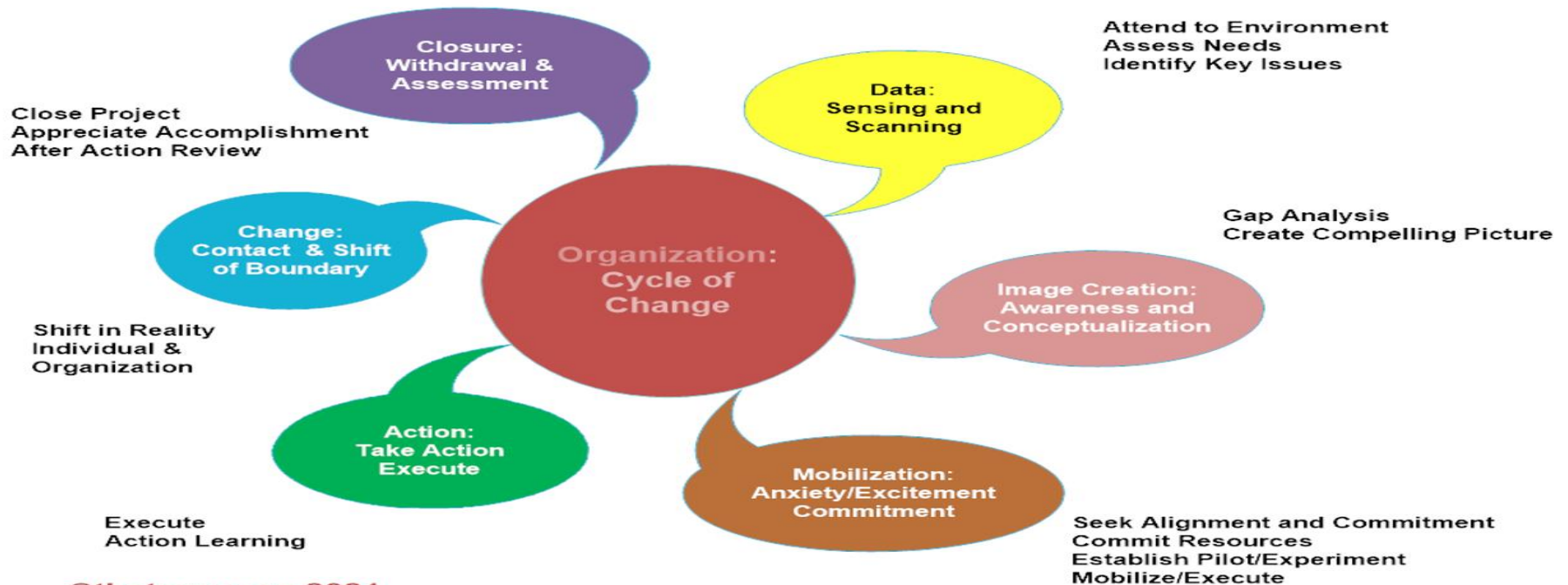




**DR. A. JOHN BALAIAH**  
GESTALT THERAPY

# Gestalt Therapy

## Gestalt Organization Cycle of Change



# Fritz Perls 1893 - 1970

Berlin-Jewish, problem child, failed 7<sup>th</sup> grade twice & expelled, MD in Psychiatry

After World War 1 -worked in hospital for Brain Damaged Soldiers-realized view humans as a whole rather than sum of discreet parts

1946-came to USA, Big Sur, California – Esalen Institute, Married Laura Perls in 1930

Founded New York Institute of Gestalt Therapy

# Gestalt Therapy

Existential & Phenomenological ~ it is grounded in the client's "here and now"

Initial goal is for clients to gain awareness of what they are experiencing and doing now

- Promotes direct experiencing rather than the abstractness of talking about situations
- Rather than talk about a childhood trauma the client is encouraged to become the hurt child

# Perls's Concept of Human Nature

Self-reliance and reintegration

Spontaneous; here and now experience

Individuals have the capacity to self-regulate in their environment

Clients have to stand on own 2 feet

Move from other supports to self-support

Help clients reintegrate disowned parts of personality & finish the unfinished business




# Major Principle of Gestalt Therapy

- **Holism-interested in the whole person**  
- emphasis on integration -thoughts, feelings, behaviours, body, & dreams

# 7 STAGES OF GESTALT CYCLE

- The cycle of gestalt formation and destruction is generally broken down into seven stages:
- sensation
- awareness
- mobilization
- action
- final contact
- satisfaction
- withdrawal

# SENSATION, AWARENESS & MOBILIZATION

- “The power of this description is that it gave greater depth and understanding to figure/ground formation. The figure would surface during sensation, [*sensation*] where the individual experiences something happening that disturbs the steady state.
  - If the sensation holds sufficient attention of the individual, awareness [*awareness*] of a need would sharpen.
  - Awareness begins to develop through a mixture of feelings, thoughts, perceptions that seek to interpret the sensation.
  - Energy mobilizes [*mobilization*] in response to this awareness of a specific need that is seeking satisfaction.
- 



# MOBILIZATION, ACTION, CONTACT

- Energy mobilizes [*mobilisation*] in response to this awareness of a specific need that is seeking satisfaction.
- The energy is released [*action*] and Contact is made with that which will satisfy the need [*final contact*]. During contact, whatever is other than the self is digested by destructuring to find what is new or different and assimilating (or integrating) it.

