

V International Interdisciplinary Gestalt Congress

MOVING EDGES OF GESTALT PSYCHOTHERAPY

— Fields and strategies of application —

21-24 September, St Julian's, Malta



INTRODUCTION

The 5th International Interdisciplinary Gestalt Congress will be held in Malta between 21st and 24th September 2023. The topic of this congress will be “Moving edges of Gestalt psychotherapy – Fields and strategies of application.” We are proud to be hosting Gestalt practitioners and practitioners from various fields, writers, researchers, and participants from many different professional and cultural backgrounds. This event is organized by the European Accredited Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute Malta, EAPTI-GPTIM (MFHEA 2014-FHI-020).

EAPTI-GPTIM holds several academic programs through collaboration with various Gestalt centres, which form part of the EAPTI-GPTIM Network (EGN). The EGN now regularly organizes these events, which provide a platform on which modern achievements in the development of Gestalt psychotherapy are presented and discussed by various presenters. We believe that these eminent experts in the field will contribute to the formation of new psychotherapists and provide continuous professional development for already established psychotherapists by discussing their experience, work, and research. For all other participants, we believe that the experience at the congress will be an inspiration in further work.

We look forward to meeting you there.

On behalf of the Organizational Committee
Director of the V IIGC
Dr. Lidija Pecotić

ORGANIZERS

EAPTI-GPTIM HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

EAGTI-GPTIM was founded in 1996 by Lidija Pecotić, with the aim of providing professional training in Gestalt Psychotherapy. Over the years, it has grown into a Higher Education Institution based on academic and experiential learning. In teaching, learning and practicing psychotherapy, a holistic, client-centred, dialogic and contextual approach is central to the institute's values and philosophy, whereby the focus is on the total person as an individual and in relation to others. The EAPTI-GPTIM is fully recognised and officially accredited as a Higher Education Institution by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). The institute is licensed to deliver and award programmes which lead to qualifications classified at Level 7 and Level 8 (Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) and European Qualification Framework (EQF)). Moreover, it is accredited by the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) and the European Association of Gestalt Therapy (EAGT).

EAPTI-GPTIM NETWORK

EAPTI-GPTIM Network or EGN was established in 2018 as the result of the unique relationship of mutual trust, friendship, respect and support between Dr. Pecotić and her original group of colleagues, who are now head of the various institutes in the different countries, or their senior practitioners.

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Association for Gestalt Psychotherapy Montenegro

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OPENING SPEECHES

Lidija Pecotić

Director and Founder of GPTIM

Lidija Pecotić is an international Gestalt trainer, supervisor, and therapist. She has a Masters's degree in Clinical Psychology (University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1986). She completed her Doctorate Studies in Clinical Psychology (University of Belgrade, Serbia, 1994). She is the founder and Director of EAPTI-GPTIM Malta, NCFHE 2014-FHI-020 since 1996, and EAPTI-SEB Belgrade since 1990. She co-founded various Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institutes and Professional Psychotherapy Associations. She is the Editor of two Gestalt Journals in Malta and Serbia and the Founder of the EAPTI-GPTIM Network.

Welcome to the 5th International Interdisciplinary Gestalt Psychotherapy Congress, titled 'The Moving Edges of Gestalt Psychotherapy: Fields and Strategies of Application'. Greetings to all participants, including our students, colleagues, lecturers, guests, volunteers, and technical support. We have participants from 23 countries here in Malta and online, so I also extend my greetings to our online guests and followers. I would like to share with you my personal reflections inspired by the theme of our Congress.

Introduction

"The world we currently live in has shown us that what once seemed impossible can become possible. In this era, where various ideas, desires, and needs can be regulated, we enjoy several advantages. One of these advantages is that we can legitimately and without fear or shame discuss in psychotherapy phenomena such as the soul, spiritual energy, human field dynamics, compassion, metaphysical Love, vibration, frequency, enlightenment. We can also draw inspiration from interdisciplinary

experiences and knowledge to seek answers to fundamental questions such as ‘Who are we?’ or ‘Who am I?’

Without answers to these questions, the theories, methods, and practices aimed at creating a more conscious and enlightened human community often fail to reach the destinations their creators and inventors hoped to achieve throughout history.”

Nikola Tesla emphasized understanding the mysteries of our existence by studying the invisible, contemplating energy, vibration, and frequency. Human beings possess creative power that brings existence to all things and a consciousness that is a creative divine force demanding exploration. Advancing human consciousness is profoundly transformative, penetrating the secrets of nature and having control over matter. Our awareness generates energy that transforms both ourselves and the world around us. New ideas often emerge in solitude, devoid of external influences on the mind. The continuous flow of information through modern technology poses a danger, preventing us from connecting with our inner selves.

Milliards of individuals form a collective Entity connected by unseen bonds. Peace among nations in this Entity arises from elevating universal consciousness and uniting all human races. Individual enlightenment loses significance; we must progress together.

How does one activate the power that elevates massive consciousness? What constitutes sufficiently elevated consciousness? Psychotherapy can contribute, but it requires a critical mass of profoundly conscious individuals dedicated to sustainability, health, and fulfillment for all. The Internet connects us, but we cannot force self-awareness and consciousness development using commercial methods. We must assess whether philosophy can effectively guide actions within a collective Entity. Inner maturity and functional dialogue within the Self and between Self

functions are lacking, hindering action. The challenge lies in a lack of widespread understanding, specifically, a lack of consciousness. We require education and therapy to support us in this direction. As gestalt therapists, we play a role in facilitating this transformative process. Psychotherapy isn't just about addressing pain and illness; it's also about elevating awareness into consciousness.

True transformation requires a collective effort. We must increase the critical mass of individuals dedicated to this mission. The Internet provides an advantage, but commercial methods may not be effective. Education and therapy beyond the clinical setting can contribute to this cause.

We have created nuclear and cyber weapons, caused species extinction, triggered climate change, fostered social injustice, and witnessed various forms of harm. Humanity's existence is endangered. We are collectively stuck in an existential impasse, disrupting the natural order and harmony. We must acknowledge our role and commitment to a better world.

Humanity's purpose is to embark on a journey of self-discovery, expanding its consciousness. Enlightenment is earned through conduct, insight, and effort. Therapy, including Gestalt therapy, supports this process. A critical mass of consciousness is necessary for success, but we cannot force growth in others.

To support this process, we must understand who we are and establish a certain level of consciousness. Only by doing so can we leave behind a better, more sustainable, peaceful, and enlightened world for the next generation.

Lidija Pecotić

OPENING SPEECHES

Charles Cassar

Chairperson of the Psychotherapy Profession Board, Malta.

Charles Cassar is a Maltese warranted psychotherapist, licensed to practice Gestalt psychotherapy, Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. He is also a European certified psychotherapist and is currently honorary member of EAP. He is a recent past member of the Executive Committee of EAP (European Association of Psychotherapy) a position held since 2000, and Past President of EAP elected in February 2019. He has held the position of President for the Malta Association of Psychotherapists (MAP) from 2000 to 2021. Dr. Charles Cassar has been the Chairperson of the Psychotherapy Profession Board Malta since the inception of the board in 2018.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

The evolution of Gestalt into coaching and consulting

Herb Stevenson

This is a brief conversation on the evolution of Gestalt into Coaching and Consulting developed by the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland. In 1960, Edwin Nevis and Richard Wallen began to apply Gestalt concepts to organization development. From these initial forays into coaching and organizational development, evolved Nevis' Gestalt Consulting.

