



# **BECOME A GESTALT PSYCHOTHERAPIST**

## **2023 STUDENT INFORMATION PACK**

**FIRST ROUND APPLICATIONS CLOSE 14 OCTOBER 2022**

**FOUNDATION STUDIES IN RELATIONAL  
GESTALT COUNSELLING**

**ADVANCED CLINICAL TRAINING IN  
RELATIONAL GESTALT PSYCHOTHERAPY**

**CONNECTGROUND CLINIC STUDENT  
INTERNSHIP**



Gestalt Therapy Australia (GTA) offers comprehensive psychotherapy training that will explore and deepen your relational capacities within the framework of Gestalt theory and practice. You are invited into an experiential process that will expand your self-awareness as a means to developing your therapeutic presence. Relational Gestalt training provides significant opportunities for professional and personal development.

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## ***Our course is both career-changing and life-changing....***

Our four-year training program is accredited by PACFA as a Specialist Training (Post-Grad). It can enhance your existing practice, help create a new career path or support you in your current career by helping you deepening relational skills and capacities.

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### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN OUR TRAINING PROGRAM**

This document will give you a comprehensive overview of our course.

We would love to talk to you about our training program, so please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Your first point of contact is our course co-ordinator Katrina Coghlan.

Please attend one of our **Relational Gestalt Taster & Course Information Sessions**. These evenings are an opportunity to have an experience of our experiential inquiry-based learning method and obtain a brief introduction to Relational Gestalt thinking. We will also talk about the course structure and answer your questions about the program.

**The Course Information Sessions will be held on the 16 August and 20 September. Bookings are now open. Please book one of these sessions:**

**16 AUG** [GTA Taster Aug 2022.eventbrite.com.au](https://www.eventbrite.com.au). or

**20 SEPT** [GTA Taster Sept2022.eventbrite.com.au](https://www.eventbrite.com.au)

**Our online application process is now open: <https://www.tfaforms.com/5002553>**

**Please contact us at the Gestalt Centre Office if you have any questions.**

**Relational Gestalt Therapy (RGT)** draws on rich philosophical traditions that support direct engagement with life as it is lived. It moves us away from broad categorisations and simplifications of human experience that end up being pathologising or otherwise amplify individual blame and shame.

We are interested in the humanistic, existential and relational underpinnings of Gestalt theory and are committed to understanding how these ideas interplay to inform a holistic and compassionate understanding of human existence (including illness and suffering) and ways to support choice, vitality and health for all.

***Healthy people are self-regulating individuals, able to respond flexibly to changing circumstances and support themselves in many respects while accepting mutual interdependence with other people and the environment. They can strike a balance between looking after their needs and caring for the needs of other people and their community, recognising their independence with the environment and caring for it as well. They take responsibility for the choices that they make in life and especially for the meaning they give their life and they experience their ability to actualise themselves within the limits of their life circumstances.*** Jenny Mackewn, Developing Gestalt Counselling (1997).



**Gestalt Therapy Australia (GTA) was founded 27 years ago. It has become a nationally and internationally renowned training program. We pride ourselves on remaining true to the experiential roots of gestalt training programs globally, whilst always striving to be at the cutting edge of contemporary Gestalt thinking. Our 12 members of Faculty are highly experienced with a broad range of professional backgrounds and commitment to Relational Gestalt practice and teaching. All faculty are practising Gestalt therapists.**

GTA offers a unique opportunity to become a Gestalt Therapist. Our 4-year program focuses on developing personal awareness and therapeutic skills to enable you to work with others in profound and healing ways. It takes time to become a therapist. At GTA, students are immersed in an experiential learning process that is holistic, integrated and developmental. It is primarily designed to foster capacities essential for deep connection. In this way, it stands apart from other courses that can be more dryly academic or module-based. Learning is supported by experiential practice and skill development and plentiful learning opportunities for ongoing feedback from faculty and peers. Students come together and form a learning group that will be a source of rich growth during the program and beyond. As deep connections are made, community is found.

