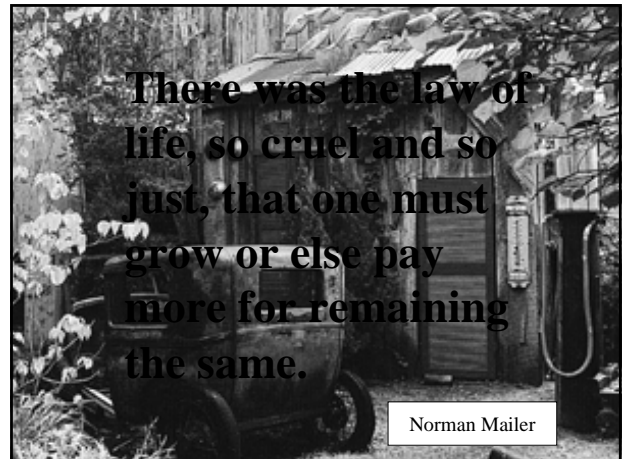


Gestalt Therapy

Timothy Leung Yuk Ki,
November 2006



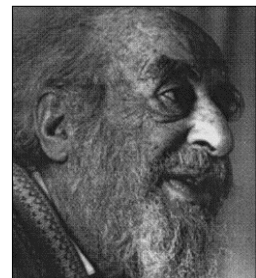
- In our learning, we are over-verbalized and under-experienced

- To do good things in the world, first you must know who you are and what gives meaning in your life.
- Paula P. Brownlee

- Awareness Exercise :This is a grape.

Founder

- Fritz Perls

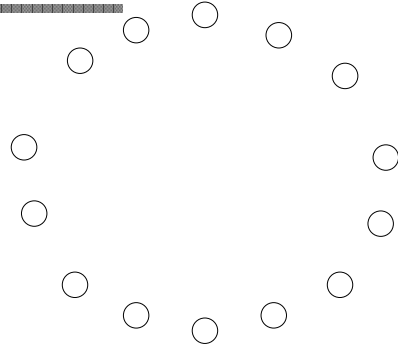


Founder

- Laura Perls



Completing the Circle



Unfinished Business

- The urge to complete uncompleted task and interrupted emotions
- This was echoed by cognitive psychology.
- Some of the subjects were interrupted while the tasks were being completed.
- Subjects remembered the incomplete tasks better than the completed ones.
- If given the opportunity, subjects returned to resume work on the interrupted tasks.
- This is called the Zeigarnik effect.

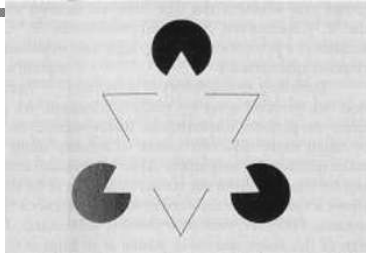
Gestalt as a way of life

- Gestalt is concerned about awareness, awareness of one 's being in the context of the phenomena in the field.
- Existentialism
 - Gestalt is more than a therapy. It is a way of life. It reflects on what you believe what kind of life you want to be, making sense and the meaning you want to actualize in life.

Gestalt Approach

- Gestalt shares the concerns of phenomenology, which are to study the multiple possibilities of a given field or situation as it is experienced subjectively by the people co-creating it at any moment in time.
(Mackewn, 1997, p.22)

- Gestalt therapy { as well as client centered therapy...existential therapy and logotherapy} takes a phenomenological sense in regards to the therapeutic relationship. That is there is a belief that the therapist can work best with the client by entering into his or her phenomenological world, experiencing along with the client the client's perspectives.
(Korb, Gorrell, Reit, 1989, p. 110)