This presentation will highlight the basic concepts that have transitioned from Gestalt therapy and evolved over time to create Gestalt Coaching and Consulting as a practical and growing field of study and application. The evolution included expanding the use of the unit of work and the cycle of experience.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

About cores and edges of ‘Gestalt Therapy’ of 1951: A review of central concepts as well as spotlights on unattended edges of the ‘Theory of the Self’ 72 years later

Bertram Müller

A psychotherapeutic concept stays alive if it's constantly developed and creatively adjusted to the upcoming demands of a changing field. Exploring the unattended edges of Gestalt therapy asks us to reconsider its roots and essence.

Where do we need to bring forward improvements 72 years after to keep this unique conception as ‘state of art’?

As an introductory statement, I will mark some critical issues which seem to be important: How does the ‘Theory of the Self’ serve us as a primary ‘navigating tool’ for therapeutic practice in our time? Why is it essential to differentiate and sharpen the meaning of the notions we use, such as ‘Personality’ from ‘Personality function’, and so on? Why and how does the aesthetic perspective become a necessary state of mind to effect a psychic cure? When do we also need to support the critical cognition of clients, tuning their will and ethical responsibility? Does Gestalt therapy need to open more to therapeutic concepts of learning and technique of repetition to stabilize the new insides? What can we learn from neuroscience to support control of anxiety, shame, and guilt in the early spring of their dysfunctional development?

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Gestalt therapy and the call of freedom: the aesthetic of contacting

Dan Bloom

According to the 18th century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, we are “born free yet everywhere in chains.” By making the freedom of the emerging figures of contacting, the heart of our clinical approach, Gestalt therapy has placed itself at the center of the call for human beings to be free.

This freedom is that of *figure of contact*, emergent at the contact-boundary of the situation, energized by possibilities and impossibilities, fullness and emptiness, affirmation and negation — and even peace and war.

Clinically, we see this in the aesthetic qualities of the forming figures themselves — in their force, fluidity, harmony, grace, brightness, rhythm, tone. And since freedom, as such, is one of the existentials of our being-in-the-world-with-others, it binds us to one another as persons able to be responsive to the suffering of the other. This a freedom out of which a clinical ethic emerges.

This *Plenary Lecture and Webinar* will explore these points through didactic presentation, large and small group experiences, and discussions. It is hoped that participants will come away with a sense that Gestalt therapy is a powerful instrument for human freedom.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Psychotherapy in times of crisis

Peter Schulthess

As Gestalt therapists we are always confronted with persons in Crisis. We are kind of Crisis managers and enable our clients to become their own managers of their crisis. As psychotherapists we are holder of hope in difficult processes. This is needed and challenging especially when we are facing social and climate situations that affect also us as therapists. What is the role of psychotherapy in society in times of unstable ground? How can we fulfill it? How can we distinguish between our own anxieties and those of our clients? How can we turn anxiety into excitement and hope for a good future?

I will relate to an understanding of crisis in Gestalt therapy, including what personality function of the therapist is needed. I will relate to central concepts of contemporary Gestalt therapy with the dialogical approach and the importance of relating. I will also refer to some research results, that show how useful Gestalt therapy is in working with depressed and anxious persons.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

A review of coaching models

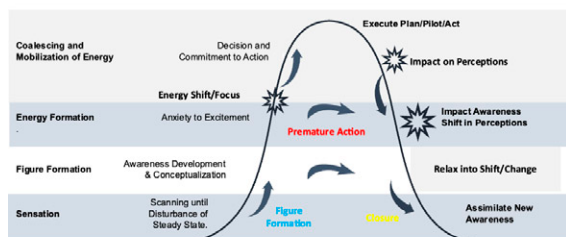
Herb Stevenson

Under a coaching paradigm, if an individual is involved in identifying problems, in working out and applying solutions for them and in reviewing the results, the more complete and the more long-lasting the learning is. This form of self-learning tends to bring about learning with a deeper understanding and a more likely shift in behavior.

The workshops will review common coaching models such as the GOOD and GROW models before delving into the models developed at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland, the Unit of Work, and the Cycle of Experience.

Whereas all coaching models are more effective when the practitioner is fully present to the moment and to the client, the Unit of Work and Cycle of Experience (awareness) include an implicit transitioning space (Winnicott) that supports the emergence of unfinished experiences or insights that completely shift the sense of being of the clients. To complete the cycle of experience or to resolve any unfinished business, requires that the client and Gestaltist remain firmly in the present moment, here and now. We will apply these models to real situations and with audience support, create interactive processes from the audience.

Cycle of Experience



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LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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Psychodrama beyond psychotherapy

Tomi Janežič

Psychodrama is a worldwide, recognised group psychotherapeutic method, developed by Jacob Levy Moreno and based on his theory of roles, which uses acting as a tool, but psychodrama techniques can also be applied in contexts that are not classical psychotherapy.

Theatre director and psychodrama psychotherapist Tomi Janežič, professor at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana, has worked in the field of application of psychodrama and group analysis to artistic and art-pedagogical processes for the last two decades. These applications involve exploration and facilitation of artistic (and learning) processes in different artistic fields through psychotherapeutic techniques, with the objective of safer, healthier, more functional and more fulfilling artistic processes.

The lecture discusses needs, difficulties, challenges and potentialities in individual and group creative processes and includes videos of applications of psychodrama techniques and group analysis in art. It is followed by general discussion.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

From surviving trauma to creatively adjusting to the future

Rose Galea

How do Gestalt therapy experiments help to integrate trauma in the here and now with a better outlook towards the future? Recent research revealed that Gestalt therapy within a group setting focused on trauma, supports the integration of the trauma symptoms. Therapeutic aspects that support the integration of trauma from a Gestalt therapy perspective include working with clients providing: Safety and distancing, Embodiment, Validation of the traumatic Self, Acceptance and Transformation, Connection with others, and a Better outlook for the future. The research shows that Gestalt therapy supports the integration of trauma. This was collaborated from the results of the (Impact of Event Scale — Revised) IESR scores which revealed a reduction in the symptoms of trauma for the experimental group compared to the scores of the IES-R of the control group. The significance of the study is that Gestalt therapy supports the integration of trauma, and symptoms of trauma were reduced according to the IES-R results. The Progressive Process experiment was used. It focused on embodiment and guided visual imagery of the self in the future, which supported the participants in having a better outlook towards the future. Aspects of the research are presented during the Plenary Lecture and Workshop.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Dialogic leadership – the new competency of ultimate leaders

Ivana Vidaković

Talia Bar-Yoseph Levine

Leadership has been studied for decades in terms of what leadership is really about, whether one is born or made a leader, whether one can be trained to become leader, and what characteristics a successful leader possesses. More recently, contemporary organizational leadership models have embraced the relational emphasis that Gestalt therapy has always embodied.

What leadership qualities are needed in our “new normal” reality: the post-pandemic era, overall business and social VUCA environment, on-going uncertainty and the world at the edge of global conflict. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of the field create a sense of lacking a solid ground. Fast changing technology, working remotely, lack of opportunities for spontaneous exchange and human touch, lack of boundaries of work/personal life, lead to increase of loneliness, anxiety, depression, projections, and so on. The changes are faster than ever before and people are looking for contact, security and trust. This also changes expectations from today’s leaders. Researchers found that having human contact with warmth, together with competent helping professionals, are curative per se. How does that reflect on a leadership role? Dialogical leadership engages and helps people evolve within the changing times.

