

GESTALT THERAPY (Fritz Perls and Laura Perls)

- Gestalt Therapy is an existential, phenomenological, and process-based approach created on the premise that individuals must be understood in the context of their ongoing relationship with the environment.
- . It is phenomenological because it focuses on the client's perception of reality and existential because it is grounded in the notion that people are always in the process of becoming, remaking, and rediscovering themselves.
- It focuses on the process than on content, the here and now, the what and how, and the I/Thou of relating. Gestalt therapists assume that individuals have the capacity to self-regulate when they are aware of what is happening in and around them.

CONCEPTS

Holism. All of nature is seen as a unified and coherent whole, and the whole is different from the sum of its parts. Gestalt therapists are interested in the whole person, they place no superior value on a particular aspect of the individual.

- This therapy attends to client's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, body, memories, and dreams.
- Emphasis may be on a **figure** (those aspects of the individual's experience that are most salient at any moment) or the **ground** (those aspects of the client's presentation that are often out of his or her awareness.)

CONCEPTS

- *Field Theory.* Asserts that the organism must be seen in its environment or in its context as part of the constantly changing field. Gestalt therapist pay attention to and explore what is occurring at the boundary between the person and the environment.
- *The Figure-formation Process.* It tracks how some aspect of the environmental field emerges from the background and becomes the focal point of the individuals attention and interest.

CONCEPTS

- *Organismic Self-Regulation.* A process by which equilibrium is disturbed by the emergence of a need, a sensation, or an interest. What emerges on the therapeutic work is associated with what is of interest or what the client needs to pursue a sense of equilibrium or change. Gestalt therapists direct the client's awareness to the figures that emerge from the background during a therapy session and use the figure-formation process as a guide for the focus of therapeutic work.

CONCEPTS

The Now

- The Gestalt approach puts emphasis on learning to appreciate and fully experience the present moment. Phenomenological inquiry involves paying attention to what is occurring now.
- To help the client make contact with the present moment, therapists ask “what” and “how” questions, but rarely ask “why” questions.

CONCEPTS

Unfinished Business

- These are the figures that emerge from the background but are not completed and resolved that can be manifested in unexpressed feelings such as resentment, rage, hatred, pain, anxiety, grief, guilt, and abandonment.
- Gestalt therapy gives attention to these unexpressed feelings because they tend to result in some physical sensation or problems.

CONCEPTS

Contact and resistances to contact

- Aiming for change and growth, contact is necessary in gestalt therapy. It is made by seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and moving. Effective contact means interacting with the nature and other people without losing one's sense of individuality. Meanwhile, resistances are developed as a means of coping with life situations, they possess positive qualities as well as problematic ones, and many contemporary.

CONCEPTS

- **Energy and blocks to energy**
- In Gestalt therapy special attention is given to where the energy is located, how it is used, and how it can be blocked. Blocked energy is another form of defensive behavior. It can be manifested by tension in some part of the body, by posture, by keeping one's body tight and closed, by not breathing deeply, by looking away from people when speaking to avoid contact, by choking off sensations by numbing feelings, and by speaking with restricted voice.
- Clients can be encouraged to delve fully into tension states. For instance, by allowing to exaggerate their tight mouth and shaking legs.

Therapists function and role

- Gestalt therapists view clients as the experts on their own experience and encourage them to attend to their sensory awareness in the present moment.
- context of I/thou dialoge in a here and now framework
- They also pay attention to the client's body language.

- ◉ . Therapist may ask the client, “What do your eyes say?”
- ◉ If your hands could speak at this moment, what would they say?” “can you carry on a conversation between your right and left hand?”
- ◉ counselor also places emphasis on the relationship between language patterns and personality believing that client’s speech patterns are often an expression of their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes.

- *“It” talk.* When the client says “it” instead of “I” they are using depersonalizing language. The counselor may ask them to substitute personal pronouns for impersonal ones so that they will assume an increased sense of responsibility.

Example: “It is difficult to make friends” to “I have trouble making friends”

- *“You” talk.* Global and impersonal language tends to keep the person hidden. The therapist often points out generalized uses of “you” and asks the client to substitute “I” when this is what is meant.

- *Questions.* Questions have a tendency to keep the questioner hidden, safe and unknown. The counselor often asks clients to change their questions to statements.
- *Language that denies power.* Some clients have a tendency to deny their personal power by adding qualifiers or disclaimers to their statements.

Example: maybe, perhaps, sort of, I guess, possibly, I suppose

- *Listening to client's metaphors.* The therapist gets rich clues to client's internal struggles by tuning to their metaphors.

Example: It's hard for me to spill my guts in here

At times I feel that I don't have a leg to stand on

I feel like I have a hole in my soul

- *Listening for Language that uncovers a story.* Clients often use language that is elusive yet gives significant clues to a story that illustrates their life struggles. Polsters believed that storytelling is not always a form of resistance instead it can be the heart of the therapeutic process.