

GESTALT APPLICATIONS TO GROUP WORK

APLICACIONES DE LA GESTALT AL TRABAJO EN GRUPO

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How to reference this article:

Austin, J., & Austin, J. A. (2022). Gestalt applications to group work. *Revista de Psicoterapia*, 33(121), pp. 123-138. <https://doi.org/10.33898/rdp.v33i121.1126>

Abstract

Gestalt group work is a dynamic and powerful approach aimed at increasing awareness and self-regulation. Group facilitators promote dialogue, curiosity, and genuine relationships between group members. The Gestalt approach asks facilitators to appreciate each group members' perception of reality and to trust that all group members are continually in the process of becoming, remaking, and rediscovering themselves. This chapter operationalizes the Gestalt approach so that group leaders can apply Gestalt theory to their work.

Keywords: *gestalt, group, here-and-now, dialogue, awareness*

Resumen

El trabajo grupal Gestalt constituye un enfoque dinámico y poderoso destinado a aumentar la conciencia y la autorregulación. Los facilitadores de grupo promueven el diálogo, la curiosidad y las relaciones genuinas entre los miembros del grupo. El enfoque Gestalt requiere que los facilitadores aprecien la percepción de la realidad de cada miembro del grupo y que confíen en que todos los miembros del grupo están continuamente en el proceso de convertirse, rehacerse y redescubrirse a sí mismos. Este artículo pone en práctica el enfoque de la Gestalt para que los líderes de grupo puedan aplicar la teoría de la Gestalt a su trabajo.

Palabras clave: *gestalt, grupo, aquí y ahora, diálogo, conciencia*



Gestalt therapy focuses on what and how an individual experiences themselves and the world around them from moment to moment. Gestalt group facilitators are authentic and active when promoting dialogue, curiosity, and genuine relationships between group members. The Gestalt approach asks facilitators to appreciate each group members' perception of reality and to trust that all group members are continually in the process of becoming, remaking, and rediscovering themselves. Throughout this chapter, we plan to breakdown the Gestalt theory and its application to group work.

Orientation to Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt Defined

When we think of Gestalt, we think of the physical, biological, or symbolic elements of a client that are so well-integrated together as a whole that they can't be identified by summarizing their parts. Gestalt theory, as Max Wertheimer (1938) said when he talked about how people see movement, sees the whole thing or client, not just the sum of their parts. We are focused on how people think and act as a whole. Gestalt psychology says that when we try to make sense of the world around us, we should not just look at each small piece. Instead, try to think of things as part of a bigger whole and as parts of more complicated systems. Clients' pain does not happen in isolation. It is connected to an event, or another's pain, or their family dynamics.

Gestalt therapy was developed in the 1940s by Fredrick S. Perls and others who were influenced by Gestalt psychology. It is an approach that attends to the whole person and looks at what blocks the whole person from working well in the moment. When we think about the past or imagine the future, we don't live fully. The Gestalt approach says that life happens now, not in the past or the future, and that when we think about the past or dream about the future, we don't live fully. In the present, we can take responsibility for our responses and actions because we live in the now. Our excitement, energy, and courage grow when we are fully present in the moment, so we can live our lives in a more direct way.

Traditional and Contemporary Gestalt Approaches

While there is not what some might call a turf war between Gestalt institutes, there are variations within the training and styles of Gestalt therapists. Traditional Gestalt therapists use movement and other expressions to help clients become aware of and remove resistances to contact in the flow of figure formation. Contemporary Gestalt therapists (CGT) prioritizes the quality of interactions between client and therapist. Contemporary Gestalt therapists rely on the I/Thou relationship between the client and counselor. Relationship between the therapist and client is one in which both learn about themselves and each other in the context of the therapeutic process. Therapeutic relationships and working together in a search for understand-

ding are emphasized by contemporary Gestalt therapy (Wheeler & Axelsson, 2015; Yontef & Schulz, 2013). Laura Perls and the “Cleveland school,” which included Erving and Miriam Polster and Joseph Zinker as faculty members in the 1960s and 1970s, are cited as inspiration for this paradigm shift, which emphasizes more support and compassion in treatment opposed to Fritz Perls’ confrontational and dramatic approach (Yontef, 1999).

