

Abstract

This dissertation is a phenomenological study with nine participants who are all practising Gestalt therapists. All participants have studied at recognised Gestalt training centres, eight in the United Kingdom and one in America. Participants are aged from 33 to 55+ years of age; three men and six women are interviewed. The minimum length of training has been three years, with ongoing continued professional development for those who have completed their training. The period of time since the participants were trained stretches from 30 years ago to fourth year trainees who will complete their training in August 2005. 'Training' encompassed the modules and group setting of the training group and the parallel obligations including personal therapy, supervision and clinical placements. Five of the therapists have trained in other psychotherapeutic models before Gestalt and there is a short investigation into what differences these participants are aware of in their 'way of being' following that training in the discussion section.

The literature review highlights many Gestalt therapy books in the 1970's that state the phrase a 'way of being'; during the 1980's and 1990's this phrase was not so evident. During the last five years this topic has been considered again in a number of articles and chapters in Gestalt literature. I was unable to find any specific research or literature on how the training affected the therapist's 'way of being' outside of the therapy room.

I used a semi-structured technique, which I felt was reflective of Gestalt, and the interviews took approximately an hour, the tape length was typically 40 minutes. I took statements from the original transcripts and drew out statements and entered them into

tables. Those that had a similar or comparable meaning were eliminated. I then found meanings of the remaining statements, drawing from the initial description. This was to create and discover what the hidden context was within the phenomenon. Then I organised clusters of themes from the meanings. These were then referred back to the original texts to validate them. There are four sections, the 'way of being' before the training, significant statements of the Gestalt psychotherapy training, what a 'way of being' was not, and finally the experience of the therapists as to their 'way of being' outside of the therapy room. From the clusters I formulated a comprehensive statement, this portrayal of the phenomenon is an explicit depiction as possible.

Each participant in this enquiry has an opinion on their 'way of being', the affect and impact the training has on their personal lives. No participant needed the phrase a 'way of being' explained to them. All participants have experienced significant shifts in their 'way of being' following Gestalt psychotherapy training. This investigation reveals what the 'way of being' is and how it has impacted on the lives of the therapists outside of the therapy room.