Psychology is a science that has been defined as the science of behavior. Nowadays it is widely accepted also that psychology is the positive science of behavior. But, does it mean that the obligation of the psychologists is to change people’s behavior? Are psychologists really responsible for modeling people’s positive behavior? ... And what if psychologists do not have positive goals in their life behavior? ...

Psychiatry is the branch of medicine concerned with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental disorders, using both medical and psychological therapies (Greek: psykhe (mind) and iatreia (healing)).

Psychotherapy is, by definition, “the curing with the psychological methods”, if we translate Greek word psykhe (mind, soul) and Latin word therapia (curing). ... Now days, the psychotherapy really does at least that.

Gestalt therapy is one of the popular psychotherapy approaches nowadays. Das Gestalten is a German word. It’s sometimes translated as “shape, form of figure“, but it is defined also as „interaction of the particles opposite to the amount of the component part“. It cannot be simply translated, so the same word has been used in all languages all over the world.

Gestalt therapy is used in a variety of situations, with multiple aims: individual, couple, group, in business, within different organizations, etc.

Gestalt therapy was developed in the fortieth years of the 20th century by Frederick Salomon (Fritz) Pearls (1893-1970), as revision of classic psychoanalysis. He escaped from Nazi Germany in 1933 first to Amsterdam, then to South Africa, and at the end to America. There he started leading a psychotherapy groups in a specific way.

His first book: Ego, Hunger and Aggression was published in South Africa in 1942, and the first edition was subtitled: „A Revision of Freud’s Theory“. The birth of Gestalt therapy represents Pearls’ book Gestalt Therapy published in New York, 1951. In the beginning genius Pearls used to call his therapy approach: Concentration Therapy – whose aim was to reach - again - the feeling of oneself. He used to say: „I invented nothing, all I did, was rediscover what was always there“. And that is really the full truth.
The role of awareness is at the central position (some Gestalt therapists rather use the word: contact) in the Gestalt therapy approach. In fact, it is difficult to discuss Gestalt therapy without discussing awareness. Awareness, or global consciousness, in Gestalt therapy approach means that the therapist has to be constantly aware of the complete figure and complete background, as well as complete – external and internal – processes between him and the client. Also, he uses all possible interventions to make the unconscious client’s processes – conscious in the inter-subjective therapeutic field. In fact, basic contact and full awareness processes are preconditions for any dialog and intervention.

Probably the greatest contribution of the Gestalt style of therapy has been the techniques it developed to increase individual self-awareness. These techniques are consistent with the belief that emotional problems represent avoidance of, or failure to recognize one’s feelings. In Gestalt therapy, the therapist does not interpret anything, because every interpretation prevents the client from growing (“thinking for him”). Therapist often frustrates the client.

Gestalt therapy phenomenology work is functioning through the relationship based on the existential model of Martin Buber: “I and You; Here and Now”. With the help of this model, the client gets into the full and intensive contact with a person or a task that is before him, and in both cases, he treats them as “You”, something that is the goal of its own, and not as “It”, a thing or a mean to achieve the goal.

Maybe the most important in that relationship are the processes that are happening between therapist and a client, so called I-You relation, as well as the processes that are happening in the client, so called I-I relation.

So, in order to be able to get in full, quality contact with the surroundings, it is necessary for the client to be in good contact with himself, that is – to achieve good I-I relation. If he manages to make good and quality I-I relation, the client will also be able to accept or to change all of his other relationships – of course – with the help, and by using also the I-You relationship with the therapist.

Only then, will the client succeed to achieve harmonic relationship with his surroundings as well, that is – he will be able to hear, to see, to feel and to understand…

One of the basic principles in the Gestalt therapy is also Arnold R. Beisser’s (1971) “The Paradoxical Theory of Changes”, that says: “The change occurs when one accepts oneself for what he/she is, not when he/she tries to be someone that he/she is not”. That means that the human being has to become completely aware of oneself in the beginning, if one wants to change and overcome one’s problems. In other words, awareness is used to restore awareness, and this restoration can be facilitated by establishing a dialogic context. In this context, contact can be used to restore contact. Awareness
techniques teach clients how to correct their interrupted contacting. Healing and growing through the restoration of the awareness are an expression of the transcendental possibilities of human existence.

A very often sentence in the Gestalt therapy work is: “I am now aware of ...”. That is the sentence that the client is often asked to finish. One of the reasons for that is - because the Gestalt therapy process is similar to peeling onion. Therapist often uses questions like: What are you doing now? ... What are you feeling now? ... What do you want now? ... What are you avoiding now? ... What do you expect now? ... In that way, the therapist helps the client to enlarge his own consciousness, here and now. That’s why Gestalt therapy is also known as “now therapy”.