Gestalt theory is rich. It supports ways of understanding the human condition that moves beyond simple categories and diagnostic labels and towards a more nuanced and compassionate meeting of people as they are. Gestalt practitioners are always sensitive to the cultural and environmental context of their clients' life and experience. With a here-and-now focus, Gestalt is process-oriented and pays attention to broader description including, including our immediate felt sense and embodiment. In Gestalt meaning emerges in embodied relational process.

Our students typically come from backgrounds in allied health, including; psychology, social work, education, counselling, occupational therapy, nursing, pastoral care, people management (HR), coaching and other organisational roles. Our course is a deep dive into an integrated therapeutic modality and meaningful support to understanding the human condition for these people. It also supports systemic thinking and group work, including work with groups, couples, families, teams and organisations. We also have students who are wanting to explore a career change.

Graduates of our program work in various settings and take up many different roles, with many graduates working in education, hospitals, youth services, community health, mental health settings, and in organisational roles. Many have thriving private practices.



**ConnectGround is our community clinic - the place where Relational Gestalt theory and practice come together in profound ways. Staffed by interns and volunteers, and supervised by our clinical team, we offer low-cost counselling and psychotherapy service to the community of Melbourne.**

visit [www.connectground.com.au](http://www.connectground.com.au)

**ConnectGround** internships begin in the 3rd year of the course and are a unique setting for students to get real-world experience of working with clients therapeutically, while being well held in the incredibly supportive and professional setting of our clinic.

**ConnectGround** offers a meaningful way of putting learning into action. It is a well supported 'apprenticeship in gestalt psychotherapy' that enlivens learning and help grow gestalt therapists. At the same time it offers a vital relational support to people who would not otherwise be able to access therapy. We currently offer 23 internships concurrently with spaces for more than 90 clients per week.

# OVERVIEW OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM

## YEARS ONE & TWO

### **Foundation Studies in Relational Gestalt Counselling.**

Introduces students to Relational Gestalt counselling through the exploration of gestalt theory and practice. This is a stand-alone course or is a prerequisite for further study at GTA.

150+ contact hours per year.

## YEARS THREE & FOUR

### **The Advanced Clinical Training in Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy.**

Expands on the Relational Gestalt Therapy of the previous two years and develops the clinical thinking and practice competencies to move into a clinic placement

150+ contact hours per year.

### **ConnectGround Clinic Student Internship.**

During the final 2 years of training, GTA students are expected to undertake an internship in our community-based clinic ConnectGround. Most placements are 12 months in duration and are best started in 3rd year and completed in the 4th year. This is approximately 200 contact hours across a 12-month placement.

## WHY DO OUR COURSE?

At GTA we are committed to lifelong learning and our program will suit people at different stages of their professional development. The course becomes a life-affirming way to grow your personal and interpersonal capacities within a sustaining and vibrant community of practice.

GTA students are often social workers, psychologists, nurses, teachers, occupational therapists, psychiatrists etc. They have had their professional training, and they want more. They come to GTA to extend their clinical thinking, and to deepen their presence – a fuller capacity to be with themselves and others.

GTA students go on a journey of discovery to develop their embodied awareness and to stretch their range of compassion, curiosity, courage and intimacy.

Relational Gestalt Therapy is offered as a counterpoint to a dominant medicalising world view that sets mental health, and by extension mental illness, in a pointless polarity that pathologises, simplifies and shames human suffering.

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO LEARN IN THE FOUR YEARS?

While the training cannot be structured into a neat and linear progression, each of the training years focuses on developing a specific set of competencies that aim to develop emerging Gestalt therapists.

In the first year, students are encouraged to explore and deepen their self-awareness. The focus is on building capacity for a nuanced appreciation of their embodied experience. That is the sensitivity to the sensations, feelings and thoughts that make up their moment-to-moment experience, as well as an understanding of their capacity to work with emotional arousal and affect regulation. This self-awareness is the ground on which the ongoing development of the therapist is built.

In the second year, the development of this awareness process moves from a focus on self-process to focusing on others, and in particular understanding how self-experience is shaped by this engagement and interaction.