Therapeutic Goals

Gestalt therapy’s fundamental premise is that individuals can self-regulate, particularly when they are fully aware of their internal and external environments. Thus, as one might imagine, the primary purpose of Gestalt therapy is to heighten awareness of what is occurring within and around clients. Certain Gestalt therapists feel that consciousness, in and of itself, is therapeutic or growth-promoting. Growth and change are paradoxical in that they typically occur when we become conscious of what, how, and how we are, rather than attempting to become something we are not.

The group therapist’s challenge is not to alter participants directly, but to engage them and aid them in building their own knowledge of how they are in the present moment. Inviting and fostering a process by which group members can become more of who they are and less of who they are not assists the group in progressing through the stages of change discussed later. Group therapists aim to focus equal attention on both the process and content of a session. They get out of the way so group members can share their stories and others can listen and be affected and changed by the stories. The interpersonal dimension of group magnifies a single member’s work in group. Members can increase their awareness of how they function within the context of a relationship.

Individual objectives may include the following:

- Integrating polarities within oneself
- Enriching and broadening awareness
- Establishing communication with one's self and others
- Clearly delineating one's boundaries
- Developing the ability to support oneself rather than relying on others

Group Goals Include:

- Developing the ability to ask simply and openly for what they want or need
- Developing skills for efficiently resolving interpersonal disagreements
- Identifying strategies to push members to grow while still honoring their needs and important work
- Developing the ability to assist and energize one another
- Developing the ability to refrain from giving other members advice

Principles

The Gestalt approach is based on several foundational principles described in this section: awareness, holism, field theory, the figure-formation process, and organismic self-regulation. Regarding awareness, both the therapist and client grow by being actively present, or aware, and engaged in the therapy sessions (Yontef, 1993) “Awareness is relational” (p. 32).

Awareness

Awareness is a critical component of Gestalt Therapy since it is viewed as a “mark of a healthy individual and a therapy objective” (Seligman, 2006). Individuals that are “conscious” of their environment are able to self-regulate. There are two primary reasons for someone to be unaware: Their fixation on one’s history, fantasies, shortcomings, and strengths is so intense that they lose sight of the big picture and develop low self-esteem. Through treatment, clients can acquire awareness in three ways:

1. Environmental contact: This includes looking, listening, touching, speaking, moving, smelling, and tasting. This permits the individual to adapt and change in their environment.
2. Here and now: This will be discussed in greater depth later. The individual who lives in the present moment and is cognizant of it, rather than dwelling on the past or the future.
3. Responsibility: This refers to the individual accepting responsibility for his or her own actions rather than blaming others.

Through their interactions with other members, individuals get a greater awareness of the “what” and “how” of experience in group therapy. By being in the moment-to-moment flow of experiencing, group members get an understanding of how they function in the world. They receive real-time input on how they are perceived by others. The therapist’s objective is to assist members in answering questions such as:

- What are you experiencing right now?
- What is going on within you?
- How are you physically experiencing your symptom (i.e., Anxiety, Depression)?
- From what are you currently attempting to retreat, and how are you avoiding contact with negative feelings?

Responding to these questions is beneficial, as does focusing on observed behaviors. Concentrating on the movements, postures, linguistic patterns, voices, gestures, and interactions of the group member promotes awareness.

Holism

Both traditional Gestalt therapy and relational Gestalt therapy adhere to this paradigm. Contact is holistic in relational Gestalt therapy, covering the client’s

thoughts, feelings, behaviors, body, and dreams. The term “wholeness” refers to a person’s or an individual’s mind and body functioning as a unit rather than as distinct components (Seligman, 2006). The term “integration” refers to the way these components fit together and the way an individual fits into his or her surroundings. Oftentimes, people who seek therapy do not have these components fit together in their environment. Gestalt Therapy is about assisting clients in integrating themselves as entire beings and assisting in reestablishing equilibrium in their environment.

