

Gestalt Therapy: Ordinary People

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Kavita Chudavala

Alliance Graduate School of Counseling, Alliance University

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Dr. George Ramos, Assistant Professor of Mental Health Counseling

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Gestalt Therapy is rooted in the existential and humanistic approach. The main idea is to help bring a growing awareness within the client through his phenomenological experiences within his environment. The belief of Gestalt therapy is that awareness leads to healing and change, and it happens with a genuine encounter between client and therapist.

Whereas Freud focused on the past, Gestalt therapists focus on the “here and now”. There is less concern with the ‘why’ of behavior and a greater concern for the ‘what’ and ‘how’ in their current situation. The therapist calls for the client to take responsibility for choices and search for meaning and answers within their own experiences rather than having the therapist interpret their behavior for them. Though Fritz Perls, who founded Gestalt therapy, was stronger and more confrontational in his approach, contemporary Gestalt therapists incorporate a softer, more supportive and empathic approach.

If I were employing Gestalt therapy with Conrad, I would first foster a warm, supportive and empathic atmosphere. In an effort to expand his awareness, I would try to bring Conrad’s past pain into the present and get him to experience the pain as if it were happening now. I would “listen for language that uncovers a story”. (Corey, 2015). Through dialogue, I would pay attention to any passing comments he may make about his life or people in his life and dig into his thoughts about it.

I would also employ the “empty chair” technique and ask Conrad to have a dialogue with his brother as if he were there with him in the room. The goal with this technique would be for him to feel and experience his feelings, accept the conflict within himself, and rather than deny his feelings and experience and he can learn to give it words and value as part of the healing process.

I think this modality would be helpful for Conrad because it would bring his pain into his present awareness, rather than keeping it locked somewhere in the past with him unable to move on. With awareness he would be able to let his past go and recognize the freedom he still has for making choices in his life.

References

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