“How does psychomotor therapy change the body awareness of patients with an eating disorder?”
Qualitative study

Marjon Valkeners & Lynn Fiddelaers
2013-2014

Goal
The main purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the influence of psychomotor therapy on the body experience of six individual patients with an eating disorder. During the interviews, we asked patients how they experienced their body, both neurophysiological as psychological, before and after psychomotor therapeutic interventions. Based on the patient’s experiences, important elements of psychomotor therapy were determined that are helpful and useful in the recovery process of eating disorders.

Method
In the study a qualitative method was used with semi-structured in-depth interviews as the source of information. The interviews consisted of open questions in order to obtain detailed information in the own words of the respondents with regard to their perception and experience. The ‘Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis’ (IPA) was used to analyze the person’s psychological experiences studied through the person’s own perspective. IPA is an approach to psychological qualitative research that creates themes, which seemed important in the analysis. Each theme is illustrated with quotes from the interview transcripts to emphasize the importance of the interpretation of the informant. IPA is based on the assumption that the individual who experiences something is the expert in his/her experiences.

Results
From the interviews, it appeared that the informants with eating disorders dispose of a distorted body image and disturbed way of thinking. They are characterized by feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, the desire to remain small and lack developed physical features, the urge to control and the impulse of perfectionism. The informants regard their bodies as negative objects. Because of this negative objectification, persons suffering from an eating disorder often tend to feel alienated from their own body. Psychomotor therapy (PMT) is perceived as an effective form of therapy as patients encounter improvements in self awareness, both physically and mentally. A closer contact with one’s own body, a more positive body experience, insight in a disturbed body image and distorted way of thinking and improved self esteem arise as a result of PMT.