

Jason Ronda

## Gestalt Therapy Essays

1. Gestalt therapy is a psychotherapy approach that places an emphasis on the present and what the client is feeling now rather than their past experiences. Part of this stems from gestalt psychology where things must be observed in their environment to be understood, while also being from their personal experience. It's also not about one particular thing about them that is causing them problems, rather, it is how they are as a whole. During gestalt therapy, clients are taught to be more aware of themselves and the environment, this is not just due to talking, but also through things such as role play and reenactments.

There aren't necessarily goals for gestalt therapy as it's not exactly goal oriented. There is an overarching goal, something that the therapist wants is that their client to be more aware of themselves and the environment. With this awareness, the client is more capable of making better choices, while also giving them an opportunity to be more responsible. For example, a client being made aware that they are in an overly emotional state and deciding smartly that they shouldn't be making any long term, or important decisions. Another example would be that they are angry and shouldn't be saying too much impulsively because they might say something they don't truly mean. Compounding that, they might notice that something in particular is actually causing them to be emotional and they might try to uncover why that something is making them emotional.

While none of that sounds particularly bad, there are not that many issues with it from a Christian worldview. Gestalt therapy's emphasis on us being shaped by our environment, but also more than the sum of our parts mirrors how the bible says we can be shaped by either bad

company. In gestalt therapy, we have to be able to take responsibility our emotions and our pasts, I don't remember where, but I remember that being something I saw in the Bible.

There is some minor conflict. For example, in gestalt therapy, we want to be true to ourselves, but the Christian worldview also wants us to be true to God.

5. Gestalt therapists want their clients to have awareness, aware of what they're doing and why they're doing it. So awareness is not just noticing these things that they're doing, but also involves insight and introspection about what they're doing. For example, a client automatically scoffs when asked to do a certain task, being aware would be thinking about why they acted the way they did and trying to find a deeper meaning in that behavior.

Confluence is a belief that you and everyone around you are thinking in the exact same way. For example, saying that everyone hates rap music because you don't like rap music. Another part of it is like a blurring between yourself and the world in an effort to conform.

Confrontation is a way to make the client examine the way they think and their thoughts. When helping your client confront something, you want them to confront their incongruities, when something they say and do are not congruent, but also have them confront weaknesses, negative traits, or anything that involves them blocking their strengths. Like they say they are kind, but you notice them doing something awfully mean, I would confront that.

Deflecting is when you change the subject of something you find uncomfortable. When the therapist makes the subject about a certain memory and the client tries to change that subject.

Dichotomized thinking is when you sort thoughts into polar extremes. For example, having a black and white mentality where everything is an absolute good or an absolute bad, without any nuance or grayness.

Experiments are an intervention in Gestalt therapy that contrasts from exercises in that exercises are ready made interventions where experiments are more spontaneously made. It's an activity made to heighten the client's awareness and understanding through experience. A therapist can make one, on the spot, and then ask the client to do something with them and they go through the motions.

Introjection is when you accept someone's beliefs and standards without assimilating them to make it congruent to who they are. I think people who do this would be like those who try to take on the personality traits or hobbies of people they date to make themselves more appealing to them, who then break up with said person because they can't keep up with it.

I think modes of defense refer to defense mechanisms or mechanisms of resistance. Mechanisms of resistance are things that get in the way of change. This is projection, introjection, retroflection, deflection, and confluence.

Projection, the opposite of introjection, where we disown certain aspects of ourselves and push them onto someone else, and then blaming that other party for our problems. One examples would be when someone is a terrible person, but then blames that other person for their behavior, perhaps saying an undesirable trait is why, instead of owning up to the behavior.

Retroflection is when we do something to ourselves that we want to do to others or others to do to us. For example, someone giving themselves self insults because they believe that people would insult them for doing something they were going to do.

Unfinished business is when a person experiences emotions because they left unacknowledged due to things in a person's past, like an event or situation. They didn't finish something in their past and something manifests in the present when something similar arises. It can cause problems like getting in the way of awareness.

7. How is “the here and now” a basic concept in Gestalt? How is the past dealt with in this approach? How about the future?

The present is a major concept in Gestalt therapy, where the focus is on the present. While there might be some focus on the past and future, Gestalt therapy primarily focuses on the present and focuses on what is happening now. There is a lot of time and energy wasted mourning past events, for example, racking your brain wondering why you didn't do something in the past that would have significantly improved your present, while it also not productive to mindlessly worry about the future, like making incessant plans to do something and worrying about getting there instead of actually managing to get there, this is why Gestalt therapists have an emphasis on the here and now. One of the goals of Gestalt therapy is to put awareness on the present. The therapist asks things like: "What are you doing now?" "What is happening now?" The term Phenomenological inquiry refers to paying attention to the now, while the therapist is trying to focus on that.

The past is not something that Gestalt therapists focus on. It is a focus on something called unfinished business. Unfinished business comes out as unexpressed feelings like rage, anger, hatred, pain, etc. these feelings get in the way of focusing on the present. It's because they aren't finished is why they linger and tend to control more behavior and emotions than one would like. It tends to stay that way until the client finds a way to properly deal with it. At this point, they're stuck at an impasse, unable to continue. The therapist has to be able to help the client deal with that. According to Gestalt therapy, the therapist keeps helping them out with their present feelings until they accept their feelings rather than wishing it was any different.