Field Theory

According to field theory, forces pull a person in a particular direction. While individuals may share a common purpose, the fields through which they must cross are all distinct. Neither does each individual’s field remain consistent; rather, it is dynamic and continually changing. Field shifts can have an effect on the individual both now and in the future. Yontef and Jacobs (2005) observe that a client’s life story cannot tell you what happened in the past, but it can tell you how the client experiences his or her history in the present moment. That account of the past is formed to some extent by the field or environmental conditions at the time. Thus, field theory effectively rejects the concept that anyone, including a therapist, may have an objective view of reality. A client’s perception of their past becomes their reality and impacts who and how they are in the here-and-now.

Figure-Formation Process

The figure-formation process shows how a particular component of the environmental field becomes “figural” or significant for a group member from moment to moment. This figure will emerge from the sea of conceivable figures and “capture” the viewer’s attention and interest. This is essentially a process of establishing a new focal point of attention. If a client expresses their feelings about someone or an incident and a new feeling emerges that the client has never noticed before, it is the counselor’s task to assist the client in focusing their attention on the new feeling rather than pushing it away (Corey, 2016).

Organismic Self-Regulation

This is our inherent capacity for creative change in response to our needs. For instance, when our bodies want water, we experience thirst; as a result, we drink water. We govern ourselves in response to our circumstances. Organismic need is a spontaneous impulse that originates from the entirety of our being. Often, these urges will conflict with one another or will be impossible to fulfill simultaneously, forcing us to make trade-offs based on our values and environmental responsibility. This process is frequently affected by parenting, education, societal influences, and hostile or unsupportive settings (Corey, 2016).

For instance, if a client is tired but am told that they cannot sleep because they are at school and required to pay attention. Maybe a client needs to use the

restroom, but they're afraid their employer will be unhappy if they leave the meeting early. In conjunction with figure formation, the therapist assists the group in exploring these needs, rather than allowing members to push unpleasant feelings aside in order to avoid feeling them.

Key Concepts

The Here-and-Now

Gestalt therapy places considerable emphasis on developing an ability to fully comprehend and experience the present moment. Concentrating on the here-and-now encompasses the past and contributes to the shaping of the future. The Gestalt group process gives several possibilities to apply present-centeredness to raise group members' awareness and effect change in their lives. Through their present-centered interactions, the group process increases the likelihood of members uncovering unfinished business. The therapist encourages members to "be here now" and uses tactics that enable members to speak about past events that may be influencing them in the present. Being present in the here and now is not a choice. Group facilitators must be skilled at connecting discussions about the past and future to how they affect the present moment and interactions in the room.

Unfinished Business

These are unspoken thoughts, events, and memories that linger in the background, clamoring to be expressed and brought to a close. These conditions will interfere with present-centered awareness and successful functioning if they are not acknowledged and dealt with immediately. Therapists facilitate the expression of emotions that have never been articulated directly before. During a group session in which a person relates their frightening experience, the therapist may notice expressions of astonishment or recognition from the other members. It is beneficial to have other group members discuss their worries in both their daily lives and in the group environment. It is important for members to stay with their uncomfortable feelings, and they may even be encouraged to exaggerate them in order to properly understand the depth of those feelings. Unfinished business accumulates in the lives of group members like debris. Consider the scenario in which group members arrive at a meeting with small garbage cans packed with balled-up paper. The first thing they do as the session starts is throw the contents of their bins on the floor. A member's life experience may unintentionally provoke the urge to process in another member if they accidentally stir up debris or unfinished business.