In this workshop we will combine theory with demonstration of dialogue and experiential learning, creating a space for personal exchange and growth.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Psychotherapy: From healing the individual toward healing the world

Sanja Bratina

Margareta Mesić

Inevitably, changing context with severe crises has impacted world global mental health on all levels. Exceeded expectations and the increasing need for psychotherapy, made counselling and psychotherapy an almost unavoidable form of self-support for individuals, groups and society in general. Psychotherapists are working hard trying to help people feel grounded in social chaos, while at the same time trying to find ground for themselves too. Can we actually heal the world by healing individuals? Is that enough? Is psychotherapy enough? Our aim is to explore how gestalt psychotherapy can go beyond itself. Participants in this workshop will search for ways in which psychotherapy can provide more to the world in which we live. Also, we intend to explore the ground that we are making for our clients and ourselves in this quest for awareness, responsibility, wholeness and survival.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Men don't cry

Vladimir Milosević

“Men don't cry” is a film based on real-life experiences of war veterans. This film was created through the use of psychodrama. After the war in former Yugoslavia a number of war veterans suffering from PTSD were invited to participate in group therapeutic treatment. Members were from different sides of the war conflict. Present in this group were ex-soldiers from the Serbian, Bosnian and Croat army.

In the movie they are engaged in a psychodrama group. In the preparation of the film and also in the film itself, the psychodrama method is the main tool of the therapeutic and reconciliation processes for the men. The film won a number of awards in different international film festivals: Carlove Vary, Bratislava, Rome, Istanbul, Zagreb, Ljubljana, amongst others.

After watching the movie, the audience will be invited to a round table discussion.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Creativity and Gestalt psychotherapy: Meet me in the sand

Atina Tasevska

Natasha Madzevska

Sand Play therapy is a form of counseling or psychotherapy that uses symbolic play to communicate with and help people, especially children, to prevent or resolve psychosocial challenges. This helps them to move towards better social integration, growth and development, emotional modulation, and trauma resolution. A Gestalt psychotherapist observes a client playing with toys to determine the cause of the disturbed behavior. Because trauma is often debilitating, directed sand play therapy works to create change in the present, without the lengthy healing process often required in traditional sand play therapy.

According to the psychodynamic view, people (especially children) will engage in play behavior to work through their interior issues and anxieties. In relation to this viewpoint, play therapy can be used as a self-help mechanism for adults as well. Across the helping professions, sand-tray has historically been used as a play-based intervention with children. As Gestalt psychotherapists expand sand-tray work with a variety of populations and client issues, its power as a tool in healing is increasingly realized and growing in the literature. Our intent here is to underscore specific techniques used by the Gestalt psychotherapist in processing tray work with adult clients. The emphasis is on how Gestalt methods are used to promote the client's deepening of self-awareness and integration of unknown or negated aspects of self.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Exploring the influence of Gestalt therapy: What clients say?

Elvira Duraković-Belko

The effectiveness of psychotherapy is mostly evaluated by cognitive-behavioural models, while the other clinical approaches — due to their specific theory and methodology — have until recently, mostly distanced themselves from scientific research. This applies to most traditional therapy approaches, including Gestalt therapy. However, in recent years, the awareness of the importance of scientific evaluation of therapy has grown in all approaches, and a balance in meta-analytic publications has been achieved. That lead to changes in the field of research within Gestalt therapy, encouraging clinicians to become more orientated towards the scientific evaluation of their work.

The study presented focusses on the evaluation of Gestalt therapy applied to individual work with clients. The goal is to explore how clients describe the outcomes of their therapy, and what factors contribute to their positive changes. With that purpose, a brief structured interview will be done with about twenty clients who have finished or are in a late stage of the therapy. The questions will refer to the achieved goals/changes as well as to the variables that might have contributed towards therapeutic changes.

In accordance with the main meta-analytic findings, it is expected for clients to report about the positive effects of Gestalt therapy. We hope to gain better insight into different aspects of change and also to identify factors that appear to contribute to such changes.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

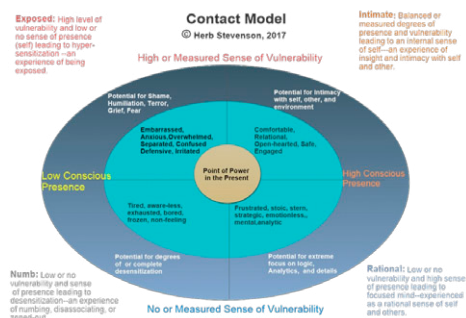
Coaching at the point of contact

Herb Stevenson

This workshop will focus on coaching at the point of contact using a correlation of the degree of vulnerability to the degree of self-awareness, often referred to as presence. Therapists have found the model useful as well.

Over the last 30 years, I have observed what seemed like indelible moments with clients and discovered a dynamic — an ongoing dance surrounding the intimate edge — between vulnerability and presence that, when balanced, can lead to a moment of insight or intimacy. But when this ongoing dance is out of balance, it can result in the client and/or coach feeling embarrassment, humiliation, or shame.

As shown below, the Contact Model can become a tracking or discovery tool for understanding one’s internal process. When applied to the concept of contact, we realize that even though it is often noted that we are always making contact, this model seeks to reveal the constant interplay between presence and vulnerability that supports making contact that leads to insight for individuals as well as couples. The focus of the workshop will be to explore the model through real examples from therapeutic or coaching situations.



LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Diagnosing through gestural expression: An aesthetic and phenomenological approach

Ruella Frank

Experience is never given, it is made by each of us in our unique, individual ways and within the varied situations we live. In the process, meanings are formed. To reveal the meanings that fill one's world, we turn to gestural expression and invite what is background to become figural. Following the gesture, arising from head, limbs, face, and posture, we find meanings that either enhance verbal expression or often say far more.

In this webinar, we explore how to analyze gestural expressions — a form of psychic unfolding — to reveal crucial information within the emerging therapy relationship. We will discover how gestures outline an intention that, if successful, can be understood by the other in reciprocal communication. Exploring gestural patterns demonstrates the freely, moving, expressive and developing power of our moving-sensing body. Gestures express what we “can do” with the other and what we imagine the other “can do” with us.

Furthering our understanding of the significance of gestures, we look to infant-parent patterns, which underlie and demonstrate the dynamic meaning-making properties of our adult moving bodies. We learn the functional similarity between these primordial gestures and those emerging within the patient-therapist dyad.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Psychotherapy: Poison or benefit for artists and creative people?

Bertram Müller

Gestalt therapy was created by artists and made for artists. Yet, exceptionally creative people often reject therapeutic support because they fear being 'adjusted and made normal' by psychotherapy. Gestalt therapy is a conception of how to get help to 'adjust to oneself', strengthen one's self-efficacy, make one's unique ideas real, and create and care for an individual profile and lifestyle.

The workshop will primarily be about the participant's interests. I will share what I have learned by working for 40 years in the field of art:

How to tap one's unattended resources, individual edges, and creative power into the creative state of the middle mode and beyond.

How to use the concept of the 'contact cycle' to structure creative processes? Which specific cognitive, emotional, deliberate, and social properties do exceptional artists need in order to be strong when performing? How to shape one's artistic personality within the current cultural aesthetic and social, ethical discourse. What are the psychological aspects of becoming successful or at least famous? What are and how do you overcome psychic crises typical for creative people?

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

How do I support myself?

Sanela Selmanović Podrug

We are witnessing many changes in the macro and micro worlds and it is crucial to keep developing own capacities and competencies. However, Gestalt therapy is offering contact as the way to manifest own authenticity and share it with others. The key question of this workshop is what awareness about our own support system we have in this moment and how we participate in contact. Considering that contact includes the presence of other, experience with other and appears between, how do I support myself to keep my present self while exchange is occurring with other.

The workshop invites participants to the topic of self-support by using metaphor, dialogue, working in pairs and groups. The aim of the workshop is to expand participants' awareness of their own resources for self-support and how s/he is supported in contact.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Gestalt therapy as applied phenomenology

Mikela Gonzi

This lecture discusses Gestalt therapy, defined as an ‘applied phenomenology’. Participants will be invited to reflect on how one’s stance is usually influenced or informed by the philosophical view integrated or introjected through training and practice. The lecture acknowledges that phenomenology is complex, containing within it different starting points and perspectives that shift and change over time. It highlights that both phenomenology and Gestalt therapy have their own growing edges and asks ‘what are the implications of this today?’