In fact, like Pearls says, a Gestalt therapist does not use techniques. He applies himself in and to a situation with whatever professional skill and life experience he has accumulated and integrated. So, there are so many styles as there are therapists and clients who discover themselves and each other and together invent their relationship.

**Therapeutical goals (Gestalt therapy principles)**

Underlying principles:
- The purpose of therapy is to increase the clients’ awareness of themselves and their experience.
  
  Awareness → Excitement → Contact → Action
- The client is already perfect and tends toward actualization.
- Human beings are creatures of habit.
  Therapist notices their Figure & Ground
- Therapist is attentive to client’s body language.
  Location of energy blocks.
- Therapist focuses on the client’s use of language:
  I or It? Which tense? Qualifiers? Metaphors?
- The counselor designs experiments to raise the client’s awareness so they take ownership of their experience.
  
  Confrontation is utilized – appropriate to the client’s capabilities.

- Exaggeration: Counselor exaggerates mannerism of client or asks client to exaggerate in order to make client aware of true feelings.
- Empty-Chair Technique: When client speaks to an empty chair as if it were another person or another part of the client (as internal dialogue of *top-dog* and *under-dog*).
- Dream-Work: according to Pearls, the dream is the most spontaneous expression of the existence of the human being.
Be that alteration that you want to see
Mahatma Gandhi

These days we are witnesses that most western people are trying very hard to be conscious through some kind of body relaxation. We are very tired of trying to be relaxed: we do different exercises, we are trying to listen to some relaxation music, but our breath is fast. We are running to different places to enjoy the nature or the sight. We are tired of all that, and we are constantly in tension. A consequence of all that is – that we are not at all aware of our real self. Our minds are yearning for some miracle material or social welfare. All the time the strongest enemies of most western men are pride and greediness. We are so egoistic, so proud and so materially oriented - that we think that the highest aim in the life is “Mr. Dollar”. In that way, all magnificent things that modern mankind discovered – lost a lot of their brightness on this destroying fire of pride and haughtiness. So, we have to look again towards the anxious wisdom of Yoga, and to reach awareness of the new aims. ....

But, the process of becoming a complete new aware person can’t be an automatic process. That is the condition which is not easy to reach. That is the way of the renunciation, and the way of happiness. That is the way of health, also in the spirit of the World Health Organization. It says: “Health is not the absence of illness or of infirmity, but as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.” ....

A human – for example – can develop, due to different reasons, feeling of sadness, anger, and also hatred toward someone else. But often, due to different reasons, he does not express that feeling – and that is why in time he starts to feel very bad. That is when he goes to a therapist, and there – in protected environment – upon a recommendation of a therapist: he shouts and hits the pillow that, in that moment, represents the hated person! In that way, at least for a short time, he takes all of his anger out. A man is surprised: that, at the first glance, it has an effect! He pays the therapist, and leaves – filled with pleasure that he did not feel in a long time! ... But then, accidentally, he sees that person on the street! Right away, the good old known symptoms reappear: again there is a spasm in a stomach; he clenches his teeth, he feels heat wave in his head, he clenches his fists, ... . Old, well known feelings are again in his/her mind.

To feel good again, he will go see his therapist again, so that he takes the anger out of his body again – that is, a man will try to, even for a while, satisfy the need of his body again. The need of a mind is, on the other hand, to resolve the conflict! If a man does not do that, the feeling of a relief is always, and only temporary. As long as the body is the one that expresses the emotions, the core of the problem survives as an unfinished work, and the problem will – periodically – overtake the person over and over again. To complete overcoming the problem, the person needs to be aware of his/her problem’s origin. He/she has to reach absolute self-awareness – through
psychotherapy, or through yoga. ... So, psychotherapy is not a way of “covering up” the problem, that’s a way of its discovering. ...

**Gestalt Prayer**

I am I, and you are you.
I do my thing and you do your thing.
I’m not in this world
to live up to your expectations,
and you are not in this world
to live up to mine.
You are you, and I am I,
and if by the chance we find each other,
then it is beautiful.
If not, it can’t be helped.

**Author:** Prim.dr med. Miodrag B. MILOVANOVIĆ
psychiatrist
gestalt psychotherapist
oneirologist

Novo mesto Prijedor
SLOVENIA Republic of Srpska
EUROPE

REFERENCES:
Clarkson, Petruska – GESTALT COUNSELING IN ACTION, Sage Publications, 1989
Kostic, Mladen – GESTALT THERAPY MANUAL, Gestalt Center, Beograd, 1997
Ruiz, Don Miguel Angel, M.D. – THE FOUR AGREEMENTS, Belgrade, 2014
Ruiz, Don Miguel Angel, M.D. – THE MASTERY OF LOVE, Belgrade, 2014