Contact and Disturbances

Contact is established by sight, sound, scent, touch, and movement. Effective interaction entails thoroughly engaging with nature and other people while maintaining one's sense of self-identity. Effective touch necessitates heightened

awareness, abundant energy, and the capacity to express oneself. Contact is vital to growth. Disturbances to contact include:

Introjections. Introjection is the proclivity to accept others' opinions and standards without assimilation in order to make them consistent with our own. We remain alien to these introjects because we have not studied and restructured them. When we introject, we passively accept what the world delivers rather than articulating our desires or needs. If we remain in this stage, our energy is invested in accepting things as they are and trusting that authorities know what is best for us, rather than pursuing our goals independently (Corey, 2016).

Projection. The opposite of introjection is projection. By associating certain characteristics of ourselves with the environment, we disavow them. Those aspects of our personality that conflict with our self-image are disowned and projected upon, assigned to, and perceived in other individuals, so blaming others for a large portion of our issues. By recognizing in others the very characteristics that we refuse to recognize in ourselves, we absolve ourselves of responsibility for our own sentiments and identity, rendering us unable to effect change. Individuals who engage in projection as a tendency frequently feel victimized by their surroundings and assume that others' words contain hidden meanings (Corey, 2016).

Retroreflection. Retroreflection entails returning to ourselves what we wish to do to another or doing to ourselves what we wish someone else would do to or for us. This process is primarily a stoppage of the action phase of the experience cycle and is frequently accompanied with considerable worry. Individuals who rely on retroreflection frequently refrain from action out of fear of embarrassment, guilt, and resentment. Self-mutilators and self-injurers, for example, frequently channel their aggression inward out of dread of channeling it toward others. Depression and psychosomatic problems are frequently the result of retroactive thinking. Typically, these maladaptive modes of functioning are acquired unconsciously; a goal of Gestalt therapy is to assist us in developing a self-regulation system that enables us to cope realistically with the world (Yontef, 1993).

Confluence. Confluence entails dissolving the line between self and environment. As we seek to blend in and get along with everyone, the line between internal experience and exterior reality becomes increasingly blurred. Confluence in relationships entails the lack of conflict, a measured response to anger, and a sense that other partners share our feelings and views. This form of communication is typical of customers who have a strong need to be accepted and liked, and hence find enmeshment to be comforting. Genuine contact is incredibly difficult to establish as a result of this disease. A therapist may aid clients who utilize this mode of resistance by asking, "What are you doing now?" "How are you feeling right now?" "What are your immediate desires?"

Deflection. Deflection is the act of diverting attention or veering away, making prolonged contact impossible. We strive to diffuse or defuse conflict by overusing humor, broad generalizations, and questions rather than declarative pronouncements

(Frew, 1986). When we deflect, we speak for and on behalf of others, avoiding direct communication and engaging the environment on an inconsistent and insignificant basis, resulting in emotional depletion.

Energy and Blocks to Energy

Unexpressed emotions can cause an obstruction in the body, manifesting as physical feelings or issues. Tension in the neck and shoulders, as well as shortness of breath, are frequently observed symptoms of obstruction. Non-verbal communication and closed-off body language are also ways to communicate that we are obstructing something. The group therapist's role is to assist group members in identifying the ways in which they are sabotaging their energy and assisting them in repurposing the sabotaged energy into more adaptive behaviors. Members are able to discern how their own and other members' energy is expressed or confined within their bodies (Frew, 1986). Additionally, group therapists dive deeply into tensions rather than focusing exclusively on physical symptoms. If a member of the group is seated in a closed position, the leader can invite them to uncross and experience the sensation, before crossing them again.