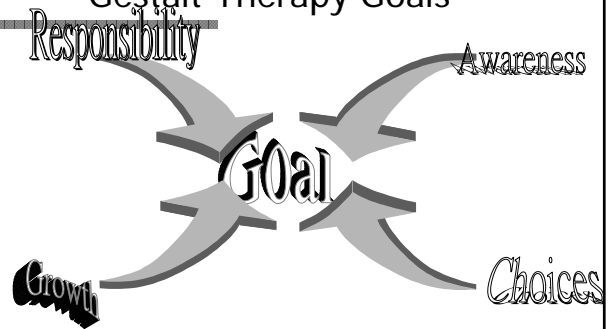


- The phenomenological approach is a discipline which requires you to empty your mind of past assumptions, and be open and fresh. However experienced a counsellor you become, keep a beginner's mind for 'in the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few' (Suzuki, 1970: 21)

Gestalt Therapy

- The aim of Gestalt Approach is for a person to discover, explore and experience his or her own shape, pattern and wholeness. The aim of Gestalt is the integration of all disparate parts. In this way people can let themselves become totally what they already are and what they potentially can become.

Gestalt Therapy Goals



- Our interests in the satisfaction of needs does not imply a philosophy of hedonism. It merely states that if the individual is aware of what goes on inside of him and does something about it, he will feel better about himself than the person who does not possess the awareness or postpones satisfying himself (Zinker, 1977, p.94).

Figure ground concept

- Look at me and I become a figure and the background becomes ground



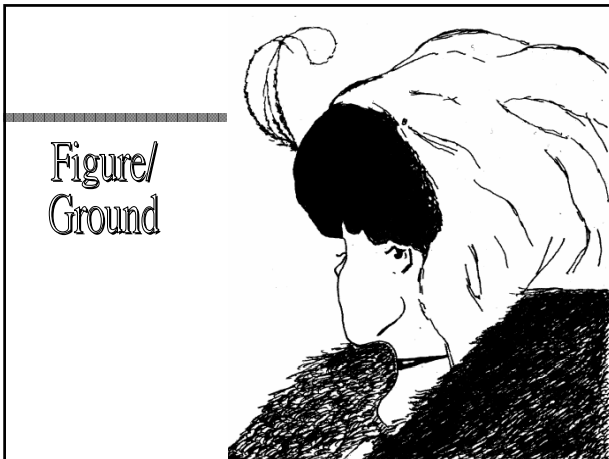
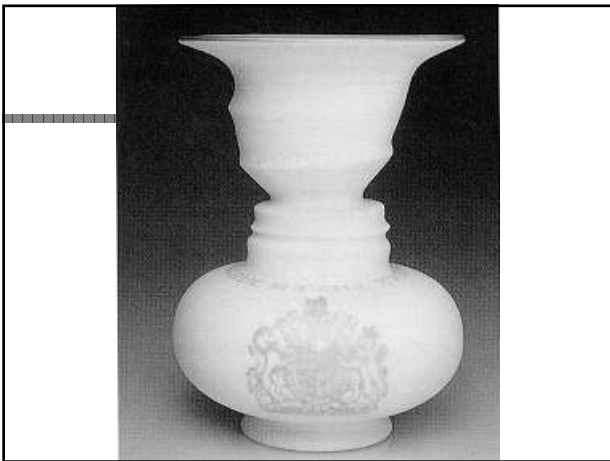


Figure ground concept

- “to understand human beings, we need first to see the whole situation before attending to the parts. But the environment changes according to circumstances. The individual organizes the totality of the environment according to different situations and different needs, sometimes making one particular aspect figure, sometimes another. (p.78)



Gestalt Approach

- In Sills et al 1995 Gestalt Counselling, uses the term connectedness to describe the field concept.

Sharing

- Exercise
- I think I feel and I see
- Outer zone Middle zone and Inner zone
- Experiment:
- when you are aware of tapping your foot next time, tap stronger and track what happens

Growth

- Carl Rogers defines self-concept as the way an individual perceives himself in relation to the world around him.
- Stanley Coopersmith found that persons with low self esteem characteristically see themselves as inferior, and lacking in the inner resources to tolerate the anxiety readily aroused by everyday events and stress.

Growth

- People as organisms have a drive /need to be more wholistic with integration of body mind and spirit.

