Emotions- Our public and private trajectories: 
Expression, exclusion, experience and empathy.

Guest lecture by Colin Lago

Initial Description (6 months ago!)

This lecture will strive to offer some ideas and reflections related to emotional life under the four sub-headings of expression, exclusion, experience and empathy.

Expression: In a review I once read of Carl Roger’s work, the author suggested that, from Roger’s perspective, ‘emotions were the true expressions of the self’. In this lecture I hope to address the vast terrain of emotion and emotional life and consider its extraordinary capacity to assist our ‘self-righting’ capacities.

Exclusion: From a different perspective, I have long been concerned for the experience of the ‘outsider’, the one who is different, the one who is projected upon. Research indicates that the experience of social exclusion impacts and shapes people’s emotional worlds in complex and distorting ways.

Experience: The task of therapy, as suggested by Rogers, is to facilitate the client’s experiencing of themselves. Eugene Gendlin conducted research that indicated that where clients are in connection with their ‘experiential flow’, then therapeutic work with them was swiftly established and invariably helpful. Where do experience and emotion fit in with each other?

Empathy: In re-addressing the concept of empathy and acknowledging the richness of the English language for emotionally nuanced words, I hope to alert
us, yet again, to the constantly important task of striving to understand the other as if we were the other.

We are involved in an emotional professional activity that exposes us to emotions, both ours, the others, and sometimes further others beyond!! How rewarding and potentially exhausting! How inspirational and traumatising! Our work demands extraordinary openness to others’ worlds.....and in continuing our work over time, we also need to manage our emotional overload.

I appreciate that this is not a coherent lecture description, but writing it some months ahead of giving it, I trust you will bear with me in this lack of coherence and clarity.....emotion does that often!! Fear not, though, I will certainly be doing my best to tease out some of the themes suggested above.

The lecture today! (Slide 3)

In the autumn there was a series of three TV programmes on the ‘British Stiff Upper Lip’ narrated by Ian Hislop. In them he explored the origins of the concept and how 18\textsuperscript{th}/19\textsuperscript{th} century cultural influences gave rise to this ‘stiff upper lip’. Indeed we, as a culture, have since come to be viewed by other cultures as emotionally cold and distant. From the notion of the stiff upper lip I began to wonder about any sayings that reflected this reserve and restraint. Amongst others, I came across phrases such as; ‘keep your chin up’, ‘as cool as a cucumber’ and ‘as cold as a fish’. We also have descriptions in the language like ‘emotionally constipated’, ‘thick skinned’, ‘zipped up’, and ‘uptight’! (Slide 4)

However, my own sense is that the stiff upper lip in our culture has somewhat receded into the background and softened. Public displays of emotionality are somewhat more frequent......in the field of sports, on television, even amongst politicians! Phrases that I could think of that depict this more open response to emotionality include....‘you can read him/her like a book’, ‘they are hot-headed’, ‘they take things too much to heart’, ‘they are touchy’, ‘he’s just a bundle of nerves’, even to the phrase ‘don’t be nice to me or I might cry’,etc.

Ever since receiving the invitation to give this lecture and then subsequently writing the lecture description, I have been musing on the conference theme:
‘Counselling and the emotional life’. I tried to pose to myself questions such as ‘why is the emotional life important? And ‘what is the emotional life’?

Clearly not getting very far in my musings (apparently) as no thunderbolts of original thought arrived in my head in response to these questions.....I began to worry that I had finally run out of any creative ideas at all. Then, quite suddenly, one morning between Christmas and New Year, I woke up with a complete sense of how to contextualise this lecture, how to introduce it.....and immediately fetched a cup of tea and a notebook back to bed and started scribbling! (Such a relief to find the creative juices are still working!!)

