How long does treatment take?

If Gestalt therapy is suitable for you, the therapist will discuss with you how long treatment is likely to take.

Gestalt therapy is not a ‘quick fix’. Treatment takes time and is closely tailored to individual needs. The length of treatment varies for each person, but can range from a few months to one or two years of weekly or fortnightly meetings, depending on the nature of your problems.

You will usually make an agreement to meet with the therapist for a specific number of sessions or for a specified length of time.

How will I know when it is time to stop seeing the therapist?

Your progress will be monitored closely throughout treatment. Towards the end of the meetings that you have agreed, your therapist will hold a more formal review of your progress and discuss with you whether you are ready to stop therapy or whether you need further help.

For further information:

Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute
www.gpti.org.uk

Contact us

www.awp.nhs.uk

To make a comment or suggestion, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust’s Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01249 468261
Freephone: 0800 073 1778
Email: pals@awp.nhs.uk

This information can be made available in other formats (for example, Braille) or languages on request by calling the PALS number.

This is one of a series of information leaflets on psychological therapies for service users. The therapy is described, what it involves, and the kinds of problem it may be helpful for.
What is Gestalt Therapy?

Gestalt therapy is a type of psychotherapy or ‘talking therapy’. It was originally developed by a psychiatrist, Dr Frederick Perls, and colleagues in the 1950s. It has been developed extensively since then.

Gestalt therapists believe that human beings are essentially healthy and will naturally tend to fulfill their needs and grow and develop. However, people sometimes go through experiences that interfere with this process and create problems in functioning. These problems result in blocks which can interfere with subsequent growth and development.

Gestalt therapy aims to help people by helping them to become aware of and understand these blocks and resume the process of healthy development.

Who is Gestalt Therapy for?

Gestalt therapy is used to treat a wide variety of problems. Common examples of such problems include anxiety disorders, depression and difficulties relating to other people.

Gestalt therapy works best with people who recognise they are having problems and want to work on these difficulties.

What will happen once I have been referred for Gestalt Therapy?

Once you have been referred for Gestalt therapy, you will be sent a letter offering an appointment for an assessment. This will usually involve two or three meetings with a therapist and is to decide whether Gestalt therapy is the right treatment for you.

During the assessment, the therapist will ask you a lot of questions and will try to build up a picture of your problems and how they have developed. They may also ask to see you with a partner or other family member, depending on the nature of your difficulties.

Following the assessment, the therapist will discuss your difficulties with you. They will also discuss whether Gestalt therapy is a suitable treatment for you and whether you want to start therapy.

What does Gestalt Therapy involve?

Gestalt therapy is a talking treatment. It usually involves a series of meetings (called sessions) with a therapist. Most often these meetings will be with you alone, although they may involve a partner or other family member, if appropriate.

In each session you will be asked to bring a problem or issue that you wish to work on which will form a theme for the session. You may come with something specific in mind or this may be an issue that arises while you are there.

Initially, the therapist will ask you to talk about the issue that you have chosen. While you are doing this they will explore it with you and try to see why you are finding it problematic. Based on this, they will then suggest a simple exercise or ‘experiment’ to help you understand more about it and where you are getting blocked. For example, if the issue involves a difficulty in relating to someone else, the experiment might be to role play a recent situation that caused you problems. During an experiment like this, the therapist might make observations and give you feedback to help you understand more about your difficulty and work on it. After such an exercise, there will usually be some time to reflect on the experiment and see what you have learned from it before the session ends.