Roles and Functions of a Group Leader

The leaders of Gestalt groups place a premium on conscious awareness, contact, and experimentation. Leaders participate in active communication with group members and may use self-disclosure to strengthen bonds and foster a sense of mutuality within the group. By revealing his or her own awareness and experience, the therapist demonstrates the process of beneficial relationships. They must be exceptionally highly trained in order to deal with any concerns that arise during sessions (Bowman, 2019). These concerns frequently arise spontaneously as a result of members' unfinished business. The group benefits when the leader expresses their personal reactions to what is occurring in the group, including how they are affected by what they are hearing and watching. A leader's role is to foster an environment and structure conducive to the group's own creativity and inventions. Clients are frequently invited to participate in experiments that result in new emotional experiences and insights (Bowman, 2019). Additionally, they must establish and foster a loving environment inside the group, as well as assist clients in taking responsibility for this environment.

Stages of Gestalt Therapy

First Stage: Identity and Dependence

The purpose of this first stage in a group is to encourage individuals to take personal responsibility (Ginger et al., 2019). The group leader assists the participants in exploring any questions they may have regarding their own identity within the group. The activities that the group leader facilitates are intended to foster trust

among the participants. This trust will encourage group members to take risks, be vulnerable, and form bonds with one another.

Second Stage: Influence and Counter-dependence

During this stage, the group is grappling with concerns of influence, authority, and control, among other things. The group's leader must seek to increase differentiation, divergence, and the role of flexibility among the members of the group in order to achieve success (Ginger et al., 2019). Members may begin to challenge whatever social standards are in place by interrupting and expressing negative reactions to one another or to what is taking place in the group environment.

Third Stage: Intimacy and Interdependence

The final stage is where members of the group come into direct contact with one another. They have a strong sense of being able to rely on one another for support, understanding, and challenge. The connections are based on mutual benefit. Members are prepared to engage in more in-depth work, both individually and as a group, when they have addressed the issues of influence, power, and authority among themselves and among the group members. If the group's cohesion is great, individuals are more likely to make a shift by participating in experiments for the sake of new learning and creating major discoveries (Ginger et al., 2019).

Promoting and Maintaining Change

While there are groups phases of change, individuals within that group also go through different phases of change. This five phases of change is also termed as five levels of neurosis. Whatever the terminology, it describes a process by which a client goes through when lasting and cathartic change happens (Mann, 2020).

Phase 1: Fixation

At this stage, the client exhibits a rigidity, a sense of being imprisoned in thoughts, conclusions, habits, and routines, and a sense of being trapped, in other words, desperation. Typically, the rationale for treatment explains this ailment. The client is trapped in roles and routines that are no longer beneficial to him. It contributes to his everyday stress and strife. Frequently, the client is likewise unaware of this point in terms of what he really requires, since these demands are forgotten or consigned to the unconscious. This sense of "stuckness" in repeated cycles has been ingrained in his way of life, and he is unable of seeing life any other way. He is, however, badly impacted by it at the moment (Nevis, 2014).

Phase 2: Distinction

With the experience of wants (as in the preceding example), or with worry, avoidance impulses. The client's focus on the current moment is diverted by previous recollections or future aspirations. He withdraws into thought chains and

concepts, engaging in arguments and intellectualization. This circuitous thinking process and decision-making is indicative of unfinished business that the client is unable to resolve because there is too much worry, fear of suffering, involved in confronting the unfinished circumstance. The therapist's role at this stage is to assist the client in remaining present. Providing a safe atmosphere in which to confront anxiety — to remember conflicts, the tension between what he or she requires, emotions, urges to act and its resistance, the impediments to act. When the client recognizes his polarities, he may accept responsibility for the path in which he chooses to travel (Nevis, 2014).

Phase 3: Diffusion

This is an acceptance phase. Acceptance of the circumstance without attempting to escape the problems. The client's current condition is no longer satisfactory, but alternatives are elusive. Typically, when clients choose treatment, they are receptive to this period. This is the acceptance phase. The client takes responsibility for the problem and recognizes that they possess the resources necessary to resolve it. This often occurs after the establishment of a therapeutic partnership (Nevis, 2014).