My waking moments had been filled by the ideas that lay behind the processes of human development as hypothesised by our theoretical ‘grand-parents’. Jung talked about the process of individuation, the Existentialist philosophers like Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, pursued ideas related to the achievement of personal authenticity, much later Rogers even began to consider the notion of the ‘fully functioning person’. In short, these differing sets of descriptions are somewhat embodied by the notion I once heard Carl Rogers quote: “If I can be all that I am, then that is good enough”.

However, this is not a process conducted in solitary isolation. The process of development of ‘individuation’, of becoming the self you truly are’, is neither solitary nor an anti-social stance. Developing our ‘humanness’ also facilitates our relational capacity. This is not a case of ‘I’m alright Jack,’ but rather is an expression of our wish to love and for love. And to develop this a bit further following the poem by Marianne Williamson, the world does not require us to be shrinking violets but rather to shine.....for us all to be fully who we are.

Our Greatest Fear —Marianne Williamson  (Slide 5)

It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us, Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?
Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

(—Marianne Williamson [Often said to have been quoted in a speech by Nelson Mandela. The source is Return to Love by Marianne Williamson, Harper Collins, 1992. —Peter McLaughlin]

Some early research that Rogers reported revealed that as persons developed (Slide 6) through counselling/psychotherapy, they not only became more developed in themselves but they were also more sensitive to and capable in their relationships with others...This finding is a critical challenge to those who have asserted that therapy is only an individualised activity that encourages selfish development with scant regard to our relationships with others.

Most therapy is frequently concerned with others in the client’s life, how others have impacted us, how we strive to manage difficult relationships and so on. As Rogers noted, we are incurably social beings, and there’s no doubt we suffer when our relations with others are troubled and strained. (Slide 7)

Therapy is conducted within the context of relationship. The client must be sufficiently motivated to engage in the process and the process is then conducted through the relationship with the therapist. Our theoretical ‘grand-parents going back to the earliest days of Freud and Jung recognised this relational component. Freud developed his ideas around ‘transference’, acknowledging the frequently complex, ‘out of awareness’ feelings and
projections we associate with others with whom we are in therapeutic relationships. Jung talked about therapy requiring the therapist to bring the whole of their personality to their work with the client.

Roger’s greatest contribution, perhaps, to psychotherapeutic theory and practice was his naming of the component aspects of relationship, frequently referred to as the necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change to occur.

So let me briefly recap:

- Counselling serves to facilitate the personality development of the individual. (How might we become all that we can be? Dare I become more authentic?)
- In so doing, the individual’s capacity to be in sensitive relationship to others is generally enhanced.
- “If you are truly heard by someone, then that can improve your relationships with everyone.” (Embarrassed to say I heard this quote on the Ali McBeal show years ago but somehow it has stuck with me!!)

(Slide 8) And if these generalised points are approximately true, how powerful they are in a world where we are now more deeply influenced by inter-connectivity than ever before, (for example, one in five relationships in the UK now starts online (YouGov, Dec 2011), online dating is the third most common way for people to meet a partner after ‘through friends’ or in a bar/pub!) (The Observer 30th Dec 2012 p.11) This is a world where we are completely surrounded by images of possibility, by seductions and temptation, by the vast panoply of social media, where experiences of every thought, reflection, opinion, seems not only encouraged but is welcomed and where every possible lifestyle choice is, apparently, so easily available........Does not the experiencing of this post modernist, post-structuralist world somehow require us to be as personally developed as we can be in order to cope with the challenges of contemporary living, of being able to value and have confidence in our interpretation of things, of meanings, etc?

(Slide 9) And this is a world where the World Health Organisation hypothesises that by 2020 the incidence of mental ill-health in the world will impact upon and require more attention than all the other current major diseases like cancer, heart diseases, etc.
This alarming projection is a situation in which the world of therapy, in its modest methods and applications will have a significant role...because counselling (for me counselling and psychotherapy are synomonomous) has been, currently is and I project with be about encouraging and enhancing reflections on and development of each client’s emotional life, (that is if we can keep our work from all the political, fiscal and ideological forces that keep imposing/preferencing one method over all others or limits on session numbers which are not supported by research outcomes and so on.)

