

PRACTICUM 3- LEVEL 6 REVIEWING GESTALT THERAPY THEORY

WEEK

REVIEWING GESTALT THERAPY

- The following slides were taken from your Practicum 2 Level 5 Module – Provided by Bev.
- It is serves as a review to grow further in practice with Gestalt theory and therapy exercises/techniques.

Gestalt therapy

- Gestalt therapy is a phenomenological-existential therapy founded by Frederick (Fritz) and Laura Perls in the 1940s.
- It teaches therapists and patients the phenomenological method of awareness, in which perceiving, feeling, and acting are distinguished from interpreting and reshuffling pre-existing attitudes.

Gestalt Personality Theory Concepts

Gestalt psychology:

- A psychological approach that studies the organisation of experience into patterns or configurations.
- Gestalt psychologists believe that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and study, among other issues, the relationship of a figure to its background.

Gestalt Personality Theory Concepts

- *Ground*: The background that contrasts with the figure in the perceptions of a field.
- *Figure*: That part of a field that stands out in good contour clearly from the ground.
- *Gestalt therapy* allows what is figural to surface

The Field Theory Perspective

- The field is a whole in which the parts are in immediate relationship and responsive to each other and no part is uninfluenced by what goes on elsewhere in the field. The field replaces the notion of discrete, isolated particles.
- No action is at a distance: what has effect must touch that which is affected in time and space.
- Work is in the here and now, with sensitivity to how the here and now includes residues of the past, such as body posture, habits, and beliefs.

The Phenomenological Perspective

- A method of awareness, in which perceiving , feeling, and acting are distinguished from interpreting and reshuffling pre-existing attitudes.
- Phenomenology is a discipline that helps people stand aside from their usual way of thinking so that they can tell the difference between what is actually being perceived and felt in the current situation and what is residue from the past.

The Existential Perspective

- Existential phenomenologists focus on people's existence, relations with each other, joys and suffering, etc., as directly experienced .
- Most people operate in an unstated context of conventional thought that obscures or avoids acknowledging how the world is.
- Self-deception is the basis of inauthenticity: living that is not based on the truth of oneself in the world leads to feelings of dread, guilt, and anxiety.

Goal of Gestalt Therapy

- By becoming aware, one becomes able to choose and/or organize one's own existence in a meaningful manner. (Jacobs, 1978; Yontef, 1982, 1983).

Gestalt therapy

- “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.

Gestalt = Whole

- Humans are viewed holistically, as a whole entity consisting of body, mind, and soul
- Clients are best understood when viewed through their own eyes, not by looking back into the past but by bringing the past into the present.

Gestalt therapy works by.....



- Helping clients to define what is truly being experienced, rather than what is merely an interpretation of the events.
- Exploring thoughts, feelings, behaviours, beliefs and values to develop awareness of how they present themselves and respond to events in their environment.
- Creating an opportunity to identify choices, patterns of behaviour and obstacles that are impacting their health and well-being, and preventing them from reaching their full potential.

Dialogue

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- A gestalt therapist will engage their client in meaningful and authentic dialogue regarding particular ways of behaving and/or thinking.
- This often moves beyond simple discussion to more creative forms of expression

Attention to body language

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Gestalt therapy concentrates strongly on body language.

Body language is considered a subtle indicator of intense emotions.

Specific body language observed is drawn to the attention of the client, and they may be asked to exaggerate these movements or behaviours.

This intensifies the emotion attached to the behaviour and highlights inner meaning.

For example, if a client were clenching their fists or frowning, the therapist may ask something such as, 'What is this movement saying?'.

Gestalt therapy...

- This therapeutic process typically uses expressive techniques and creative experiments which are collaboratively developed between therapist and client, tailored for the client and their specific problems.

Awareness:

- Attending to and observing what is happening in the present.
- Types of awareness include sensations and actions, feelings, wants, and values or assessments.

Locating Emotion

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- During a session, it is common for people to talk about emotion. Talking about emotion is different than **experiencing** an emotion, which is what the Gestalt therapist is wanting the client to do in sessions.
- As a client talks about emotion, the therapist may ask them where they feel that emotion in their body... ..

LOCATING EMOTION

- I feel,
- I Notice
- I Imagine,

Locating Emotion

- An example of this could be, "a heavy weight in my chest," or "a lump in my throat", or "butterflies in my stomach or "my chest feels tight".
- Bring the emotional experience to awareness in the body helps the client stay present and process their emotions more effectively



Dreams contain existential messages, and each piece of dream work leads to assimilation of disowned aspects of the self.

In summary.....

- These are just some parts of gestalt therapy used to help people in therapy increase their awareness of immediate experiences.
- Through exercises and spontaneous experiments, gestalt therapy also allows people to reconnect with parts of themselves they may minimize, ignore, or deny.