

## Finding Your Style

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The title Finding Your Style refers to how you want to work with people within 1) your own personality and level of comfort, 2) the training you have received, 3) the requirements of the situation within which you work, 4) what your client or group of clients calls forth from you here and now.

There are many ways to look at style in this context. These include an examination of language use, the way we greet and take leave of our clients, the way we set up our workspace, the kinds of interventions we choose, our attitudes towards transference and counter transference, and countless others. And the topic of focus this morning is the ways in which we attend to body process in our practice.

Laura Perls, the cofounder of Gestalt therapy, said, “You must be a body to be somebody.” And Paul Goodman, in Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality wrote “...in therapy, one tries to extend the area of body awareness.”

As practitioners, we may consider attention to body experience along a continuum from most subtle to most active:

1) Proprioception and sensory awareness, which grew from the work of Elsa Gindler and her students. These are approaches, which direct people to feel what is here-and-now, without judgment or interpretation.

2) Direct body experiments. These are experiments which support people in finding new physical experiences – encountering the novel – through such procedures as exaggerating, provoking, finding the boundary between comfort and discomfort. Approaches such as Feldenkreis method, Alexander technique, bioenergetics, and exploring infant developmental movement patterns come under this category.

3) Body as metaphor, in which physical experience, language and imagination are worked with all together, through such classic examples as “be your heart”, “could you speak as your foot?” or would you explore the statement you made “my brother is a pain in the neck”.

4) Expressive movement, including dance, authentic movement, mime, and voice work in which body and imagination are attended to simultaneously.

These categories are a teaching device to make it possible for us to initiate a discussion around including body experience as an integral part of practice in Gestalt therapy. In life, of course, these categories are artificial since all aspects of human functioning flow together in an emerging field.