Phase 4: Vacuum

At this point, the client is perplexed as to how to proceed. This stage is often referred to as impasse. At this point, it would be counter-productive for the therapist to intervene and give analysis of the scenario — even if the solutions are self-evident. The therapist is encouraged to take a step back and allow the client to process this pretty unpleasant period. Any early instruction from the therapist would jeopardize the clients' recovery process. The therapist's involvement may cause the client to get obsessed on the polar opposite of the issue (Nevis, 2014).

Phase 5: Integration

A person who is capable of being in the temporary condition of emptiness in a vacuum, in bewilderment, in not knowing which direction to turn, finally achieves a "ah-ha" moment. Fritz Perls (1976) makes frequent reference to this in his publications. The majority of the time, the issue is that we are terrified of this vacuum. Almost invariably, we escape by devising solutions, diverting our attention away from the circumstance, forgetting, being oblivious, or numbing our experiences. During the treatment session, a secure setting is created for the client to sit in the nothingness for an extended period of time in order to obtain crucial "ah-ha" insights, knowledge, and experiences. The biggest challenge is to avoid intellectualizing and making sense of what is happening while in this condition of "stuckness." This demands the client's faith (Nevis, 2014). Typically, when the client is kept in a place of emptiness by the therapist, the client does not employ their previous habits of avoiding the difficulties. This is a chance for the client to dig into unresolved previous events and experience the associated needs and sensations. This is the point at which enlightenment occurs.

Therapeutic Techniques and Procedures

Experiments

From the outside looking in, or after watching videos of Fritz, Gestalt experiments can be characterized as random, spontaneous actions that are imposed on the client. In reality, they are a byproduct of the therapeutic encounters that take place in groups. They are merely exercises or procedures that are frequently employed to elicit activity or interaction, sometimes with a predetermined end, in order to achieve a desired result. An effective experiment feeds into the group's decision-making procedure. These groups are phenomenologically based, which means that they develop as a result of what is happening within a person or group of members in the present moment, and the outcome is unpredictable and cannot be predicted. They increase the members' awareness and comprehension by exposing them to new situations. They can provide a safe environment for members to raise their consciousness and experiment with new ways of thinking and behaving with one another in a supportive environment. Some tests may involve dramatizing a terrible experience, picturing a frightening encounter, or taking on the role of one's own parent, among other things. No matter how innovative the experiment, it must be carried out in a supportive environment in it to be effective (Corey, 2016).

Attention to Language

Gestalt therapy emphasizes the relationship between language and patterns and personality. As stated before, group therapists focus equally on the content and process of a session. When doing so they look and listen for the verbal and non-verbal ways members communicate. Our speech patterns are often expressions of our feelings, thoughts, and attitudes; by focusing on our overt speaking habits, we can increase our self-awareness. Gestalt therapists are alert to when members do these things:

- Turn "It" talk to "I" means that a member is taking responsibility
- Switch "You" to "I" statements
- When members use qualifiers and disclaimers when sharing their experiences
- Transitioning can't statements to I won't which indicated choice
- Making demanding statements like "Should" and "Oughts", especially when it impedes self-regulation

Perhaps Gestalt therapists are most known for paying attention to non-verbal language. When watching videos, it might be noticed that Fritz and other therapist ask about things they notice a client doing; clenching a fist, taking a deep breath, tearing up. There may be discrepancies between non-verbal cues and what the member is verbally stating. It is critical to pay attention to the tone, pitch, and loudness of the voice, as well as the posture of the members (Corey, 2016).

Making the Rounds

Making the rounds is a Gestalt exercise in which a member of a group is asked to approach and speak with or do something with each member. The objective is to confront, to take risks, to reveal oneself, to experiment with new behaviors, and to grow and change. This can be experimented with when group leaders sense that a participant wants to address a theme in their life or current experience. For instance, a group member may state, "I never felt like anyone accepted me." A group leader might then respond by asking the member to go around the room and share with each member the level to which they feel accepted or rejected by that member. They could also be asked to identify one or two individuals that make them feel rejected (Corey, 2016).