The ideas guiding this lecture, emerge from discussions held with a philosopher who is an expert in phenomenology. It also seeks to provide some light on the different terminology that has been integrated into Gestalt literature and workshops over time. Being knowledgeable of the nuances within the development of phenomenology and in tandem, of Gestalt therapy, opens up a possibility to position oneself as trainee, therapist, teacher or supervisor, from a place that holds a wider perspective of the whole therapy experience for an authentic, informed, richer and meaningful experience.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

The moving edges of life

Joyce Sciberras

Welcome to Malta, an ancient island whose edges, both physically and metaphorically, have moved through time.

‘Moving edges’ implies a dynamic flow, shifting focus, letting go, not necessarily of only the old but also in choosing what to embrace over a myriad of possibilities. Then there are life events which contribute to shape our movement. And yet, are there more complex and inclusive ways of considering ‘moving edges’?

Possibly considering a holographic viewpoint which involves observing and enfolding multidimensional perspectives, ideally aspiring towards a creatively indifferent stance? And how about the forever engaging presence with its wisdom?

How are we in the moving edges of our life as psychotherapists and as human beings? What defines us as individuals moving creatively, or not, in the space and time of life? Are we able to enfold our life narrative in order to come to our fullness? Are we living long or existing long?

Learning how to live is a lifelong experience.

This workshop is an invitation towards an explorative journey into living wider not only longer.

What helps you live the vibrancy of your life?

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

‘War’ against COVID-19: metaphor analysis

Olja Jovanović

Gestalt therapy perceives the self as a process that takes place at the contact boundary with the environment. Therefore, the Gestalt therapy perspective can give us valuable insight into the process of the self in relation to global disturbances in the environment, such as the pandemic.

In this study, I explore students’ experiences of the pandemic COVID-19 and their process of meaning-making through a metaphor. Students from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade were invited to complete the online survey, which included three open-ended questions about students’ experiences during the pandemic times. The narratives of 31 students were inductively analysed using reflective thematic analysis.

Findings demonstrate that the villainization of the pandemic COVID-19 is the most prominent in students’ narratives, while the metaphor of a war or a dangerous wild beast was most often used to describe students’ experiences, suggesting that the pandemic is experienced as a life-threatening event. Moreover, the pandemic is often described as powerful, ill-intentioned and uncontrollable, influencing the participants to start withdrawing from their environment. A student’s self is described as evolving over time as a consequence of changes induced due to the pandemic, with emotional sentiments varying in their tone.

The findings will be discussed in the context of the pandemic COVID-19 as a collective trauma, causing discontinuity with some aspects of our previous lives, but at the same time being a shared experience that slowly becomes integrated into the fabric of humans today.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Can we reach a change within us with a smile?

Brankica Šaljic Milenković

Jelena Petrović

Connecting some of the results from two doctoral thesis there came an idea for a workshop that we would like to present in Congress. Having analysed clients' experiences of elements of change during the psychotherapeutic process, together with the way in which humour can impact the experience of it, we saw a space in which we could, together with participants, explore and share some of the interesting findings.

The aim of the workshop is to share our idea of the topic through an interactive use of short form questions and experiments with a group of maximum 30 participants. The idea is to enable participants to experientially reflect on how elements in a session together with a smile, may bring change within us, clients and therapists. This and other similar questions may provide us with further answers.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Towards the end: the journey taken by all

Talia Bar-Yoseph Levine

Be it the ultimate journey leading to death, to ending of therapeutic relationship, or any other clear expected ending – most struggle with letting go, saying goodbye, accepting the given, let alone incorporating the prospect of ending as defining life.

As Gestalt humans we rehearse with closed eyes: “What ‘is’ can be, only thanks to what not”. Differently said, life/therapy/relationship is experienced fully thanks to the boundary that the ending draws to it. The discrepancy between what we know and how we feel is where the problem stems from, combined with a common wish to avoid the feelings endings evoke. The process of ending is more difficult the more connected we are to the one who is leaving.

As therapists (consultants, friends, patients...) we are bound to be able to sustain whatever the client (other) brings to the meeting. It becomes more of a challenge when ending is on the cards, as ending touches each and every-one of us rather deeply while also reminds us of our and other significant deaths.

The *Plenary Lecture*, followed by the *Workshop* invites participants to address their inner quest towards saying goodbye as the leaving or the one that is left behind. There will be space to think, experience, explore, consult and simply be.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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Turn and face the stranger

Sanja Bratina

The actual challenging world context, with multiple severe crises, has provoked mental health on all levels. There are exceeded expectations and need for psychotherapy for individuals, groups and society in general. We, as psychotherapists, are working hard trying to help people feel grounded in, for many, new and strange situations. At the same time, we need to find ground for ourselves too. How can we do that through relation and contact with each other? Is current relation field pregnant enough to let us meet the stranger and expand our awareness on different levels? How can we endure our quest for the awareness, responsibility, wholeness and survival of our clients and ourselves? We are going to share reflection on these questions during this session.

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Gestalt psychotherapy – the eternal eight

Emilija Stoimenova Canevska

Gestalt therapy is a humanistic, phenomenological, existential, and holistic approach that has been around for more than 2500 years, as Petruska Clarkson pointed out.

However, the relational approach embedded in the core of Gestalt therapy is infinite. The use of the “number eight” symbolizes balance, eternity, and order. It emphasizes the richness of the contact, for all our abilities and possibilities. Serge Ginger used another infinite symbol to represent contact, the number π . The awareness about the eternal eight could be the key to point out relational patterns that, when re-experienced in the present, could open up reparative possibilities that could bring joy in the here and now and spread the seed for the future. Its understanding from both ends could bring the psychotherapy a better and uninterrupted experience of cycle to the whole process, integrating limitless options for healthier well-being.

The visual representation of the eternal eight could encourage both therapists and clients to explore the maintenance of relational patterns. The metaphor behind it emphasizes the never-ending interruption, the possibility of overcoming and changing it. The approach encourages the involved parties to sensitize, raise awareness, explore introjects, accept them as they are, identify what belongs to whom, support reaching out, and grasp and assimilate with satisfaction.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

The whole intelligence of Gestalt therapy

Malcolm Parlett

Gestalt therapy's emphasis on the organism/environment field dominates our approach theoretically and practically. Given multiple Earth crises (e.g. over-heating and climate instability, bio-diversity losses, violent conflicts, epidemics, food shortages and global inequalities), it's not surprising that so many –especially young people –are depressed, suicidal, feel anxious or confused about their lives. Whatever our world future may turn out to be, one thing is certain: that people will continue to need places of safety and sanity, with supportive conditions that enable them to learn to live as creatively and responsibly as they can. Gestalt practitioners –therapists, coaches, OD consultants –are field-oriented specialists, and know what is needed to create and nurture fields supportive of healing and adventure, of courage, love, and spirit. They have learned to be situationally flexible and attentive to needs; truthful and contactful in relating; feeling, sensate, and grounded in their bodies; self-recognising and aesthetically attuned; and daringly experimental when judged necessary. As gestalt specialists we have acquired such 'Whole Intelligence' and need to draw upon and demonstrate it, creating strong and sustainable fields, and teaching others (including non-gestaltists) how to do so too.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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From neuroscience to psychotherapy: emotional regulation

Nadica Pop-Jordanova

The established opinion is that emotions are the gift given to us by nature in order to help us connect with other people. They are constantly generated, usually by stimuli in our interpersonal as well as external world. Problems raised in our relationships initiate emotions to help us fix those problems. Almost all forms of human psychopathology are associated with dysregulated emotions. Emotional dysregulation occurs due to the failure to apply appropriate cognitive, attentive, and behavioural regulatory strategies.