- Change is through
- Awareness &
- making
- contact
- with self and
- the environment



Gestalt Approach on Change

- Change occurs when one becomes what he is, not when he tries to become what he is not. (Beisser, 1970:77)
- Position of creative Indifference (Perls) or non attachment with expected kind of changes

Contact

- the need of relationship constitutes a primary motivating need, and contact is the means by which the need is met.

Assessment Experiential based theorists: Fritz Perls

- Fritz Perls identify interruptions to contact with self and other as boundary disturbances or neurotic self regulation
- Interruptions such as projection, confluence, retroflection, introjection and deflection were identified as producing unhealthy functioning

Introjection

- Psychological process of assimilating is very much the same as its physical counterpart. Concepts, facts, standards of behaviour, morality, and ethical, esthetic or political values –all these come to us originally from the outside world.

Introjection

- If we simply accept these values without assimilation and uncritically just because they are safe or fashionable. They are indigestible and psychology calls these introjects and the mechanism by which these alien accretions are added to the personality, we call introjection. (Fritz, 1973,p.33)

Introjection

- Introjection displays itself in the use of pronoun *I* when the real meaning is *they*.
- Introjection vs. spitting out, rejecting

Retroflection

- Instead of doing things towards the outside, the act is being done inwards. For instance, pinching oneself or squeezing one's lips, swallowing instead of spitting out undesirable input or avoidance of expression of disappointment towards significant others and swallows the anger and disappointment towards self.

Retroflection

- Retroflection displays itself in the use of reflective *myself* when the real meaning is *they*.
- Depression typical case of anger turning inward
- Retroflection vs. Aggression

Projection

- A projection is a trait , attitude feeling or bit of behaviour which actually belongs to your own personality but is not experienced as such, instead, it is attributed to objects or persons in the environment and then experienced as directed toward you by them instead of the other way round.
 - Perls in Chris Himelstein Eds. Hand book of Gestalt Therapy p.155
-

Projection

- Projection displays itself in the use of pronoun *it or they* when the real meaning is *I*.
- Dream are often seen as a spontaneous expression of the dreamer, each part of the dream represents different projected aspects of the personality Mackewn, 1997 p.146
- All kind of creativity involves projection.
- Chinese painting天地有情

Projection

- Seeing in others what I don't acknowledge in myself (Clarkson, 1989, p. 53)
- In pathological projection, the angry person colours its destructive, the cruel person colours its sadistic. Every person colours the world with his inner life. Zinker 1977 p.15
- Prejudice as an specific kind of projection. Disowned aspects of the self are attributed to the contempt race, class or gender



Projection

- Projection Exercise
- I think that you think that I am
- projection -imagination, assumption, -owning, literalness



Implications of contact interruptions

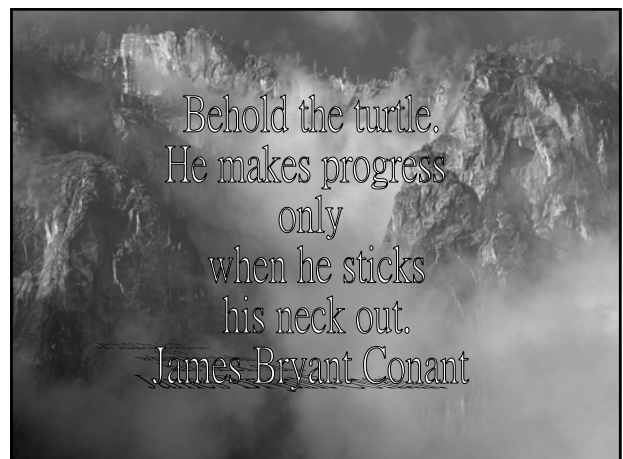
- It is important to be sensitive how one interrupts oneself from making contact with self and the environment.
- e.g. How he was stopping himself from expressing his love to to others?
- How he was stopping himself from expressing his emotions/needs/wants to the partner?

