

The Gestalt counsellor needs.....

A "tiny bit of goodwill" from clients, or....

Is there any point in trying to work with someone who refuses to be worked with.

No. Well.....maybe...

When the client is unaware of the degree and type of refusal.

The therapy problem is: How to get through the "phony" (game-playing, role playing, manipulative) layer of the client's personality.

Favorite games of the manipulative client include:

Playing stupid

- " helpless
- " smart aleck (jokester)
- " clever (collecting trophies)
- " Mona Lisa
- " deaf
- " expert (explainer)
- " poor me

The skilled counsellor may interpret games to the client as a way of saying "If you want to learn anything from working with me, you'd better quit that."

MAIN AVOIDANCE MECHANISMS

1. story-telling (rambling on)
2. anticipating
3. explaining (aboutism, "science game")
4. shouldism (religion game)
5. asking questions (do you mean?)
6. announcing comfort
7. playing dumb (I don't know, "fine")
8. offering judgements
9. offering apologies, excuses
10. playing "me too" (complying, riding piggyback on someone else's descriptions or statements)

RULES

1. "I" (not it, one, they)
2. describe (don't explain) on-going experiences (NOW principle)
3. be concrete
4. no questions

WHEN A PERSON BREAKS THE RULES YOU CAN INFER:

1. what is being experienced must be avoided
2. desire to show "how clever I am" is stronger than desire to describe on-going experience
3. therapist or therapist's method is not trusted

WHAT TO DO WHEN A CLIENT BREAKS THE RULES

1. restate the rule: insist and/or
2. redirect client to his/her experience of the moment
 - a. need to avoid unexpressed discomfort
 - b. compulsion to explain
 - c. compulsion to judge
 - d. wish to feel accepted
 - e. need to control:
 - i. I'm cleverer than you are or I'm dumber than you are
 - ii. my method is better than yours

BENEFITS OF ELIMINATING AVOIDANCE MECHANISMS

1. discover that most are not needed
2. gain sense of actuality "this is me"
3. locate "holes" in personality (impotencies, paralysis, impasse, inability to accept experience) as a pre-requisite to taking remedial action.

The most frequent form of manipulation from some individuals is question-asking. While there certainly are genuine questions, most are phony. That is, they are methods for:

1. subtly exhibiting the questioners own views
2. expressing doubt (in a veiled manner)
3. trying to expose lack of basis in the others statements
4. indirectly seeking reassurance that the questioner is "right" or approved.

In general, then, a question is manipulative, seeks to elicit an answer which will meet the questioner's needs, and does not express the questioner's experience.

RULES FOR DEALING WITH QUESTIONS

1. State a "no-question" rule, or,
2. Ask for a translation of the question into a statement
 - a. "why don't you" = "I think you"....or "See how I'm being helpful and better than you" and "You need me" = "I need you to need me"
 - b. "What are you thinking" = "I'm worried about how you feel about me and I'd like to know."
 - c. "Don't you think that you were right" = "I'm feeling supportive of you and would like to help you avoid feeling badly."
 - d. "Why do you say that" = "I think that what happened is quite different from what you've just said but I'm afraid to differ openly with you."