The brain regulates emotions through a biological mechanism. Emotions rise in intensity, peak, and then go flat once the emotion adaptive action tendency has been expressed. The aim of the therapist is to help clients express, face and regulate their emotions, and channel them into healthy actions.

The idea of this presentation is to gather contributions from both affective neuroscience and psychotherapy in order to explain the ways how our emotions become dysregulated in life and can become regulated through psychotherapy.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

From disappointment to curiosity

Michael Vincent Miller

Disappointment and curiosity are often experienced as contraries or polarities. But they are more than either of those. They are alternately dark and light temporal moments and events, inevitable ones for most of us, emerging from our existence in an ever-changing field of possibilities. We will explore through lecture and discussion how they play out and relate to each other in the life cycle, shaping aspects of our lives with much force, especially in our intimacies. We will also look at ways in which our understanding of them can be illumined and deepened by examining them from the aesthetic basis particular to Gestalt therapy.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Building bridges beyond the therapeutic room through Gestalt mentoring and supervision

Rose Falzon

The Plenary Lecture and Workshop envisage to explore experiences, narratives and phenomena related to Gestalt psychotherapy, in contemporary society, in humanistic professions and one's personal narratives, to inspire participants to further reflexivity and personal and professional growth, and to further develop the use of Gestalt as a bridge beyond the therapeutic room.

Part 1 of the workshop will be in lecture format covering the main aspects emerging from my Doctoral study entitled Supervision apprised through the Gestalt Paradigm informing Mentoring in diverse Humanistic Professions: A Narrative Inquiry. The research endeavor set out to attain understanding and insight regarding the efficacy of supervision as experienced and perceived by seasoned Gestalt Practitioners and/or supervisors, and its contribution to their professional and personal wellbeing and growth. Informed by these narratives, this study then explored the efficacy of such support practices by means of mentoring apprised through the Gestalt paradigm in their diverse humanistic fields.

Part 2 of the workshop encompasses experiential exercises, discussions and collaborative exploration, reflexivity and understanding. Participants will experience models using the Gestalt framework applicable to their own personal and professional growth in diverse humanistic fields.

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Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Soul therapy

Thomas Moore

The exact meaning of the word “psycho-therapy” is “soul-care.” The word “care” implies that therapy is a heart activity, not an act of the mind or will. Above all, therapists bring a caring attitude toward their involvement with a client. The therapist needs two main qualities: serenity and neutrality. Of course, the therapeutic relationship is complex, and the psychoanalytic idea of transference is useful. The encounter is full of fantasies from the past and present on the part of both therapist and client.

There are also spiritual issues to work through: possible family religious influences and attitudes toward meaning, purpose, and mortality. The therapist is sometimes a spiritual guide, as he or she works with stories from a client’s history, even mythic narratives that run deep. A knowledge of mythology can be useful both for these stories and for dreams that can be at the heart of therapy. One has to be careful not to reduce therapy to a technical process but to include the mysteries in a person’s life.

Therefore, the education of a therapist could include attention to the arts and the spiritual traditions. Ultimately, the therapist is a soul guide, much like what the Irish call *anam cara*, a special kind of friendship, or *philia*, that involves paying attention to the person’s destiny as it unfolds.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Psychotherapy in times of crisis

Peter Schulthess

As Gestalt therapists we are always confronted with persons in Crisis. We are kind of Crisis managers and enable our clients to become their own managers of their crisis. As psychotherapists we are holder of hope in difficult processes. This is needed and challenging especially when we are facing social and climate situations that affect also us as therapists. What is the role of psychotherapy in society in times of unstable ground? How can we fulfill it? How can we distinct between our own anxieties and those of our clients? How to turn anxiety into excitement and hope for a good future?

I will relate to an understanding of crisis in Gestalt therapy. What personality function of the therapist is needed? And I will relate to central concepts of contemporary Gestalt therapy with the dialogical approach and the importance of relating and holding contact. I will also refer to some research results, that show how useful Gestalt therapy is in working with depressed and anxious persons.

Related to my lecture of Friday this workshop will give space for exchange, discussion and self-experiential work.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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Essential cores and unattended edges of Gestalt therapy, 72 years later

Bertram Müller

Herb Stevenson

Sanja Bratina

The world has changed since 72 years ago. Then, this unique Gestalt therapeutic tree of knowledge and its approach to social-therapeutic care was planted. Since then, how did the Gestalt therapy community preserve the anthropological roots of this tree of knowledge, its theoretical trunk, and methodological branches? What further proceeded to foster its growth and bear new fruits within its therapeutic domains at the edges and beyond its original field of psychotherapy?

How are we prepared to support clients who are confronted with an increase in cultural diversity, individualism, overexploitation of natural resources, wars, a global pandemic, a lack of personal connectedness, and a decrease in social justice to cope in the future with the negative fallout of those overwhelming challenges.

Which of the new proposed conceptions are congruent and vital enough to bring the developments of the 'theoretical and methodological conception of Gestalt therapy' forward, which would also serve as a home base for new domains of psycho-social therapeutic care, personal growth, and meaningful human relations.

One central message of this round table discussion is about:

'Gestalt Therapy 1951 plus'

What is already on the table: enjoy getting involved in an ardent fight for your truth concerning different opinions!

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Structure and functions of the aesthetic experience

Bojana Todorović

Slobodan Marković

Aesthetic experience is defined as an experience qualitatively different from everyday experience. It includes strong fascination with an aesthetic object (high arousal and attention), appraisal of the symbolic reality of an object (high cognitive engagement), and a strong feeling of unity with the aesthetic object.

Two parallel levels of aesthetic information processing are proposed. On the first level two sub-levels of narrative are processed, story and symbolism. The second level has two sub-levels, perceptual associations and detection of compositional regularities. In addition, emotional processing is also included in our model: the aesthetic emotion is defined as an affective evaluation in the process of symbolism appraisal or the detection of compositional regularities. Elements of the aesthetic experience are also present in the therapeutic relation. The aesthetic value of the psychotherapy process is followed by formation of the good forms or gestalts, from experiences that are unintegrated or unfinished. Within an interaction of the therapist and the client these experiences can be transformed, integrated and become “beautiful”.

Structure, function and interventions from the relational field will be discussed as a criterion of aesthetic experience in the therapy process.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Our human superpower: Gestalt, evolution and the social brain

Gordon Wheeler

The convergence of a dozen research disciplines over the past generation — contemporary neuroscience, comparative anthropology, evolutionary theory, climatology, dendrology, paleontology, campfire archeology, and more — gives us a much fuller picture now of our species development and brain capacities. We can now say definitively that it was the demands of social complexity that drove the rapid expansion of the human brain (especially the tripling in size of the pre-frontal cortex in the space of roughly a million years).

The result: a brain adapted to deal with social/relational issues and problems at a mathematically fantastic level of complexity. In addition, this evolved organ, which mediates so much of our human contact with our worlds (both “inner” and “outer” realms of experience), operates largely without the simplifying effect of instinct: fixed patterns of behavior which are inborn, and/or triggered by a single stimulus input. This makes our complexity challenges all the more difficult.

Increased challenge requires increased support. Where do we find these additional sources of support? What happens when we do not find them, and the challenges of increased relational complexity threaten to overwhelm the organism?

The answers to these questions and others like them will lead us to a new understanding of our species’ “superpower,” which is *the management of social complexity*; — and of our species’ “Achilles heel” as well (to take a metaphor first put forth in this corner of the world over 3000 years ago); — or, to draw on more contemporary action superhero tales, our species’ “kryptonite” (the fictional element that cancels Superman’s powers). What is this built-in human limitation that constricts our relationality, canceling our species “superpower;” and what can we do about it? It won’t surprise you to find that the answer lies in politics — which, like nearly everything, looks different, sharper when viewed with a Gestalt lens.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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The challenges in creating therapeutic alliance with adolescent clients – what do they really need from us?

