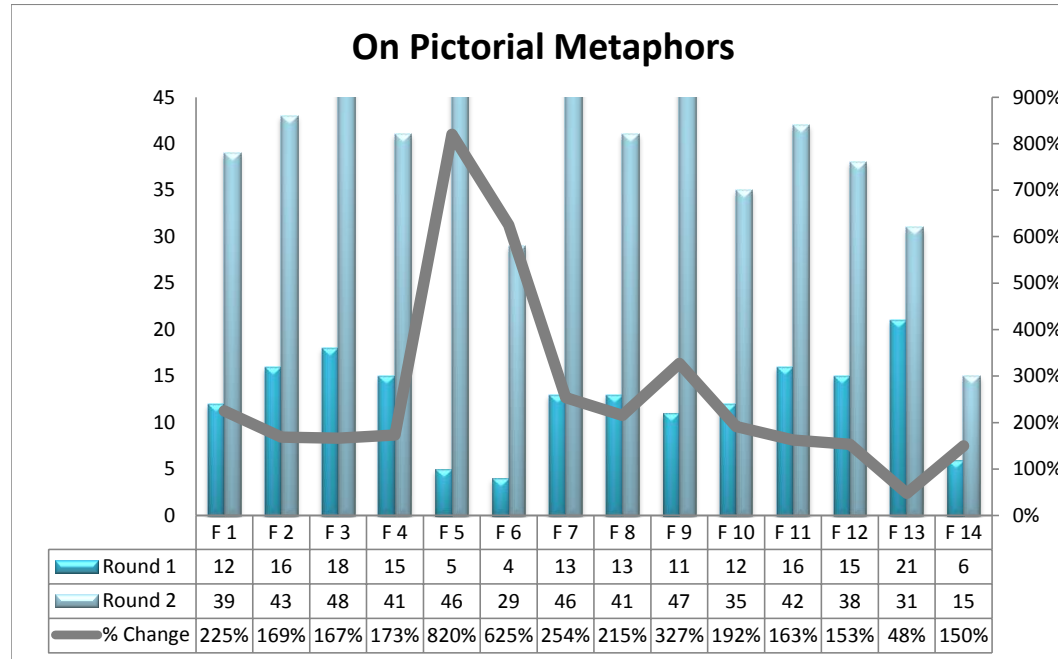
Scores for PM increased as a number of responders had scored based on very limited experience, as the workshop product was for responders to utilise the PM technique during role pay then they were able to rate this at the end of the workshop. F1 saw a 225% increase which relates to playfulness in working with PM; this is encouraging. F2 '*accessible image*,' F3 '*non-judgemental*' and F4 '*simple not perfect drawings*' all achieved a positive increase. F5 *'we worked with images that came from the mind's eye'* scored below the 80% threshold in Delphi R3.

Study 4 timing

Fig129: Time to complete questionnaire

Time to Complete Questionnaire

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Round 1	22	23	25	25	29	26	38	25	22	17	21	23	22
Round 2	10	15	9	12	10	13	19	16	16	13	16	16	12
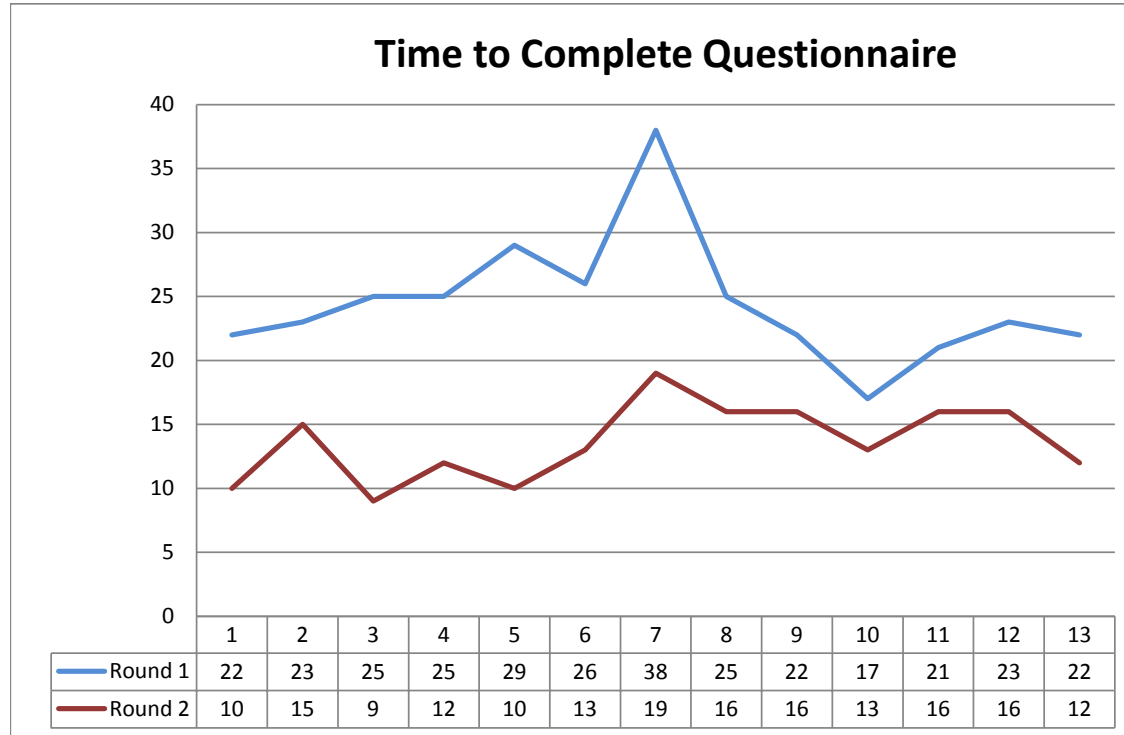
Bose et al. (2001) note Mabe and West's (1982) meta-analysis of self-assessmer concluding that 'self-evaluations become more accurate as subjects gain experience i evaluating their abilities' (Bose et al 2001, p11). The repeated measure was found to b completed on average 44% quicker with average time 24 minutes in the first measuremer and 14 minutes on the second. One responder noted... *'It was really helpful to do th questionnaire before and after to monitor learning and development learning throug experience really works for me - thank you'* (81)

Study 4 summary

- Increased awareness of metaphors is noted by responders

- Increased confidence in working with metaphor.

- metaphors that resonate with the patients experience to mind in supervision

- Metaphor was noted to break down defences and capture a central theme for one session or a series of sessions.

- PM responders were able to utilise this technique in the workshop and skills development noted.

- Awareness of managing being playful and not being overly concerned about perfect representations.

- The drawn images need to be drawn in such a way as to facilitate development and expansion.

Discussion/feedback/closure

Thank you for listening

If you want to stay in dialogue please contact me.

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