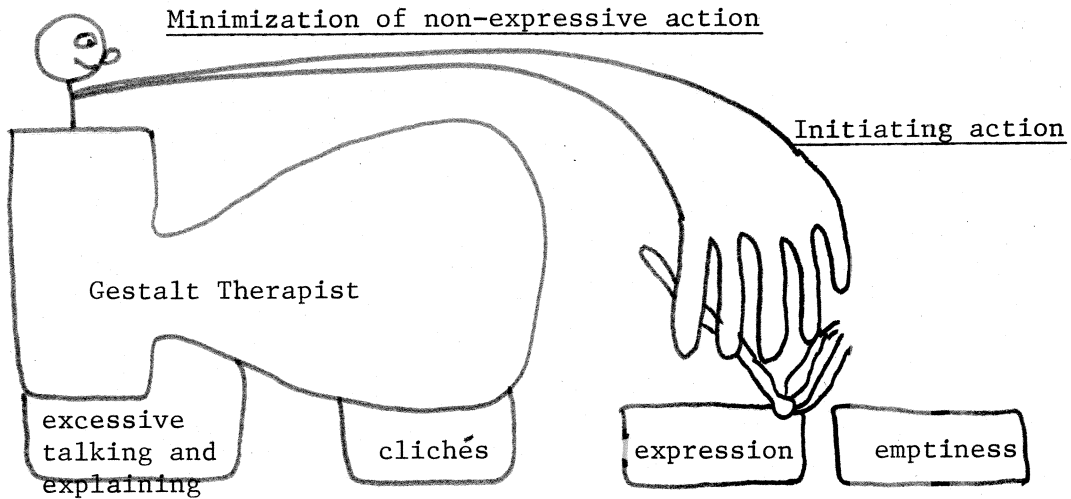
- e. "What should I do" = "I'm feeling uncertain and frightened right now and I'd like someone to take responsibility for me."
3. The questioned one should feel free to answer or not, according to his/her preference.
 4. Regardless of whether or not an answer is given the questioned should respond.
 - a. I am excited by your question and afraid to answer.
 - b. I admire your perceptiveness in asking that question and would like to have an intellectual discussion with you at some other time.

Besides games and questions, another manipulation is asking permission. This is an effort to get others to be responsible for what you do.

Permission asking is contrary to risk-taking.

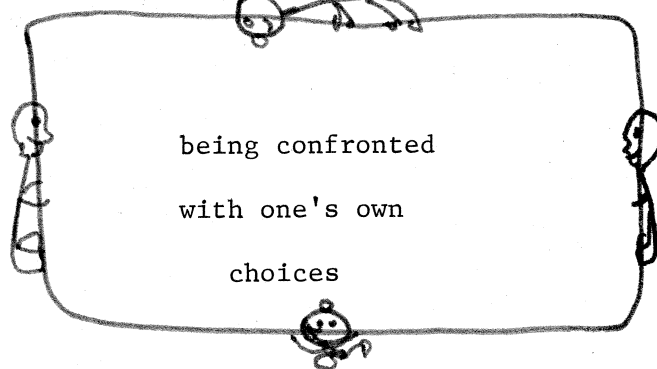
The counsellor may confront client permission-asking thus facing the client with his/her own fear and freedom.

THE ROLE OF THE GESTALT THERAPIST:

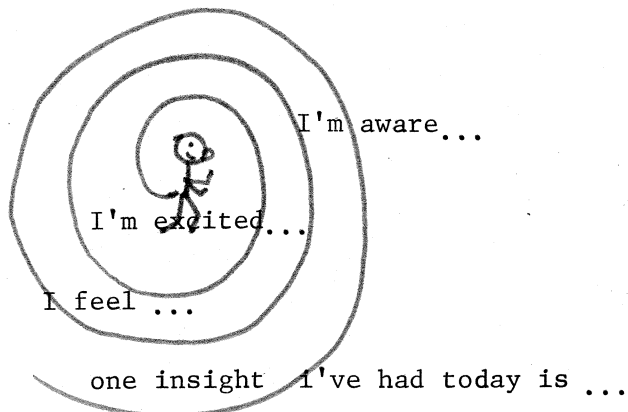


To squash, stamp out, put your foot down on, excessive talking and explaining and cliché conversation, while igniting, setting fire to the persons expression or emptiness. This can be done in an:

UNSTRUCTURED SITUATION: i.e. through silence



or in a STRUCTURED SITUATION i.e. making the rounds



Prompting

Non-verbal

"Your foot is tapping."

"you are swallowing."

"You are smiling."

Verbal

"Can you put that into words."

MAXIMIZING (AND COMPLETING) EXPRESSION

Individual prescriptions

From the perception that there is a "hole" in the persons experiencing.

1. "May I feed you a sentence?"
2. Direct the person to do what he is avoiding to do.
3. Direct the person to reverse what he/she is doing (instead of swallowing/exhale)
4. Direct person to go on and "finish" experiences, especially resentments and appreciations.

TO INTENSIFY EXPRESSION:

1. repeat
2. exaggerate and develop
3. translate:
 - give words to you movement
 - put your feeling into movement
4. Identification and acting:
 - be your hand
 - be your eyes
 - be him
 - be your voice.