**Emotion**

(Slide 10) The study of the emotions has been and continues to be an extraordinarily long, multi-disciplinary, highly contentious research field. Interestingly, Charles Darwin published a paper:’ Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals’. He explained how people everywhere have common emotional facial expressions, some of which are also shared by animals. (Slide 11) For example a wolf baring its fangs uses the same facial musculature as any human being does when angry or threatened. The same simple physiology of emotions has been preserved over evolutionary eons and across species. On the basis of the universality of this phenomenon, Darwin speculated that the emotions must be key to the survival of the fittest. (Slide 12)

Emotion, for Sartre (from his Sketch for a theory of Emotions, 1939) is a form of human reality...and the converse is true, that human reality is a form of emotion. It is not something imposed from the outside but inherent in our very being. Similarly we cannot reduce experienced emotion to a series of bodily functions or manifestations: these sensations must necessitate a process from which meaning may be derived.

Deepak Chopra, in his foreword to Candace Pert’s book ‘Molecules of Emotion: Why you feel what you feel’ notes ‘how the mind, spirit, and emotions are unified with the body in one intelligent system. She provides us with a vivid scientific picture of these truths. She shows us that our biochemical messengers act with intelligence by communicating information, orchestrating a vast complex of conscious and unconscious activities at any one moment. This information transfer takes place over a network linking all of our systems and organs, engaging all of our molecules of emotion as the means of communication. What we see is an image of a ‘mobile brain’- one that moves throughout our entire body, located in all places at once and not just in the head.
(Slide 13) Just a few pages into this book she writes: Recent technological innovations have allowed us to examine the molecular basis of the emotions and to begin to understand how the molecules of our emotions share intimate connections with, and are indeed inseparable from our physiology.....in my talks I show how the molecules of emotion run every system in our body and how this communication system is in effect a demonstration of the body mind’s intelligence, wise enough to seek wellness, and one that can potentially keep us healthy and disease free....’ I return to this general theme later when I discuss Art Bohart’s work on our ‘self-righting ‘capacities.

As a noun ‘emotion’ has been described as ‘a natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one’s circumstances, moods or relationships with others....’

Apparently dating back to 1579, the word emotion was adapted from the French word ‘emouvoir’.....which means to ‘stir up.’ (However the earliest precursors of this word are likely to date back to the very origins of language.)

I remember my initial ‘emotional stirrings up’ happening very soon after starting work as a full time counsellor in the counselling service of a large old polytechnic/ new university in the autumn of 1977. I had just completed my counsellor training- a one year full time diploma here at Keele- and within a couple of weeks of the new term starting, was seeing clients on the hour, every hour, all day, every day!! There were just two of us working flat out.

One day, having a brief conversation over lunch with my new colleague, she asked how I was doing. My response surprised me with its strength of emotional expression; it was as if her question had opened a trap door out of which poured feelings of strain, pressure, ‘over-whelmed’ness, anxiety.....I blurted out, in response, ”nothing in my training equipped me for this onslaught”, I moaned!! “Am I being of any use to my clients? Can I keep coming up with the ‘goods’, a good enough way of being, on the hour, every hour, with each client? How much more emotionality can I bear, both coming from others and from within me in response? “

Despite having previously been a full time youth worker for 5 years in the east end of London and then teaching in Jamaica for two years, (both quite challenging and occasionally stressful jobs) this enormous demand on my emotional resources, on my capacities not only to cope but to meet each client fully, was already over-extended....and I had only been in the job 3 weeks!!!
I soon located a supervisor who had been recommended to me - Bernard Ratigan (who sadly died last autumn)......and I always will remember Bernard saying that, when under pressure, (counsellors need to) get lashings of supervision. Working with others is emotional work. Self evidently, it is not only a client coming with their emotions.....the work exposes us to their emotions, our emotions and sometimes to the wider emotional climate within the world.

