
ABSTRACT

The process of acceptance of growing old: Psychotherapy with a bereaved elderly widow

KONISHI, Toru

Department of Psychiatry, Dokkyo Medical University Hospital

The client described here is a bereaved elderly widow living alone who exhibits depression. A major characteristic in her psychotherapy is her narrative of her experiences with growing old. This paper focuses on a discussion of changes subjectively experienced through the client-therapist (the author of this paper) relationship. First, the author understood the client's loneliness and physical difficulties in living alone. Then the relationship changed as symbolized by the appearance of the client in the author's dream. Secondly, in the initial sessions, the client wanted to "be taught" by the author; but, in later sessions, the relationship changed so that the client was "teaching" the author about growing old. These changes in the client-therapist relationship enabled both client and therapist to face growing old together, and may have advanced mourning work and reconstruction of the role by the client. In psychotherapy for elderly people it appears likely that the relationship will have a tendency to change to one of the therapist being taught by the client, a process that may have great significance.

Key Words: elderly, loss experience, relationship
