

Ordinary People: Gestalt Theory

Christina T. Escanio

Alliance University

GCN 502 Theories and Foundations of Counseling

Dr. George Ramos

March 7, 2023

Gestalt Theory (GT) is one that focuses on the individual's experience and observation. The therapist emphasizes helping the client become aware of how past behaviors and adjusting to past environments may interfere with them living in the here and now. One of its primary goals is for the client to gain awareness. The therapist also focuses on increasing the client's awareness of how they interact or make contact with their environment. The therapist follows the naturally occurring process of self-regulation that happens within the client (Corey, 2021).

Gestalt is a German word that means whole or completion. It means a whole that cannot be broken into parts without compromising its integrity or core. The therapist views the whole person and does not value particular aspects of the person as having more importance than any others. GT is based on field theory meaning that the client must be observed in their environment or its context as the environment is constantly changing. Focus can be on the most important figure at the moment. Focus can also be on the ground, things in the client's environment that the client is unaware of (Corey, 2021).

Conrad is struggling to reconcile with his circumstances, the loss of his brother, and his environment. The loss of Buck has stripped him of his role as a brother, it has changed his role as a member of a swim team, he has gone from the youngest son of his family to being the only child in his family and other various role changes. He struggles to adjust to this new environment that has been forced upon him by the death of his brother. GT views all these changes as a whole, giving each aspect the same amount of importance.

As Dr. Berger, I would consider using confrontation. While Conrad is grieving and we see that his relationship with his mother is strained, perhaps he must be made aware that she is also grieving. This may help him to blame her less and begin to have empathy for her. This may be a lofty goal amid his grief and could be a lengthy process for both Conrad and the counselor (Grande, 2016).

I might also use role play and play the role of Karen, the young lady that killed herself. The news of her death sent Conrad into immediate crisis. Perhaps a "conversation" with her

might be helpful in allowing Conrad to adequately process this loss. He may also become aware of what drove him to attempt to take his own life by assigning his feelings to Karen.

I think this therapy can be helpful for Conrad, but I believe it will take several sessions for him to begin to reconcile all that he has experienced. He has a lot to unpack; his own grief, his relationship with his parents, being an athlete, the loss of Karen, his emerging relationship with his new girlfriend, and a few other things. Once he can increase his awareness of all that has happened to him, he can begin to bring them back together and more holistically be aware of who he is and why he is the way he is.

References

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