Our work certainly can expose us to difficult emotional states, to clients who, however unwittingly, stir up our inner wounds. Supervision is obviously one channel for us to take and explore the painful implications stirred up by clients.......that is, if we dare to raise them. Which leads to the question of what happens in circumstances of unexpressed emotion and emotional reactions? As human beings we are truly remarkable and our feelings can be buried, sometimes for long periods of time....but, unfortunately, sometimes at quite a cost to us and our health. I also remember very well quite a few student clients over my years working in Higher Education who had, sadly lost a parent in the months building up to their ‘O’ or ‘A’ levels.....and who resolved to work harder as a tribute to the parent’s memory......who didn’t really express their grieving at that time.......and then, several years later, often coming up to degree finals, and being quite incapacitated by their rising feelings of delayed bereavement..........As mentioned elsewhere in this lecture, the more able we are to express openly our strong feelings, (perhaps, but not only in the professional contexts of therapy or supervision,) the more in touch we will be with our natural experiential flow.

**Emotions and Expression**

What Jean, my colleague in this story had done, was to somehow facilitate my expression of very strong and full emotions that I hadn’t quite realised were there in this situation. *(Slide 14-Munch)* Needless to say, being able to express these somewhat cathartically was immensely relieving to me. Of course, this is not rocket science to any of you. Our work offers such relief to our clients. To be able to tell it like it is can be such a relief. Indeed, there are many circumstances I have been involved in where this (apparently simple release but with profound consequences) has been sufficient for the client. Through this process, not only have they have released the emotional build-up that
they have been experiencing but additionally, without any further work, they have discovered how to proceed with their difficult situations. No wonder ‘Anna O’, one of Freud’s early patients talked about the therapeutic process as ‘chimney-sweeping’!

(Slide 15) This emotional expression with another truly reminds us of John Donne’s poem, that none of us exist as an island. In addition it draws our attention to emotional expression as something conveyed with others—‘emoting’ implies a public context, a witnessing by another.

As Rogers said: ‘rage needs to be heard. This does not mean that it simply needs to be listened to. It needs to be accepted, taken within, and understood empathically…….The truth about rage is that it only dissolves when it is really heard and understood without reservations.’ (Rogers 1978: 183) I guess we could generalise this specific statement about rage to many of our clients’ strong emotions.

Such emotional material is frequently contained within stories, as exemplified by my story earlier in the lecture concerning my stress levels soon after commencing work as a therapist.) McLeod (1997) has suggested that stories can function by giving a means of contextualising or locating feelings and emotions within a broader framework of meaning. Sarbin (1989) points out that an analysis of the way that words and phrases describing emotions are actually used in everyday life reveals that emotional states are usually located within narratives. Several ‘emotional’ theorists also start from the position that persons are fundamentally social beings and that emotion must be seen within a social and interpersonal perspective, points with which I fully concur.

**Music and Emotion**

(Slide 16 plus play Paul Simon)

Soon after receiving the invitation to give this lecture I watched a TV programme in the ‘Imagine’ series with Alan Yentob entitled ‘How music makes us feel’.

In his introductory remarks, Alan Yentob noted the great tradition that recognises that singing has always been more than speaking. There is something about music that intensifies our emotional experience.
The programme featured Jessye Norman, the African American opera singer who believed that her enslaved forebears were enabled to endure their slavery and the everyday unimaginable events that occurred through music, specifically spirituals and the blues. When working with young children she discovered that playing music, specifically Mozart, was a way of getting them to rest and sleep. *(Slide 17)*

Messian believed that music comes from nature and noted that our emotional response has something mysterious about it.

Playing music to children before they are born has been found to be helpful. Research has revealed that the more babies are synchronised with musical time the more they smiled!

Music can open the space where you can exist in the ‘now’. It can transport you to the unknown.

