

Workbook 8

Gestalt therapy

Personality theory

- Gestalt
- Assimilation and self-formation
- Boundary disturbances
- Contact, confluence, and isolation
- Introjections and projection
- Retroreflection and deflection
- Impasse
- Assessment

Process of therapy1: I and Thou, here and now, what and how

- I and thou
 - › Based on direct, lively, emotionally engaged contact in which the therapist is both with the client and also doing something with the client.
- Here and now
 - › Clients are neither reviewed as determined by their past nor reduced to unconsciously repeating prior relationships.
- What and how
 - › Both process theory and phenomenology favour use of descriptive rather than explanation based methods. The prototypical question in Gestalt Therapy is not why? But what? What are you experiencing? What are you doing? What do you need? Description can be experience near and sensed, whereas explanations are experience far and speculative.

Process of Therapy 2: Experimentation, techniques, strategies

- 1) To clarify and sharpen what the client is already aware of and to make new linkages between elements already in awareness.
- 2) To bring into focal awareness that which was previously only in peripheral awareness
- 3) To bring into awareness what is needed but systematically kept out of awareness
- 4) To bring into awareness the system of control of awareness, especially the mechanism of preventing thoughts or feelings from coming into focal awareness
- 5) To experiment with new ways of thinking, behaving, and being aware including proactive self support such as mediation, relaxation and breath control

The stance of the therapist

- Inclusion
 - › Is the process of projecting oneself as fully as possible into the experience or subjectivity of another, simultaneously maintaining awareness of oneself as a separate person.
- Presence
 - › The therapist also practices what Buber called “genuine and unreserved communication”
- Commitment to dialogue
 - › The therapist allows what emerges between therapist and client to lead to an outcome not controlled or determined in advance.

Curative factors or mechanisms of change

- Relationship and therapeutic change
- Building self support
- Insight
- Factors of success and failure
- Patient variables
- Therapist factors
- Interaction variables

Treatment applicability

- Range
- Clinical evaluation
- Research
- Discussion

Philosophy and concepts: nature of the organism

- Holistic principle
- Dialectic principle of homeostasis
- Instincts
- Aggression and defences
- Reality
- The contact boundary
- The ego
- Growth and maturity
- Neurosis
- Psychosis

The goals to therapy

“The man who can live in concerned contact with his society, neither being swallowed up by it nor withdrawing from it completely, is the well integrated man....he is the man who recognises the contact boundary between himself and his society, who renders unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and retains for himself those things which are his own. The goal of psychotherapy is to create such a man’

The process of therapy

The client seeks therapy because he or she is in an existential crisis; psychological needs are not being met. The client is thus motivated but comes with certain expectations and with neurotic and unsuccessful ways of attempting to get the environment to do the work for her or him. The client expects the therapist to provide environmental support and uses techniques in an attempt to manipulate the therapist to do so by “putting in the appearance of the good child”.

- Implementation and techniques
 - › There is not systemic presentation of methods and techniques of Gestalt therapy. Specific exercises are presented *in Ego, Hunger and Aggression* and more systematically in Gestalt Therapy.
- The role of the therapist
 - › Paradoxically, the therapist is not a helper, but the client wants to depend on the therapist for support.
- Here and now awareness
 - › The slogan for Gestalt therapy is “ I and thou, here and now.” “Now” is the zero point between the past and the future, neither of which exists; only the now exists.

- Making the patient responsible
 - › The responses of the patient to awareness questions, both verbal and nonverbal, provide indications of the total personality; they are all expressions of the self. The therapist observes these responses and asks further questions.
- Drama and fantasy work
 - › Although the awareness technique alone is curative, it is slow. The therapist can speed up the process by initiating a number of other techniques that involve dramatic activity (role taking) and fantasy by the patient.
- The shuttle technique
 - › The shuttle technique involves directing the patients attention back and forth from one activity or experience to another. In one form, the patient shuttles between talking and listening to himself or himself.

- Top dog-underdog dialogue
 - › Neurotic conflicts involve opposite or opposing traits or aspects of the personality.
- The empty chair
 - › One of the most widely used techniques. It is a method of facilitating the role taking dialogue between the client and the others or between parts of the clients personality.
- Confusion
 - › Perls (1973) introduced the technique of dealing with confusion without giving it a designation.
- Dreamwork
 - › Gestalt attempts to have the client relive the dream in the present, in the therapy situation, including acting it out.

- Homework
 - › The homework involves the client reviewing the sessions by imagination himself or herself back in it.
- Integration
 - › These techniques do not operate in solution, by focusing on specific actions, feelings, experiences, or awareness per se.
- Rules and games
 1. Games of dialogue
 2. Making the rounds
 3. “I take responsibility”
 4. “I have a secret”
 5. Playing the projection
 6. Reversals

Lengths and limitations of treatment

- Lengths
 - › Gestalt therapy can be used as a form of individual treatment. It can also be used in groups. In individual therapy sessions often occur once a week in group therapy sessions often used for two hours; in the workshop setting, they treatment may last the entire day or over the weekend
- Limitations
 - › Gestalt therapy has been used in the treatment of a wide range of problems and conditions, including couple issues, psychosomatic disorders, neuroses even character disorders and psychoses