Vesna Hercigonja Novković

Therapeutic alliance is fundamental and critical in maximizing the success of psychotherapy. In working with adolescents, however, creating therapeutic alliance is often difficult. Adolescence is a period in between childhood and adulthood and no therapy intervention was created for this population specifically, rather, interventions were modified to fit with their developmental and emotional state.

Often, while in contact with the therapist they present a resistance because they might have been forced to therapy, their specific developmental point and immaturity does not allow for interventions that work with children or adults, neither play techniques nor exclusively talking therapy works with them. There might be a stigma in their minds about therapy or may see the therapist as “the long arm of parents”. Most often, adolescents are in precontemplation state of change and the aim of therapeutic contact is to merely keep them interested and engaged.

Engaging adolescents in therapy and creating a strong therapeutic bond requires the therapist to be genuine, interested, non-judgmental, utterly creative, authentic, open, to express empathy, support and to use age-appropriate interventions. The paper discussed will explore the interventions and techniques that best fit therapeutic work with adolescents aiming to create a firm therapeutic alliance taking into considerations the cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social aspect of adolescence.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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Gestalt psychotherapy – the eternal eight Application in supervision

Emilija Stoimenova Canevska

The relational approach is embedded in Gestalt therapy supervision. The use of the symbol “number eight” brings eternity balance and order. The employ of the infinite eight is bringing to the awareness, the richness of contact, in all our abilities and possibilities.

The awareness about the meaning of the eternal eight could be the key to recognizing the relational patterns from the past, that are re-experienced in the present and could open the reparative possibilities, that could bring joy in here and now and spread the seed for the next. It's understanding from both ends could bring a better and uninterrupted experience of the whole process of supervision.

The visual representation of the eternal eight could encourage both supervisor and supervisee to explore the maintenance of relational patterns.

During the workshop, the involved participants will be encouraged to explore in depth their therapeutic relations and gain insights that could create a better understanding and further balance and order.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Playwrights in their characters' shoes

Lada Kaštelan

In my presentation I'd like to talk about the techniques borrowed from psychodrama that I've found out to be extremely helpful for developing dramatic characters in the texts my playwriting students are working on.

When writing dramatic texts there is always more than one character, and those characters need to have different inner lives and reactions to be able to have a relation, dialogue or a confrontation with each other. Which means that a playwright has to be in the position of all of them, not an easy task, and sometimes just describing them from outside, from the creator's position (what's usually done in playwriting classes) doesn't necessarily prove to be useful enough. In the moment playwrights, with the little help of psychodrama, step in the shoes of their characters, they get to know much more about their characters than they could have imagined. I've seen it happen many times in my twenty years of teaching playwriting in the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb. Important factor in this process is also the spontaneity with which it has to be done — it's not about preparing in advance, it's about jumping in the unknown and letting the character take over the command.

A result of that is not only discovering more about their characters but also discovering more about themselves — the process goes both ways.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Contemporary developments in couples' psychotherapy — when solutions make problems worse

Charles Azzopardi

Couples therapy has a long tradition. Working with couples briefly and strategically is a recent development in this long tradition. Contemporary pressing issues in couples therapy include the many shifting constructions about the myriad of notions involved in the life of couplehood. This change is happening fast, and so very fast that being and staying in an intimate relationship has become increasingly challenging. Many of these constructs are paradoxical to the nature of intimate relationships. Especially paradoxical to being in a romantic relationship for life. Strategic Couples Therapy offers a versatile narrative based on neuroscientific research. The shift from person to human systems remains essential for the couple's ecology around Time and Space. Solving their relationship problems becomes a circular process of failed attempted solutions that turn a cyclical pattern into a spiral that fails.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

How emerging adults make or interrupt contact with self and environment

Tijana Mićović

Nina Mićović

The study presented starts with the theoretical idea in Gestalt therapy that the “self is a system of contacts at any moment” (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951) and considers observations from qualitative research that emerging adults are running through and/or skipping phases of pre-contact and post-contact (Mićović & Mićović, 2021).

The main aim of this study is to verify the mentioned findings by using a quantitative methodology to investigate which contact styles or resistances emerging adults use in order to make or interrupt contact with self and their environment. The data will be collected with GIRL scale (Gestalt Inventory of Resistance Loadings)¹ on the sample of young adults ranged from 18 to 34 years old. Findings will be presented at the congress.

These findings will be discussed within the Gestalt psychotherapy framework with the goal of contributing to a better understanding of the emerging adult population in the psychotherapeutic context.

¹ Reference: Woldt, A. L. & Prosnick, K. P. (2020). *Gestalt Inventory of Resistance Loadings (GIRL)*. Kent, Ohio: Gestalt Center for Personality-Oriented Research.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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The experience of shame in individual and group therapy settings

Snežana Opačić

Dunja Vesić

Human nature is relational and only in the interactive act of contact can a person have a sense of himself or herself and another. When there is a lack of support in the field for who we are, we identify with rejected parts of ourselves thus provoking shame which is further internalized, creates core beliefs about ourselves and affects our relationships with others. Internalized shame creates the experience that our entire being is wrong, inadequate, not worthy of love, existence, or belonging. Despite the fact that shame is most often experienced as a personal inadequacy, it is always relational and occurs in the context of relationships. Shame often occurs in relationships between therapists and clients, both in individual and group settings, and threatens to lead to a halt, regression and even the termination of therapeutic relationship.

This qualitative research aims to contribute to a better understanding of shame, as well as the role of others in creating it, coping with it and healing it, in different contexts of group and individual psychotherapy. The data was collected through a semi-structured in-depth interview designed for this research with one focus group of clients and one focus group of psychotherapists and analysed using thematic reflective analysis. The findings will be processed, discussed and presented from a relational and field theory perspective.

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Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Online Gestalt therapy and the online contacting process

Mikela Gonzi

With the sudden onset of the pandemic, a real need emerged to study whether online therapy lends itself well to Gestalt, particularly when one considers that 'contacting' is conceptually and methodologically at its core. By considering this we are truly considering the *moving edges* and growing contours of psychotherapy!

The *Plenary Lecture* provides a succinct summary of a two-year exploratory sequential mixed-method study that explored client and therapists' experiences of online Gestalt therapy with a core focus on the online contacting process.

Conducted from a critical realist worldview and framed by a Gestalt therapy theoretical lens, the study consisted of a qualitative phase through the use of in-depth interviews and focus groups, followed by a quantitative phase through a survey. Methodological triangulation and integration was used throughout the study. A total of 303 Gestalt therapists and Clients from various countries participated in the research. Of these, 93% therapists and 72% clients experienced online therapy sessions during the pandemic. Several interesting findings are highlighted, some of which are further reported as being statistically significant.

The Workshop aims to present the research findings in more detail, offering an opportunity to further discuss the results with guests, while creating a space to explore their own experiences of online therapy. Now that the pandemic is over many therapists are still using online therapy in a blended form. Reflecting on the findings is relevant and timely as they highlight various implications for Gestalt therapy, particularly in relation to teaching, training, continuous professional development, supervision, regulating practice and reviewing ethical issues. Let us, together, take a look at our growing edges!

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Sixty years after the beginning – is there a retirement for therapists?

Dubravka Kocijan-Hercigonja

The question I have asked myself on several occasions is whether, by retiring after more than 65 years of work, I can end my long-term work, interests and change my lifestyle. I believed that I could and would be able to do numerous activities that I was not able to do during my work. But, the answer is no. Through a number of years of education, changing jobs and finally realizing my initial professional ambitions – working with children – I have realized my professional and personal needs – working with children and solving problems at the very beginning of their development with a focus on mental health.