The programme noted how music has strong religious origins and that music, singing, heightens our language to speak to the gods. Music at funerals can somehow spark emotional reactions in us, can give us permission to cry.

Music has also inspired people in desperate situations; lifts up the spirits of football supporters, increases work rates, seduces you in adverts and, from recent research, reduces ‘loutish behaviour’ and deters crime in shopping centres by 30% and so on. Music has powerful emotional effects.

Interestingly, in musical composition, there is a term ‘a piato’, the use of a chord that moves into another-I understand- that means ‘tear ‘in Italian.

Apparently this area of exploring the effects of music upon us as listeners or players is now the subject of intense scientific research. We unconsciously associate music with emotions we are experiencing.....and I’m certainly aware of how music takes me to emotional places that already, obviously, exist within me but are opened up, are stimulated by the music I’m listening to. Stravinsky recognised this when he noted that ‘music doesn’t express feelings, it helps you find your feelings’.

Quite a few years ago two colleagues in the South West, where I had been an external examiner for many years, started experimenting with one of them
counselling whilst the other accompanied them on a guitar. The guitarist, obviously a very competent musician, was able to spontaneously produce music that reflected the emotional tones of the dialogue occurring between therapist and client.

This TV programme also showed a music therapist working with old people suffering dementia......and it was so moving to watch the therapist playing a keyboard and singing with these people; one old woman struggling to her feet and he, the therapist, playing music with one hand, holding her hand to assist her balance with the other hand, and both of them singing old songs. It has the capacity to touch our episodic memory, musical memories from previous moments in our life, evoking such strong emotional responses....we learn to be human beings through music and it is one of the last things that go from us....

**Exclusion (Slide 18)**

I am going to move on now quite sharply from this arena in which we can be musically nurtured, stimulated and supported to consider almost the opposite end of the spectrum, the emotional and developmental complexities experienced by those who experience social exclusion. As I have already noted, one of the most basic and powerful human motivations is the need to belong, which impels people to form and maintain social connections with others. The consequences of being rejected or excluded by other people can be severe and catastrophic.

In a recent edition of the Sunday Observer colour supplement there was an article on people who have experienced exile from their countries of origin. The article was composed entirely of short biographical accounts by exiled people now living in new countries around the world.

One such person, Parvez Aslam Choudhry, originally from Pakistan tells his story:

“*I’m a human rights lawyer. I have three Masters Degrees, in History, Urdu and Political Science. In Pakistan I worked on laws that discriminate against minorities. Especially the blasphemy law, which is used mainly against Christians. In 2009 I was nominated for the human rights award by the European Union Bar Association.*
Working on human rights issues made me a high profile figure in Pakistan which is why I received death threats. In 2006 my car was hit by Muslim extremists and a passenger was killed. I sustained many injuries and remained in hospital for weeks. In September 2010 mullahs declared outside the High Court that my family and I were blasphemous, working against Islam and were liable to be killed. I was sure I’d be assassinated at any moment, so we left Pakistan on 7 April 2011 with support from the EU.

Our main fear here in Thailand is arrest by the police, after our visas expire. We want to live like free human beings but we, like all refugees, we’re afraid. We feel stateless. When my wife and children ask about our future I don’t know what to tell them. I feel that later we can hope to live in another country-whoever will take us. To live a life with a free mind is a necessity for every human being.”

To live a life with a free mind is a necessity for every human being.” What a powerful sentence and important sentiment.

Though this particular story is situated in foreign countries, I know of many similar stories here in the UK, mainly through my supervisory work with counsellors working with refugees and asylum seekers. Such stories are not, sadly, unusual.

The impact of exile and social exclusion is enormous upon our functioning selves. (Slide 19)

In a book by Forgas and Williams on the Social Self, they cite medical research that suggests that mortality from nearly all-physical diseases is higher among people who are single and/or lack a network of close relationships than among people who have close relationships. Mental illness is likewise significantly higher among people who are alone.