11. Gestalt therapy is not exactly goal oriented, but there is a certain thing that gestalt therapists want and that is for their clients to have more awareness. With more awareness, they have more choices, and have the ability to make those choices. When the client has awareness, they know themselves and they accept themselves while also knowing the things around them. The therapist wants their clients to be aware. When their clients are aware, they can more easily facilitate growth; they are able to face what plagues them and integrate it into their subjectivity; they can be more responsible for their actions and make better choices.

The therapist acts as a partner, trying to encourage the client to experience things and try to pay attention to what happens. Other roles the therapist is trying to play is catalyst for change, a guide, the one who presents their observations about the client, the one who puts experiments. Instead of using normal goals, the therapist is trying to get them to increase their client's awareness, sense of freedom, and self direction by being personally engaged and active with the client.

I'm actually making my final research paper on this topic: body language is usually involuntary. It tells what your verbal cues are not telling. A person's verbal content might sound true, but if their body language is incongruent with that verbal content, it may be perceived as a lie. If your patient is doing things that are incongruent with their verbal content, they might be lying.

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## Behavioral Therapy Essays

Behavioral therapy is an approach of psychotherapy where the techniques and theories are derived from behavioralism. The focus of behavioral therapy is on observable behaviors, what causes that behavior, ways the client can learn how to change that behavior, while also having each plan being tailored to the client and also each approach being assessed and evaluated.

Behavioral therapy is used to treat a wide variety of things, including anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse disorders, depression, weight and eating disorders, hypertension, among others.

The goals of behavioral therapy are, for the most part, to increase personal choice and create new conditions for learning. Other goals include getting rid of behaviors that are detrimental to the client while also finding new behaviors to replace them with that are considered much healthier.

While none of that sounds bad on the surface, those with a Christian worldview would have issues with it. One aspect of behavioral therapy that actually has a lot of criticism is that it is very reductionist. It sounds like behaviorists fail to realize that people are more than their behavior and how they respond to their environment. Humans are very complex, by nature, their behavior is not as simple as a single stimulus and response, and there are other factors at play. Another aspect of behaviorism is that it stemmed from a naturalistic philosophy, in which only natural laws and scientific laws are the only things in the universe; this contrasts with Christianity as we obviously believe in God, the one who created everything.

Despite my earlier criticisms, there does seem to be some mirroring in behaviorism and Christianity. Stories in the bible occasionally have a theme where bad things or bad people tend

to corrupt others. One noteworthy example of this is how being married to Canaanites or Pagans was highly frowned upon because they were sinners and that they would be a bad influence. This mirrors behaviorism as one of the core tenets is that behavior is learned, even by the people around us.

29. Positive reinforcement is when you add a favorable stimulus to the environment of someone in an attempt to increase the future probability of wanted behavior. For example, giving someone a gift in reward for doing something that you want them to do. In contrast, negative reinforcement is similar, but also quite different. In negative reinforcement, you take away something that is considered bad for them and this is done so that behavior that they want is increased. An example of this would be removing a creepy statue from a workplace after the team does a good job.

Compared to reinforcement, punishments are designed to decrease the probability of a certain behavior. Positive punishment is when you add something bad, a stimulus, to something in order to reduce behaviors you don't like. An example of this would be when you add a creepy statue to your workplace and it causes your workers to stop being weird in front of it. Negative punishment is when you take something away. For example, you take away a child's game or TV privileges because of their poor behavior.

40. So behavioral therapy is considered evidenced based because some of their techniques are evidence based. These techniques include CBT, social skills training, relaxation training, and mindfulness strategies. These techniques were developed to handle a certain problem and they are very good at what they were designed to do and they are empirically supported so that gives

them high value. The procedures, however, are chosen specifically for the purpose of the selected problem.

For example, one particular intervention would be social skills training. It can be applied for substance abuse, ADD/ADHD bullying, social anxiety, emotional and behavioral problems. These techniques can also be used on other approaches too. While there are studies done on them, they are better than having no treatment whatsoever. There is research and assessments done on patient outcomes; what basically happens is that the therapist also looks into how the patient is doing with the treatments, and then goes back to understand why it did or did not work, and try to revise the treatment plan to better suit the patient. It actually reminds me of how nurses do nursing plans; incidentally, those are also followed by evidenced-based practices. Supposedly, behavioral therapy and its techniques had the most research done on its material, specifically whether or not the interventions are effective.

42. Dialectical behavioral therapy is used to treat borderline personality disorder, substance dependence, depression, PTSD, and non-suicidal self-injury. Part of DBT is that it is a blend of psychoanalytic and behavioral techniques, it also includes a psychotherapeutic relationship between the therapist and client, the client being validated, confronting resistance, and that the client understands they experienced an invalidating environment. Clients are taught acceptance through mindfulness while also helping them make changes in their environment and behavior and also helping them accept their current state. In short, the therapist teaches the client how to regulate their emotions and behaviors and clients can learn acceptance and change.

This method is not a fast method, it takes around a year for it to work. The techniques used here stem from behavioral therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and exposure therapy

where the client learns to not do self-destructive behavior when they are experiencing painful emotions that they are learning to tolerate.

Not so much of a problem, but because DBT places a heavy emphasis on didactic instruction and teaching mindfulness, therapists require training to be able to do this properly.