Numerous activities could be devised to assist group members in being involved and deciding to work on the issues that keep them stuck in their feelings. Other examples and illustrations that are relevant for making-the-rounds are reflected in group member responses such: "I'd like to communicate with individuals more frequently." "No one in here appears to care about me." "I'd like to connect with you but am terrified of rejection." "I have a difficult time accepting compliments; I constantly ignore positive things people say about me." Group therapists can take responses like this to move into the intervention and bring members into deeper contact with their emotional experience.

Internal Dialogues

As mentioned before, the goal of Gestalt therapy is to achieve integrated function and acceptance of the aspects of group members' personalities that have been discovered and denied. Therapists pay close attention to splits and polarities in personality function which can reveal themselves through group dialogue (Corey, 2016). The internal dialogue exercise involves the outward expression of an inner conflict. Imagine that a client feels conflicted about a new relationship. Group therapists can use empty chairs to help that client process both sides of the conflict. Group members can provide feedback to help the client resolve the internal conflict. This intervention is meant to promote awareness of internal splits and eventual personality integration. We uncritically take in aspects of other people, especially parents, and incorporate them into our personality. The danger is that it can prevent personality integration. Group dynamics can help us process the internal dialogue and separate a member's voice from someone else's voice.

Fantasy Approaches

In Gestalt Therapy, fantasy is utilized to raise clients' self-awareness of their ideas and feelings and to put unfinished business to a close (Seligman, 2006). Situations such as what they would do in a particular circumstance, or by imagining themselves in various roles can be processed in group. Experimenting with a variety of different types of fantasy in a group setting can result in tremendous growth. Fa-

Facilitators of groups might have members practice assertiveness and receive feedback from the group. Additionally, it is beneficial in dealing with negative expectations.

Rehearsal

This intervention is used when members say out loud what they are thinking internally. This is not intended to elicit strong feelings in members, but to bring to light a procedure that is generally carried out subconsciously. Facilitators must have a keen eye to detect whether a member is concealing something. Inviting them to share can help strengthen the group's bond (Corey, 2016).

Exaggeration Technique

This technique is used to help group members become more aware of the subtle signals and cues we send through body language. The individual in group is urged to repeat and exaggerate a specific action or expression, such as frowning or bouncing a leg, in order to increase their awareness of the emotions associated with the activity (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2018).

Dream Work

The Gestalt approach is not concerned with dream interpretation or analysis. Rather than that, the goal is to bring dreams to life and experience them as if they were happening right now. The dream is performed out in the present moment, and the dreamer becomes an integral part of it. The recommended strategy for working with dreams is to create a list of all the facts of the dream, recall each person, incident, and emotion, and then convert oneself into each of these parts by transforming oneself, acting fully, and improvising dialogue. Each segment of the dream is supposed to be a projection of the self, and the client writes scripts for interactions between the various characters or segments (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2018). Each component of a dream is a manifestation of the client's contradictory and inconsistent sides, and by dialoguing with these competing sides, the client eventually becomes more conscious of the spectrum of his or her own emotions.

Perls asserts that dreams can depict an unresolved problem, but each dream also contains an existential message about the dreamer and his or her current struggle. Everything may be discovered in dreams if all the components are comprehended and absorbed; dreams are a good tool for identifying personality voids by showing missing components and clients' avoidance strategies (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2018). Perls says that through appropriately working with dreams, the existential message becomes more evident. If individuals cannot recall their dreams, they may be avoiding confronting what is wrong with their lives. At the absolute least, the Gestalt counselor will invite clients to communicate with their unfulfilled dreams.