Suicide rates are higher among people who are alone than among those with a network of relationships, and suicide is especially likely among people who have recently lost close relationships.

Twenge (2000) has documented significant correlations between rates of social pathology and rates of social isolation, and indeed a rise in the divorce rate
appears to have more impact on antisocial or destructive behaviour than does change in the economic indicators.

These broad statistical relationships have been sadly acted out in recent years by a series of vivid news stories in several countries in which school pupils (and others) who felt socially excluded resorted to violent attacks on their fellows.

Social exclusion appears to produce a sharp increase in antisocial behaviour.

Excluded people become more aggressive in criticising and harming others – especially people who insulted or provoked them, but also people who have been neutral towards them. This can be extended to almost anyone they encounter.

Excluded people are less likely to help in a response from others. In one study excluded people donated less money to charities than others.

Self-defeating behaviour has also been found to increase following social exclusion.

More accurately most self-defeating behaviour involves performing acts that are simply ill advised and will tend to produce destructive outcomes, even though the person may be seeking positive outcomes.

Social exclusion affects behaviour and cognitive functions but may have little effect on emotions.

Social exclusion appears to have strong effects on people’s ability to retrieve memory and use that information as a basis for thinking and reasoning. Excluded people show significant lower performance than others on logic and reasoning problems.

Research found that socially excluded people seemed to lose their habitual orientation in time – i.e. time can drag slowly for the socially excluded person.

Social exclusion significantly increased the willingness to accept a short-term sacrifice for the sake of a long term gain (immediate gratification sought).

Social exclusion can also create numbness and being numb might be preferable to feeling pain, anxiety and sadness, and so people shut down quickly when confronted with the distressing experience of social rejection.
Suzy Henry, a dear friend and colleague of mine, writes about the horrendous effects upon her of being discriminated against, of being abused and bullied as a young person, because of a facial disfigurement. Her chapter in the book ‘Anti-Discriminatory Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy’ discusses the complex emotional consequences caused by other’s behaviour towards people having disfigurements and other visible differences. On her 14th birthday, a boy she was walking past on Rickmansworth station said to her: ‘Who puked on your face?’.....and followed this by spitting at her......it was important to her, at this point, not to show this incident had been impactful and hurtful, so she walked off and didn’t clean her face until she was out of sight of the aggressor. Sadly, the regular occurrence of such ‘violent ambushes on the soul’ leads the sufferer to become, in some complex way, inured to their full impact at the time, whilst having to withstand the chronic impact of the accumulation of such moments, of having to find ways to rationalise this behaviour in themselves.

Having to endure such reactions in our social lives erodes our self confidence, our capacities to trust (anyone at all), our levels of self-esteem, sabotages any sense of intelligence, or competence or ‘worthwhileness’.....The impact of social exclusion is incalculable in terms of the wreckage it reaps.

Never underestimate the power of your acceptance of others and their stories.

**Empathy** (Slide 20 mother and child)

All of which brings me to the critical concept of empathy. Sandor Firenzi, a close Hungarian colleague of Freud’s was an early pioneer in recognising the importance of empathy within the therapeutic process.

Heinz Kohut-(1977), the humanistic psychoanalyst, who incidentally worked at the University of Chicago at the same time as Carl Rogers- though they never met, wrote an article in which he feared that he would lose any respect and reputation that he had within psychoanalytic circles for pronouncing very strongly his support of empathy as a key therapeutic element. He noted that ‘humans can no more survive psychologically in a psychological milieu that does not respond empathically to them, than they can survive physically in an atmosphere that contains no oxygen. (p.253.) *(Slide 21 Joey)*

Jeremy Rifkind’s recent book ‘The Empathic Civilisation’, argues that we are now living within a new cultural paradigm where empathy is a regular phenomenon of social life. Simon Baron-Cohen, a professor of Psychiatry at the
University of Cambridge published a book a couple of years ago entitled ‘The Science of Evil: On empathy and the origins of cruelty’. In this book he argued that lack of empathy on a massive scale provided a mechanism for understanding the mass acts of cruelty to others, specifically in relation to the Holocaust but also to many other events worldwide.