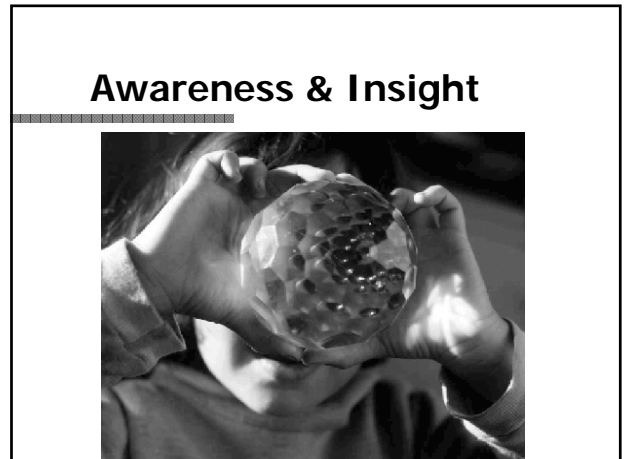
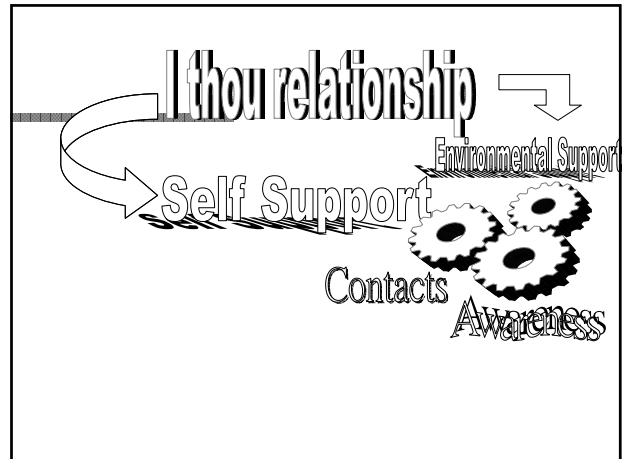
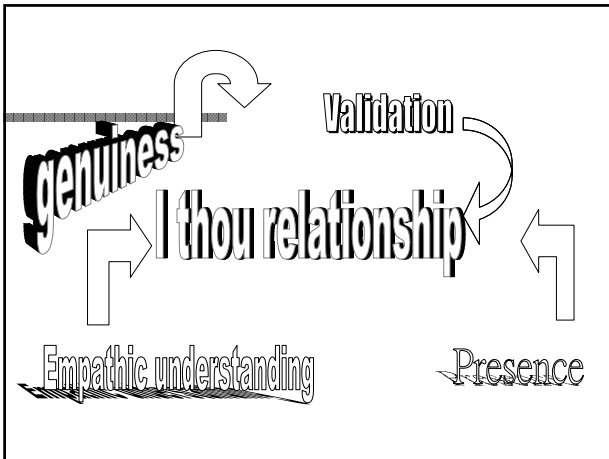
Paradoxical understanding on change

- change is not by elimination of various qualities within themselves
- when people allow themselves to be fully aware and in touch with who they currently are, change and growth then emerge as the inevitable and natural outcome of such contact and genuine self knowledge. (Mackewn, 1997, p.69)

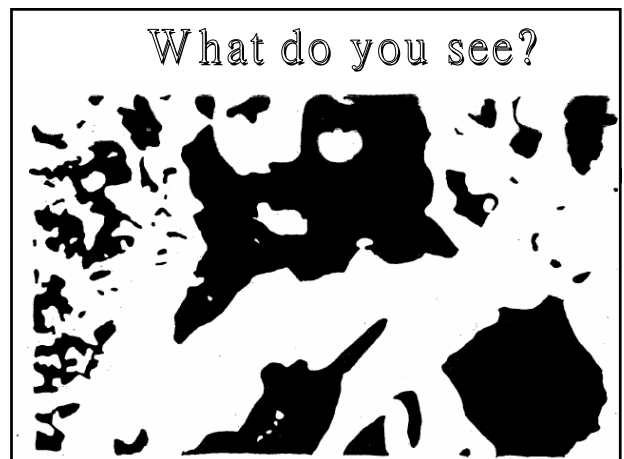
Paradoxical understanding on change

- appreciation for the paradoxical nature of change - people can best change by supporting the present experience of self. "
- --Philip Brownell, "I'll Start With This...", March 12, 1997 In Behavior Online Forum on Gestalt Therapy





- ### What do you see?
- What do you aware of right now?
 - What are you feeling right now?
 - How are you stopping yourself
 - Catastrophic fantasies
 - What do you want?



