

EMBELLISHING ‘T GROUP’ WITH A GESTALT PERSPECTIVE

*(Credit for inputs is given to Steve Vinay Gunther, Director,
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Kurt Lewin has been credited for having originally conceived the idea of ‘T Group’ as we understand it today. While he went on to develop the basis for modern day group dynamics and organisational psychology, it was the Gestalt psychologists who were among the first to speak of wholism as an understanding of human nature.

Gestalt concepts have been around for a long time and found expression in existentialism and humanistic psychological processes.

Typically ‘T Group’ and ‘Gestalt’ share much in common:

T GROUP	GESTALT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased interpersonal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding group development and dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An appreciation of the wider field
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing awareness of feelings in the moment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An interest in the freshness of here and now
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing understanding of impact of one’s behaviour on others, sensitivity to feelings of self and others and taking responsibility for one’s feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Valuing of authenticity and choiceful living
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experimenting with changes in behaviour and learning from one’s own and group’s experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on action rather than abstract interpretation

Gestalt, like T Group is very existential in its approach, grounded as it is in here and now and emphasizing that each person is responsible for himself / herself.

Gestalt believes that the human being is fundamentally healthy and fractures within as he / she journeys through life owing to life’s experiences. While unlike T Group, Gestalt attends to therapy, like T Group the experience is therapeutic and meant to heal.

T Group will gain from understanding the phenomenological approach of Gestalt which focuses on the individual’s reality, aims to increase awareness of both of self and interconnected with others and works with ‘what is.’ Change results from being more fully oneself.

Gestalt is known as therapy without resistance and T Group attempts to help an individual recognise and work through his / her resistance. As in T Group, where the facilitator is unwilling to give the answers so also in Gestalt the therapist sits with the client in his / her ‘creative void’ allowing something new and surprising to emerge.

T Group and Gestalt both focus on integration i.e., helping the individual re-owning all parts of self.

Like T Group, Gestalt emphasizes on experiential learning rather than interpretation or cognitive insights: 'how' rather than 'why.'

Where Gestalt and T Group depart is in the manner of experimenting. Gestalt encourages creative experimentation to embody abstract and generalize ideas. Thus the therapist follows an intuitive process of facilitation.

In Gestalt the belief is that everything is interconnected. By working from this perspective the facilitator, the group and individual can use the power of many connections and resources in a person's life which may have been overlooked as vehicles for change. A small movement in the right place can lead to surprisingly fast, dramatic and long lasting change in the rest of individual's life.

Awareness is also a major tool of Gestalt. Through being more fully present to our body and immediate environment we can experience life with more depth and excitement. Awareness of 'what is,' the obvious, can lead to change without pushing. It involves the acceptance of the fullness of each moment and thus leads to the acceptance of fullness of ourselves.

The expansion of awareness is supported gently. The result is that each person confronts their own choices which lead them to a particular predicament. Gestalt encourages people to take responsibility for their choice and works to expand the range of choice which is possible. The result is a greater sense of personal power and increased creativity in living.

The experimental dimension of Gestalt makes it a little different from T Group, which often times becomes 'a talking therapy.' Abstract ideas are manifested in creative experiments and familiar ways of doing things are expanded by trying out something new. This dimension brings a great deal of colour, innovation and excitement into the process. The emphasis is on immediacy, freshness and playfulness. New possibilities emerge and new skills are developed in a supportive and healing environment.

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(T.T.Srinath underwent intensive Gestalt training between October 2006 and September 2007 at the Northern Rivers Gestalt Institute, Lismore, Australia)