Empathy, then, as a familiar concept in current life, has arrived, writ large! Indeed, you used to even be able to buy a whole range of beauty products called ‘Empathy’!

The danger, I believe, is that this concept, empathy, might come to be seen as ‘old hat’, yesterday’s fashion and so on by practising therapists. I know of quite experienced colleagues, who, upon recording their work to review it, realised, with shock, that, despite their beliefs to the contrary, they were exhibiting very few empathic behaviours with their clients!!

There is no doubt that Rogers raised it to an art form in his therapeutic work. To watch him at work in this way was so powerful and so gentle. As he was known to say, it is not enough that you think you understand the other, it is important you demonstrate that you actually do understand them.

And I’m not sure if you have ever had this experience, but once, in a group circumstance, another group member fed back to me her understanding of what I had been desperately trying to communicate. The sheer accuracy, brevity and eloquence of her response hit me right between the eyes.....not in a painful way but rather the power of it......it was exactly how I felt at that point. In such a moment, one feels completely seen, recognised, and deeply understood. The experience can be so emotional, and absolutely breathtaking. There is nothing left to fret about or to solve. ‘Yes, that’s exactly how I feel’. If clients give you such feedback on your empathic responses to them, you are really ‘catching’ their sensing, their experiencing and emotional processing.

To feel accepted, received, recognised and understood begets gratitude, intimacy, respect and love, and it facilitates growth. Not to be understood begets disdain, lack of respect and a wish for distance.

Gerald Bozarth and Art Bohart conducted a review of the research on empathy some years ago and amongst other things, revealed that:
60 years of research consistently predicts that therapeutic empathy is the most consistent predictor of outcome.

A 10 minute drop in empathy leads to less self-exploration by clients.

Both vocal tone and non-verbal behaviour have been linked to empathy. Interruptions by the therapist are seen as indications of less empathy.

There are many definitions of empathy in the literature but let me read the definition Rogers constructed: (Slide 22 definition empathy)

“The way of being with another person which is termed empathic has several facets. It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgements, sensing meanings of which he/she is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover feelings of which the person is totally unaware, since this would be too threatening. It includes communicating your sensing of his/her world as you look with fresh and un-frightened eyes at elements of which the individual is fearful. It means frequently checking with him/her as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive. You are a confident companion to the person in his/her inner world. By pointing to the possible meanings in the flow of his/her experiencing you help the person to focus on this useful type of referent, to experience the meanings more fully, and to move forward in the experiencing.

To be with another in this way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another’s world without prejudice. In some sense it means that you lay aside your ‘self’ and this can only be done by a person who is secure enough in his/herself that he/she knows that he/she will not get lost in what may turn out to be a strange or bizarre world of the other, and can comfortably return to his/her own world when he/she wishes.
Perhaps this description makes clear that being empathic is a complex, demanding, strong, yet subtle and gentle way of being.”

****Colin- stitch this bit in to the text... partic the quote. This is a link to the John Schlien article ‘A Counter-Theory of Transference’

http://www.allanturner.co.uk/papers.asp?function=paper&id=11

There is a fabulous quote from a 17 year old young woman that John Schlein shares,- in his article’ A Counter theory of Transference’.  He says:

'As to how she feels, in substance and spirit, when she experiences understanding, she wrote:
I felt as if he, my boyfriend, had reached into my heart and had really seen my fears and understood how much my religion meant to me. My whole being wanted to cry out how much I loved him for that understanding. My body felt so alive and I wanted to tell everyone how happy and exuberant I was. I wanted everyone to be happy with me. I wanted to hang on to that understanding and pray it would never be lost to me.