Multicultural Application

The Gestalt approach to group counseling takes a holistic view of clients and their contexts. Instead of placing one rigid perspective about the world, Gestalt group leaders pay attention to how clients view their world (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2018). Because of this approach's phenomenological attitude, therapists are less likely to impose their own values and cultural standards on group members. In short, group leaders take the client's context into account. Sessions begin from a not-knowing position. This means group leaders avoid making assumptions about clients. Effective group counselors acknowledge the client's ethnicity, background, and demographics when working with them. This approach is also tailored to group members' interpretations of their cultural identities. These identities can be explored further through dialogue about views and potential biases. This approach is particularly helpful when clients are faced with internal conflicts like bicultural identity issues. It is also a strong approach with group members whose cultural backgrounds that indirect speech

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

One of Gestalt therapy's strengths is its emphasis on the client as a distinct individual human being (Clarkson & Cavicchia, 2013). Gestalt therapy is founded on the notion of holism, which asserts that a person must be seen holistically, stressing that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Tan, 2011). According to the premise, no aspect of a client's experience is more important than any other. The Gestalt therapist views the client's "feelings, actions, ideas, physical sensations, dreams, and other experiences" (Tan, 2011) as equally significant. This technique has been demonstrated to be as effective as or more effective than other treatments in the treatment of a range of psychiatric illnesses. Additionally, it has favorable benefits for those who suffer from personality disorders, drug abuse, and psychosomatic disorders. Finally, in follow-up studies conducted 1-3 years following therapy, the results are often persistent (Yontef & Jacobs, 2011).

Limitations

The majority of my objections of Gestalt therapy are directed at the classic form, or the style developed by Fritz Perls, which stressed confrontation and downplayed personality cognitive elements. This school of Gestalt therapy put a greater emphasis on confronting clients and causing them to experience their emotions. Contemporary Gestalt treatment has advanced significantly, with more emphasis on theoretical training, theoretical exposition, and cognitive elements in general (Yontef, 1993). Other limitations include the possibility of group members abusing their influence. Additionally, group members may develop an aversion to the leader taking the initiative, and hence may be unwilling to take the initiative in developing their own experiments or experiences.

Last Conclusions

Due to its field theory-based therapeutic viewpoint, Gestalt therapy is well-suited for group settings. The major purpose of the Gestalt group is to develop members' awareness and self-regulation via their interactions with one another and with the group as a whole (Conyne, 2015). Gestalt therapy places a premium on direct experience and action above exclusive discussion of problems, difficulties, and emotions. If members have concerns about a future event, they may take action now. This in-the-moment approach animates the group and encourages members to examine their issues passionately. Often, group experiments are used to facilitate the shift from debate to action.

Gestalt therapy employs a number of techniques to magnify group members' present-moment experiences with the objective of enhancing awareness. Gestalt group therapists are interested in verbal and nonverbal communication, postures, voice, and interpersonal relationships, with a focus on group processes (Conyne, 2015). When a single individual is the major focus of work, other individuals may be enlisted to assist that individual. The connecting skill of the group leader allows him or her to involve a large number of members in the examination of a subject. Gestalt group therapy's participatory method appeals to certain leaders because it incorporates an interpersonal component that boosts the group's therapeutic efficacy.

In terms of intervention and experiment design, a group environment stimulates significant innovation. These experiments must be tailored to the specific needs of each group member and completed on time; they must also take place in an atmosphere that balances support and risk. Experiments at their finest come from the dynamics between individual members and the group's present condition. While Gestalt group leaders encourage members to expand their awareness and pay attention to their interpersonal communication style, they also take an active part in devising experiments to aid members in accessing their resources. Gestalt leaders are highly connected with their followers and regularly disclose personal information in order to establish ties and create a feeling of mutuality among the group. Gestalt instructors emphasize the importance of awareness, touch, and investigation (Yontef and Schulz, 2013).

If members regard the group as a safe zone, they will be more inclined to address their anxieties and journey into the unknown. To increase the possibility that members will benefit from Gestalt tactics, group leaders must first define the intervention's overarching goal and create an experimental atmosphere. Leaders are not seeking to enforce an agenda; rather, members are free to experiment and decide for themselves the conclusion of an experiment.

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