# SATISFACTION & WITHDRAWAL

- **When what is new or different has been satisfactorily destructured and assimilated, change occurs within the organism (individual) [*satisfaction*]. Once the original need has been satisfied, the individual returns to a steady state by withdrawing from the experience and closing the cycle [*withdrawal*].**
- **When the cycle has been completed, the individual would return to sensation and wait for a new figure to emerge from the fertile ground of the individual.” ( Zinker, 1977, 90-91)**

# Layers of Neurosis

Perls likens the unfolding of adult personality to the peeling of an onion

- Phony layer ~ stereotypical and inauthentic
- Phobic layer ~ fears keep us from seeing ourselves
- Impasse layer ~ we give up our power
- Implosive layer ~ we fully experience our deadness
- Explosive layer ~ we let go of phony roles

# Contact and Resistances to Contact

- **CONTACT** ~ interacting with nature and with other people without losing one's individuality
  - **RESISTANCE TO CONTACT** ~ the defenses we develop to prevent us from experiencing the present full
- Five major channels of resistance:
- Introjection
  - Retroflection
  - Deflection
  - Projection
  - Confluence

# The Now

- **Our “power is in the present”**
  - Nothing exists except the “now”
  - The past is gone and the future has not yet arrived

# Unfinished Business

## Feelings about the past are unexpressed

- These feelings are associated with distinct memories and fantasies
- Feelings not fully experienced linger in the background and interfere with effective contact

## Result:

- Preoccupation, compulsive behaviour, wariness oppressive energy and self-defeating behaviour

# Unintegrated Part of the Self

Past traumas are not acceptable to mind and it disowns those parts of personality.

This causes disintegration of the Self.

# Client's Process in Gestalt Work





# Reintegration

**Bring the past trauma to the present  
and bring the event under your  
control**

**Reintegrate disowned parts of  
personality from the past and own it  
without condoning it.**

# Finish the Unfinished Business

**Bring the unfinished business to the present and finish it.**

**Complete the business and bring the finished business under the client's control.**

# TECHNIQUES OF GESTALT THERAPY

**Internal dialogue**

**Top dog/Underdog**

**Empty Chair**



# Internal Dialogue

EMPTY-CHAIR-shift client in two chair for dialogue-role play-experiences conflict

Identifies the struggle for control in a person-fragmented between controller & controlled-  
through introjection of aspects of others

Between “Top Dog” and “Underdog”



# Language forms Looked for in Therapy:

“It” talk~instead of “I”- depersonalizing

“You” talk~global, impersonal

Questions~keep hidden, safe, unknown

Language that denies Power~uses qualifier or disclaimers~...YES...BUT

Client’s metaphors~clues to internal struggles

Language to uncover story~use elusive language-cover life’s struggles

# Client's Process in Gestalt Work

- **Discovery ~ Surprises for client**
  - new realizations about self
  - novel view about old situations
  - new look at significant other
- **Accommodation~**
  - recognition they have a choice
  - try new behaviors in safety of office
  - expand awareness in real world
- **Assimilation~**
  - Learning to influence environment
  - Deal with surprises encountered daily
  - Confidence to improve and improvise

# Therapeutic Techniques

The experiment in Gestalt Therapy-to assist clients self-awareness of what they are doing and how they are doing it

- Expanding awareness of client
- Opportunity to “try on” new behavior

Experiments bring struggles to life-inviting client to enact them in the present

Major emphasis on preparing clients for experiments-through trusting relationship

# Types of Confrontation

**Imposing stance ~ therapist meets own agenda for the client-acts as expert, power and control in therapist**

**Competing stance ~ therapist promotes rugged individualism with lots of negotiation, compromise, & confidence**

**Confirming stance ~ acknowledging the whole being of client-client's needs & experience center of relationship-ideal type of confrontation-invites client to look at incongruities in verbal and non-verbal language, in words vs actions**



# Gestalt Experiments

Internal dialogue exercise

Making the rounds

Reversal technique

Rehearsal exercise

Exaggeration exercise

Staying with the feelings



# Making the Rounds

In a group go up to each person in the group and speak to or do something with each one

Goal: confronting, take risks, disclose self, try new behaviours to grow and change



# Reversal Technique

Role play the opposite of symptoms and behaviours client suffers

Client tries the very thing fraught with anxiety – therefore submerged and denied

Help clients to accept personal attributes that they have tried to deny



# Rehearsal Exercise

Behavioural rehearsal: role playing a planned for new behaviour with a person or people in client's environment

To reduce stage fright, anxiety or fear “not do the role right”

Encourages spontaneity and willingness to experiment with new behaviors



# Exaggeration Exercise

Exaggerate movement or gesture repeatedly to intensify feelings attached to behaviour to make inner meaning clearer

Trembling hands or feet, slouched posture, bent shoulders, clenched fists, tight frowning, facial grimacing, crossed arms

# Staying with the Feelings

Keep client from escaping from

- Fearful stimuli ( Terrorizing images)

Encourage to go deeper into feelings or behaviour which they wish to avoid

Facing, confronting & experiencing feelings-to unblock and make way for new levels of growth-  
takes courage & pain

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