Over the years, I have become more and more aware of the needs of children and young people and the way those needs are in connection with the environment (both the family and the society). I was not completely satisfied with the psychotherapy work with adults because the client's expectations were to solve the current problem, and through the work I was faced with the fact that the beginnings of current problems, in the majority of cases, started in childhood. So, I recognized that I should work with children. However, working with children alone does not lead to a solution to the problem if we do not include their family and also wider social environment (school, preschool).

Today, I see my function, but also my need to influence society through various programs, especially in school and preschool. Today's increasing addiction of children to the Internet and other electronic means of communication point the problems of emotional insecurity. All of this directed me to educating future psychotherapists while continuing my professional work with children, both with aspiration to make changes and raise awareness of problems and the need for change.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Psychotherapy of shame from an integrative perspective

Zoran Milivojević

When working with clients, we often encounter feelings of shame, which can manifest as an isolated issue or the underlying cause of certain disorders such as social phobia or avoidant personality traits/disorder. Our definition of shame is the feeling a person experiences in front of those they are not close to, where they assume others judge them to be inferior. In other words, a person attributes their negative self-beliefs to others. Meta-shame is the “shame of shame”, where a person believes others have noticed their shame and view them as weak or mentally unstable. Thus, shame can be seen as a projection of self-contempt onto others.

From a developmental perspective, shame is the first moral feeling, which should be replaced by a sense of adult guilt during emotional maturation.

In this presentation, we will explore shame in the client-therapist relationship, as well as the two critical steps in overcoming shame: self-acceptance and relinquishing the notion that one's worth depends on the acceptance of others.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

The edges of presence

Herb Stevenson

Understanding the dynamics of presence is imperative to fully understanding awareness. Active presence acknowledges that nothing exists beyond this moment. The past is a memory, and the future is imagination. Active presence invites an open-ended engagement with experience like the spiritual dynamic of surrendering... the allowing-in of the moment without emotional reactions or mental restrictions... simply Being with oneself. Or, as Fritz Perls indicated being fully present here, now.

We will explore active presence as the four forms of present-moment attention that can be identified and supportive in coaching or therapeutic engagements.

1. In therapeutic presence, you actively choose where to focus your attention.
2. In joyful presence, you actively choose how you react to your experience.
3. In mindful presence, you actively choose how to make sense of your experience.
4. In pure presence, you exist in the oneness as a deep sense of being.

In this workshop, we will delve deeper by looking at the point of presence that is experienced at three edges of awareness:

1. Intimate Edge
2. Innermost Edge, and
3. Inmost Edge.

Moreover, we will explore intimacy and attentiveness as key components.

This workshop includes a broader perspective of presence by exploring the existential and spiritual dimensions of presence as a state of being.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

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Panic disorder and affective neurosciences: Findings from empirical research

Michele Settanni

By combining the affective neuroscience developed by Jaak Panksepp with clinical insights from a phenomenological-gestalt perspective, panic disorder can be understood as an acute attack of loneliness rather than just an overwhelming bout of fear. This view can explain many signs that otherwise remain isolated elements without a comprehensive framework: e.g., the association with agoraphobia, the occurrence of PD during adolescence and young adulthood, the need to be accompanied, the association with air hunger and other respiratory abnormalities, the efficacy of antidepressants, and the lack of activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis.

This shift has profound implications for therapeutic work. In this lecture, I present some empirical findings supporting this clinical hypothesis and discuss the implications of this perspective for therapy and for further research projects.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Perinatal loss – the unauthorized grief

Ena Canevska

The importance of perinatal development has been well known for a long time, although recently it is closer to the place that it belongs to. On the other hand, focus on perinatal losses has been neglected even in the field of perinatal development.

Today, we are noticing increased interest in perinatal losses and perinatal grief. Gestalt therapy with all of its aspects, especially the relational aspect, the work with polarities, as well as the constant work on closure that has stayed open as an unfinished business, has shown very good results in working on perinatal grief.

Through psychotherapeutic work with clients going through the process of perinatal grief, we put the work in the theoretical frame of gestalt psychotherapy, to give visibility, acknowledgment, and support to what has been kept hidden, unsupported, and unauthorized. The gestalt literature on the topic of perinatal losses and grief is still limited, therefore we have used the cycle of contact-withdrawal and its modifications as well as the theory of self as a starting point in this process of visualization.

We as psychotherapists have a very important task in front of us. On one hand to work with those that seek help (individually or in a group), and on the other hand to speak up so that we can raise awareness on this topic. This is our responsibility as professionals in the field.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Intuition and imagination in psychotherapy

Vesna Petrovic

Working as psychotherapists we are guided by interpretive hunches, gut feelings, images and bodily impulses. When working with our clients, we use all our five senses, together with other embodied, intuitive senses. Such experiences are the foundation of our clinical intuition and act as a creative source for inspirational transformation (Finlay, 2016).

This workshop focuses on our work with imaginal possibilities towards intrapsychic healing, specifically the use we make of guided imagery and fantasy, metaphor, and felt sense. I will also briefly highlight the relational base of imaginal work.

A workshop will offer exploring an experience of dwelling with our bodily meanings or felt sense, making sense of our senses, recognizing embodied intersubjective relationship, guided imagery and fantasy, and use of metaphors.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Advanced emotional literacy: A new model for analyzing and understanding emotions

Zoran Milivojević

Milena Marković

Clients often seek psychotherapeutic treatment due to unpleasant or dysfunctional emotions. This presentation introduces a comprehensive model for analyzing emotional reactions, known as the Circular Emotional Reaction (CER) model. The main elements of this model will be presented, along with how to analyze the functional and dysfunctional emotional reactions of clients, both pleasant and unpleasant.

In addition, the internal and external (transactional) functions of certain emotions will be discussed, with a particular focus on anxiety, which is commonly encountered in psychotherapeutic practice. One of the key functions of psychotherapy is to enhance clients' emotional literacy and increase their understanding of their own feelings. With this knowledge, clients can more accurately assess whether their emotional reactions are adequate or inadequate.

Furthermore, emotional literacy is essential for every psychotherapist, regardless of their psychotherapeutic approach, to achieve accurate empathy with clients. A thorough understanding of emotions greatly enhances the effectiveness of psychotherapy.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Relationship satisfaction, contact resistances and basic personality supports

Dragana Ilić

Dusanka Jovanović

Marija Krivačić

The dynamics and functionality of a couple is dependent on the degree of support received by each partner to create the contact experience with the other while maintaining the self-regulation of their own self. The capacity for participation in a couple relationship in this manner is defined by a person's self-support and the opportunities and means to reorient and adapt with the permanently shifting boundary of a couple's dynamic. This is the foundation upon which satisfaction is maintained in a relationship. Our objective is to examine the degree to which contact resistance and psychological support systems of a partner's personality relate to the satisfaction and dissatisfaction experienced in a relationship. The research is based on quantitative, exploratory correlational design. A representative sample was selected comprising 150 Serbian participants aged 25-60. Data were collected using a demographic questionnaire, Basic personality supports (BOL: Berger i Kostić, 2002), Gestalt Inventory of Resistance Loading (GIRL: Prosnick i Woldt, 2020), and Couple Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Cepukiene, 2019). Participants completed the tests on an online platform. Data is being analyzed using Pearson's linear correlation, arithmetic mean and T-test.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

The development and manifestation of aggression in children and adolescents

Anica Dudvarski
Gordana Mićović

In his first book *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (1942), Fritz Perls described the basis of concept of aggression and destruction in Gestalt therapy. He explained aggression by using the term “reaching out” which includes everything that organism does in order to make contact with the environment where the organism recognizes the possibility of satisfying his own need. In this movement of “reaching out” Perls recognized the wish of organism to create specific changes in his environment that would help him to satisfy his actual needs. In our poster presentation we will discuss how connection (relation) between organism and environment develops through aggression in children and adolescents, as well as in which ways aggression can be manifested in healthy (assertive) and pathological (destructive) manner.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Refer to <https://www.egngestaltcongress.org> for a full biography

Working with anxiety in Gestalt psychotherapy

Mira Stojanović

The increase in the number of clients with anxiety disorders after the pandemic situation focused the lecturer's interest in this topic. This lecture will be a brief review of the literature as well as a review of the live speech of the author of Gestalt therapy. During her many years of practice working with clients and during her research experience, the lecturer also made a personal review of the workflow in Gestalt therapy in working with clients with anxiety disorders.