Whenever I am understood by anyone, I feel a fresh onset of love for anyone or anything. I can't sleep right away because I don't want that understanding to fade, and somehow it seems to me that it will probably be lost in the morning.

My body seems to have a terrific pounding sensation and I want to cry out something which I don't know how to express in words. I feel more sure of myself. I want to give. I want to give everything I have to make this person who understands happier. I want to live the full minute of every day. Life seems so much richer when you know someone understands, because to me, one who understands is the one who cares and loves me and I feel love and security and peace (Van Kaam, A., Personal Communication, 1961).

My principle reason for revisiting this concept is to draw your attention to the everyday language that the majority of us use in our lives and certainly in therapy. Despite our being projected upon to be a bit cold as a culture, we have an enormously rich language. Melvyn Bragg in his book- ‘The Adventure of English’ noted that Shakespeare put into print at least two thousand new words. The current estimate is that there were 1,013,913 words in the English language in January 2012....and at the rate of 14.7 new words added daily the figure is now a bit higher!!
Within our rich language, we have an extraordinary range of nuanced words that name and describe many subtle shades of emotional states. And it is to this richness and extensive variety I wish to draw your attention, because it is in the skilled, sensitive and knowledgeable usage of our language of emotions, our linguistic emotional lexicon we could call it, lies our potential as therapists to be able to fully empathically capture and offer to the client, with great accuracy, the gift of us understanding them. And the receipt of this gift may not only be accompanied by great delight and excitement by the client but is likely to afford them further opportunity for deep exploration.

Brian Thorne, the Emeritus Professor of Counselling at the University of East Anglia is a colleague with considerable linguistic capacity. Not only have I seen him conducting recorded interviews here in the UK but I have also seen him working in both France and Germany with French and German group participants, and in those languages, (French and German), and have heard such participants say to Brian, after one of his responses to them, ‘Brian, that is exactly how I feel. No French (or German) person has ever said that to me before. That’s exactly how I feel.’ ‘Wow!!!

(Slide 23 CS Lewis) As C.S. Lewis wrote in a response to a criticism of John Milton’s poetry

“The whole art consists not in evoking the unexpected but in evoking, with a perfection and accuracy beyond expectations, the very image that has haunted us all our lives.”

Brief concluding statement. (Slide 24)

As a way of trying to round off this lecture at this point, I remembered an old quotation made by Blaise Pascal, the 17th century French philosopher, mathematician and physicist: ‘The heart has reasons that reason knows not of’.

We need to remain mindful of this sentiment and not inappropriately seek to move the client to ‘solutions’. Assisting others with unfolding their emotional selves is a complex process and one that requires patience and respect for the unique unfolding of meaning the client affords us. (Slide 25 finish of lecture.)
Some references used in this lecture:

(Bohart A and Greenberg M “Empathy Revisited.”)


(Bozarth G, Review of research in Client Centred Therapy)


Urquhart, C & Fraser- Thomas, E. (2012) ‘Online dating surges as lonely hearts look to kickstart some post-Christmas romance‘. The Observer.


References to images used in Power-Point presentation.

Edward Munch- ‘The Scream’

Viktor Sheleg (b.1962)(Russia/ Latvia) Series: Emotions and energy in the chaos aesthetic. 2 images shown here:

1. Woman with bird on shoulder
2. Woman- in black and white- red lips

Richard Calmes (Photographer):

1. ‘Dance Magic’ (woman leaping)
2. ‘Smiling male ballet dancer.’


Berk Ozturk:

1. ‘Girl with head down/knees clasped’
2. ‘Watercolor kiss’
3. Girl
4. Father and son
5. Freedom of thought

[www.flickr.com/photos/australian-war-memorial](http://www.flickr.com/photos/australian-war-memorial): ‘Soldier with kangaroo’

Unknown source: ‘Mother and baby.’

[www.emotionalcompetency.com](http://www.emotionalcompetency.com):

1. ‘Anger’
2. ‘Fear’.