Emotional Insight

- For Gestalt, we provide enough support through development of a secured base for client to explore his/her emotions within a optimal distance without being getting overwhelmed by his/her emotions.
- Expression of emotion without cognitive insight is not helpful.

Role of emotion

- *In gestalt therapy (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman 1951) the experience and expression of emotion is regarded as of critical importance to change. Emotion is regarded as the organism's direct evaluative immediate experience of the organism-environment field.*

Facilitating Emotion



How to utilize Gestalt perspective in Counselling

- Symbolization: Actions, sounds movements, Art Symbols: like clay moulding, aluminium sculpture, drawing, drama (exercise : three lines exercise)

How to utilize Gestalt perspective in Counselling



Dream Work

- Royal Road to Integration. (Perls)
- Dream as an existential message as different from Freud view's view of dream as wishful thinking and disguised message.

Dream work

- Dream : to resolve unfinished business and to integrate fragments of our personalities.
- Each character or object in our dream is part of ourselves, a fragment of our personality that we have projected out in dream.

Selection of dreams

- Dream with strong emotions
- Repetitive dreams
- Nightmares

Method

- Tell the dream in first person
- Tell in present tense
- To identify with and speak as, each element of the dream
- Dialogue between different parts

Gestalt Therapy Intervention Strategies

- use of metaphor, self awareness moment to moment awareness, working with body posture and movements, enactment, time distortion, awareness experiments (empty chair) and the full expression of feelings involving the whole body in action (Clarkson,1989)

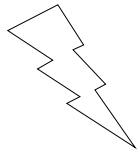
How to utilize Gestalt perspective in Counselling

- Unfinished Business-Empty Chair enactment, time distortion, awareness experiments (empty chair)
- Problematic Reactions
- Here and now awareness

How to utilize Gestalt perspective in Counselling

- Here and now awareness: contact and interruptions (exercise as illustration: I think I feel I imagine)
- Ask them what is happening here and now when the participants are trying things
 - What are you telling yourself when you are up there?
 - What kind of statements do you make?
 - What does it mean to you if you have trouble balancing yourself?

What to do if client becomes overwhelming in the assessment process?



Awareness exercises

- Guided Imagery
 - Imagine this is the end of the camp
 - Visualize that you are doing it what will happen?
- Meditation
- Solitude
- Metaphor
- Mandela drawing

Working with Polarities

- If I give you, for instance, an example of what is the most frequent opposite inside people, then you'll see what will happen from this. The most frequent opposite example is the **top dog and the underdog**. And we will extrapolate for this a bit. ”
 - Extracted from Interview with Fritz Perls by Adelaide Bry, 1972
 - I should vs. I want

Exercise

- ‘Shoulds’ and ‘needs’
- List the things that I should do /behave
- For instance, As a student, I should
- As the eldest child in the family, I should
- I want

Working with Polarities

- “You don't need to stay twenty years on the couch or have year in, year out therapy. ... And the solution is the therapeutic community: where we come together, work together, and do the therapy together.
- The core of the therapy is learning to confront your opposites. Once you know this way of confronting yourself with opposites, next time you might be able to do it easier.

Risking being Alive

It is necessary
to run risks,
follow certain paths
and abandon others.
No one can make a choice
without feeling fear.
Paulo Coelho



Reflection & Conclusion

- Space/difference (secure base & development of trust)
- Change and new experience creates anxiety, Stress to Challenge
- Awareness
- Choice/options
- Response-ability
- Growth

The End