The poster will represent: how to start and end work with clients who have complaints, how to intervene and what is significant in the experience of clients during Gestalt psychotherapy work. Is it okay to act in an advisory capacity and which techniques from the traditional psychotherapy framework can be used in the work? Is it permissible to use paradoxical interventions in working with anxiety and how could body work techniques be applied? Why is a relational approach important and what is the importance of a good working alliance with the client, especially when working with such complaints? How can change be brought about in the experience of complaints among clients.

This topic was partly the subject of the lecturer's doctoral thesis, and the poster will represent a short review of the results of the pilot research before the thesis and the quantitative and qualitative research conducted by the lecturer during the preparation of the doctoral thesis.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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Elements of the process of change through Gestalt psychotherapy as the experience of clients who define it as successful at the end of this process

Jelena Petrović

This qualitative research is characterized primarily by a humanistic approach to the individual experience of the respondents. This, through an epistemological approach to the process of change from the client's perspective, through Gestalt psychotherapy sessions with clients who define their change as successful. The research will be based on the interpretation of the client's pure experience and their experience of the elements of process of change that they went through during Gestalt therapy sessions.

The data will be collected with the help of a semi-structured interview purposely created for this research. The research proposes the participation of six respondents, three woman and three men, who went through the Gestalt psychotherapy process for more than one year and who define their change after this process as successful. The obtained data will be processed by interpretative phenomenological analysis by one examiner. This paper is only part of a larger doctoral thesis research. We see the value of the results obtained through this research in the contribution to the professional public and current and future clients of Gestalt psychotherapy. The research is ongoing and the results will be presented at the Congress.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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What does humor feel like in a psychotherapeutic setting, from the client's point of view?

Brankica Šaljić Milenković

The phenomenon of humor that is ubiquitous in everyday life and communication is an indispensable part of psychotherapy sessions. In this way, it is part of both the therapeutic process and the relationship between the client and the therapist. Given that little research is within Gestalt therapy, this qualitative research is useful and informative for our profession. The aim was to examine the subjective experience of the effects and functions of humor on the gestalt psychotherapeutic process, in clients who are currently attending this type of therapy. The proposed sample, composed of 6 clients, was heterogeneous as much as it is possible for qualitative research, and convenient. The data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview. Data were processed by Interpretative phenomenological analysis. Since the research is ongoing, the results will be presented at the Congress.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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The way we understand a child is a marker for a child's appearing

Olivera M. Cirkovic

Due to etiology, most of the health disturbance in everyday pediatric practice has some psychological base besides lifestyle, as a commonly mentioned risk factor (Cirkovic, 2016). Mihail Hasminski (2018) wrote: "We do not realize that just pain, by itself, does not distract us from living. Cause of pain is the main reason which makes a disturbance in our lives" (pg.230).

Many disturbances in children's physical and mental health are present in physicians' and psychotherapists' offices. There is also a wide range of mental and physical health consequences that inadequately treated disturbances can cause.

This qualitative study aimed to determine some of those most common disturbances and consequences. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the utilization of Gestalt psychotherapy with children and adolescents who suffer from other physical and mental health (different pathology).

According to the collected data and analysis, the researcher drew the appropriate conclusions and made recommendations for healthcare professionals and psychotherapists working with children and adolescents who suffer from physical and mental health pathology, same as with their parents.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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Panic attacks: The silent cries of the soul; The emotional component in the experience of panic attacks

Elena Borg

Individuals at risk of developing panic attacks show prevalence in suffering from alexithymia. This research explores the emotive component in the development of panic attacks while building a personality profile of individuals who are at risk of developing panic attacks in Malta. The conceptual frame of this research draws from Gestalt Psychotherapy, Psychopathology and Affective Neuroscience. A Qual-Quan sequential mixed-method design was adopted. In the qualitative part, eight retrospective interviews were conducted utilizing IPA. The quantitative phase included a questionnaire built from the constructs which emerged from the qualitative themes and the administration of the TAS-20. 117 participants responded via snowball sampling. Findings look at the emotional component as crucial in the development of panic attacks and provide a personality profile of Maltese who are at risk of suffering from panic attacks. This research puts forward how panic attacks can be understood as an 'attack of emotional blindness'. Including the emotional component within the treatment for panic attacks could attribute to the individuals who do not respond effectively to the current treatments provided. The Maltese typology of people who suffer panic attacks could also support helping professionals as a guideline for prevention.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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Gestalt play therapy in work with children who have communication problems

Marija Stefanović

Filip Stefanović

The aim of this poster presentation is to determine how Gestalt play therapy may be used in the therapeutic treatment of children who have problems in communication (tantrums, cries, anger, ignores, stutter, etc.) and their parents.

Problems in communication are difficulties that touch the lives of many families and are associated with great interpersonal distress. Problems in communication are especially difficult for children in early and middle childhood, a time dominated by the kindergarten and school experience. Gestalt play therapy creates a child-friendly environment, in which the child can share information in a safe manner through the use of play therapeutic techniques.

V. Oaklander stated that play is a form of self-therapy through which confusions, anxieties and conflicts are often worked through. It is a symbolic language which children use to formulate and assimilate what they experience, much of which cannot be expressed in language.

According to our therapeutic experience we concluded that Gestalt play therapy can be used with the aim of achieving good results with children who have communication problems. It allows them to work through their emotions, and therefore, encourages them to communicate more freely within the therapeutic environment.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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From loneliness to connection: the possibilities of dialogue in the modern world

Ljiljana Božović

Dušanka Jovanović

Marina Pješčić

The aim of this paper is to discuss the importance of applying the dialogical and relational principles of Gestalt therapy in working with individuals and couples, in the context of fast and disturbing social changes.

Living in the XXI century means being exposed to constant and very fast changes in all areas, which makes it difficult for us to integrate and assimilate experiences. Tasks of adaptation often exceed our capabilities, so that not only is today's individual vulnerable and threatened, but various forms of community as well — the couple, family and so on. Anxiety and concern have been dominating the atmosphere of global human community for some time, and almost all of humanity has gone through the experience of the pandemic, fear of a potentially deadly disease, isolation from close people as a recommended way to survive, as well as the threatening possibility of global war in recent years. In such an atmosphere, dialogue is threatened, and exchange at all levels is carried out through two polarities — aggressive imposition or giving up too soon.

Many representatives of modern Gestalt therapy point out that the paradoxical consequence of the accelerated development of means of communication is a decline in the quality of contact, in all its forms. In today's age of the Internet, cyber and virtual spaces of functioning, individuals and couples try to find a solution in living the illusion of belonging to relationships. We will present some of the conclusions of our research focused on the dialogic potential of modern couples and the relational spirituality of an individual, which make living in the modern world easier.

The poster presentations will be displayed throughout the day in the Entrance Hall of the Conference Center – Hilton Malta. Lecturers will be next to their posters at a time indicated in the program for questions and explanations related to their topics.