



Letter of support for Gestalt therapy

On the occasion of this fifth international conference on Gestalt therapy research, which is being held today in Hamburg, it seemed important to publicly express the essential principles that characterize Gestalt therapy clinical practice. In the general context of a practice of psychotherapy that tends to become medicalized as well as to want to reduce the overall costs of therapeutic care, the values and working principles that are those of all humanistic psychotherapists must be reaffirmed. This must be done all the more clearly because these values and principles are often called into question even though they are supported by a growing number of psychotherapy researchers.

Gestalt therapy emerged in the 1950s under the impetus of psychoanalysts Fritz and Laura Perls who wanted to promote the emergence of faster and more lasting transformations by giving a central place to the body, to emotion and to lived experience. Today, Gestalt therapy is practiced by tens of thousands of practitioners around the world who - aware of the irreducible singularity of each human being - adjust to each of their clients in order to design a therapeutic trajectory that is always specific.

By maintaining that most of the psychological problems encountered are relational in nature, Gestalt therapy is part of a long tradition that developed in the wake of Freud's work. It differs in its method because it affirms that it is through sufficiently secure, high-intensity emotional experiences within a new and unique relationship that these problems can be resolved.

On the scientific level, it is now proven that psychotherapy does work and that no psychotherapeutic treatment has been shown to be superior to others for all disorders - with a few minor exceptions. In fact, it is now certain that the essential factor of change lies in the quality of the relationship that develops between the patient and his or her therapist and that, in particular, the therapist's ability to adjust moment by moment to the patient's needs and difficulties (responsiveness) is essential. The contribution of these relational factors to the success of the therapy is greater by an order of magnitude than that which can be attached to the type of treatment provided.

This quality of relational adjustment is also one of the factors that makes psychotherapy research so difficult and that randomized clinical trials - which are considered the best methods of evidence in pharmaceutical research - are of little relevance to the field of psychotherapy.

Their conduct actually differs far too much from the conditions of real practice and often leads to inapplicable or erroneous conclusions. This is why any justification of the effectiveness of a psychotherapeutic treatment on the basis of randomized clinical trials alone is fragile and insufficient.

On the other hand, the observational and/or comparative studies that have been conducted consistently show that Gestalt Therapy is as effective a modality as any other.

This is why we, researchers and practitioners in psychotherapy, hereby support Gestalt therapy and consider it a therapeutic modality worthy of being part of the psychotherapeutic care offer.

Hamburg, September 4, 2022



Bruce Wampold

Professor Emeritus of Counseling Psychology at the University of Wisconsin—Madison
Senior Researcher at the Research Institute at Modum Bad Psychiatric Center in Vikersund, Norway.

Distinguished Professional Contributions to Applied Research Award from the American Psychological Association

Distinguished Research Career Award from the Society for Psychotherapy Research

Gold Medal Award for Life Achievement in the Application of Psychology from the American Psychological Foundation



Robert Elliott

Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Toledo (Ohio)

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Past President of the Society for Psychotherapy Research

Distinguished Research Career Award of the Society for Psychotherapy Research

Carl Rogers Award from the APA Division of Humanistic Psychology



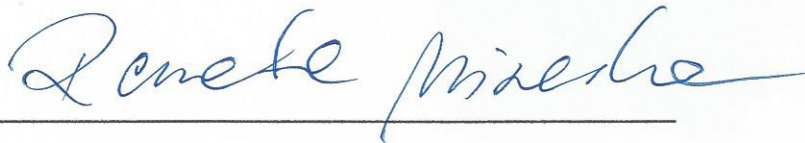
Sibylle Ahlbrecht

President of the German Association for Gestalt



Maryanne Nichols

President of the International Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy



Renata Mizerska

President of the European Association for Gestalt Therapy



Vincent Béja

Chair of the EAGT Research Committee

On behalf of the Conveners of the Fifth International Gestalt Therapy Research Conference

- Hamburg