Notes on the Gestalt Art Experience

Introductory description of how to use art media to explore unique qualities in self and others; how to develop awareness and perceptiveness by creating art forms and learning to understand the visual messages of your own art forms (messages from you to you).

Assumption: the experience of perceiving the visual imagery of ourselves and others contributes to our breadth of immediate awareness and to our conceptual understanding of ourselves, others and to relationships.

We can start from where we are. We can use whatever personal resources we have to actualize the best potentials and possibilities available to use.

Creating art forms is not a parlor game. You may find joy, excitement, release. You may have fun. You may also see and contact ugliness, pain and distress. This is a low-risk way of getting into high-risk areas. Working in art forms requires that you accept responsibility for your own feelings and perceptions and that you respect the feelings and perceptions of others.

Gestalt art experience guarantees nothing: it opens possibilities for:

- increased imaginative ability
- sharpened visual perceptiveness
- clearer recognition of own emotional states
- using various forms of expression
- breaking rigid habit patterns
- expressing taboo or forbidden things
- increased self understanding
- increased self-use
- recognition and resolution of routine dissatisfactions and anxieties
- exploration of time and space in personal life
- exploration of relationships
- extending one's abilities
- enjoyment and play

Healthy children are naturally gestaltists--they live in the present; give full attention to what they are doing; do what they want to do; and trust their own experience. Most of us are not allowed to grow up naturally. We are trained out of our naive wisdom and lose contact with our own body-mind. Teachers, parents and other cultural agents force children away from their own intuitive awareness and knowledge into accepting cultural standards of what they should think, feel, believe, and do. Since most of us want approval and acceptance we give up our own true selves and become what others expect us to be. In other words we trade what we really are for what others would like us to be. As adults most of our energy goes into gaining and keeping approval--for the approval of others is the source of our adult self. This makes us quite fearful and subject to much manipulation. Yet the fear of losing approval is great. Since we no longer have contact with our own 'natural' self, if we lose our other-directed self, we end up with nothing--a fearful prospect, indeed. Gestalt art work offers us a way to reclaim parts of our lost and disowned self. If we accept this challenge, we go into a process of unlearning and regrowth. By using art imagery and creating forms we may recover some of the intuitive wisdom of our creative child. We use associations, memories, fantasies, and insights to find our way to greater strength and self-responsibility.

- Gestalt = the ability to perceive whole forms or configurations.
- Art = the forms that emerge from your own individual experiencing.
- Experience = the act of living through an event; personal involvement in events.
- Gestalt Art Experience = you making art forms, being involved in the forms you are creating as events, observing what you do, perceiving through your graphic art forms not only yourself as you are now, but also perceiving alternate ways that are available to you for creating yourself as you would like to be.

Wherever you are, begin there. Don't try to do art. Settle into your thoughts, feelings, memories, imagination. Give your hand permission to begin marking. Let go.

R. Vance Peavy
University of Victoria
May, 1978

Checklist of Goals for the Adult Counsellor
(esp. Counsellors employed by Community Colleges)

1. Interpersonal goals

The counsellor should be able to:

- 1a) attend to the client
- 2b) clarify by using questions and empathy
- 3c) support by showing respect, acceptance and using empathy
- 4d) establish the purpose of counselling sessions
- 5e) advise, according to the non-imposition principle

2. Informational goals

The counsellor should be able to:

- 2a) collect and make available educational and vocational information (brochures, calendars, course lists, newspaper, radio announcements, etc.) to population served
- 2b) refer clients to other resources within the community
- 2c) advance own knowledge of counselling

3. Organizational goals

The counselor should be able to:

- 3a) describe counselling services and make a report of counselling services to appropriate administrative officials
- 3b) rationalize counselling services to other departments including the development of budget requests
- 3c) recommend procedural, policy and organizational changes which are designed to improve counselling services

4. Consultation goals

The counsellor should be able to

- 4a) Consult with other staff members on common concerns
- 4b) Consult with other members of the community at large who are concerned with adult counselling and adult education
- 4c) Consult with counselling personnel from other colleges about common concerns

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