## What can I expect to learn? (cont)

In the third year, the focus returns to the experience of the individual, but with a specific focus on better understanding how developmental contexts shape and influence the individual experience. This 'field' focus also seeks to take into account the complex social and cultural situations in which we are all embedded.

Fourth-year aims to integrate the learning of the three previous years, supporting students to weave together self-awareness, awareness of others and sensitivity to how our 'situated-ness' shapes our experience and can be applied in therapeutic practice. In this year students engage with what they know of their own relational patterns and explore their developmental edges as emerging therapists.

In summary, the learning trajectory (though never linear) can be represented in the following way:

**Self** / How am I in the world. What do I sense, feel and think?

**Self & Other** / Who am I with you and who are you with me?

**Self in Context** / How do the contexts from which I have emerged shape who I am?

**Self & Other in Context** / Who am I as an emerging Gestalt therapist?

## BEING A STUDENT AT GTA

A GTA student is willing to participate in an inquiry-based learning process that is holistic and developmental. Effective learning at GTA involves responding to the experiences offered in the education and training program with leadership, agency, openness and commitment.

A central feature of being a student at GTA involves participating in an experiential learning group, and the wider GTA learning community and being responsive to unfolding events – especially as they manifest in the learning process in the training group. This interrelating involves making and sustaining relationships with fellow students and faculty through sharing personal experiences and repairing ruptures in relationships should they occur.

Engaging ever more fully in this relational activity requires developing deeper personal awareness and insight through self-reflection and inquiry. In the experiential learning process, students are encouraged to be curious and to investigate how they affect others and the environment through the way they relate and the choices they make. Students are challenged to take opportunities to move beyond established patterns and into new territory and novel experiences of themselves and others.

Over the four-year training program, students will inquire into (and develop) the six personal abilities that we believe are crucial to the practice of psychotherapy and fundamental to our course. These are described under the headings: **Aware, Present, Receptive, Choiceful, Situated and Engaged**. These six foundations become an important tool for self-awareness and conversation across all aspects of the training program and the clinic.

Students will engage with faculty in dialogue about their personal abilities using the Personal Abilities Framework (PAF) throughout their studies. You can find more information about the PAF on the GTA website.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

### **Foundation Studies in Relational Gestalt Counselling**

Year 1 & 2 is a two-year course that offers students the opportunity to understand and practice Relational Gestalt counselling through the exploration of theory and practice. The modules are:

#### **Module 1 / Personal Abilities Of The Therapist**

This module focuses on the personal development of the counsellor. The module includes identifying and developing essential capacities for healthy relating as well as inquiring into the contextual influences that support and constrain us. The module is based on Relational Gestalt principles providing students with a “lived experience” of the Relational Gestalt approach. Core learning opportunities will be provided in explorations of the student's experience through personal and interpersonal inquiry and the group process.

#### **Module 2 / Relational Gestalt Theory**

This module focuses on the central theoretical underpinnings of Relational Gestalt Therapy. The module creates opportunities for students to discover the essence of relational philosophy and translate these into practice. The module is based on key Gestalt theory and Relational principles. Emphasis is given to the theory that informs both the core ideas and the methodology of a Relational Gestalt approach to counselling.

#### **Module 3 / Relational Gestalt Methods**

This module provides the practice methodology for Relational Gestalt Therapy. The module develops the application of gestalt principles to the practice of counselling and integrates core gestalt concepts such as field theory, phenomenology and dialogue and begins to map these alongside more traditional and evidence-based approaches to mental health.

#### **Module 4 / Skill Development Practice**

This module focuses on practising Relational Gestalt ideas and methods. The module provides opportunities for micro-skills development in small practice groups. Specific micro-skills related to the basic counselling practice, Relational principles and Gestalt methodology are practised with peer and faculty feedback. The feedback process in the practice groups provides an opportunity for students to integrate their theoretical and methodological knowledge with their practice.

#### **Module 5 / Specialist Gestalt Practice**

This module focuses on specialist Gestalt practice. In first-year students are invited into a 3-day process around the Personal Abilities of the Therapist. In the second year, the focus shifts to exploring taking up the role of therapist and thinking about Relational Gestalt Practice in the clinic setting.

#### **Module 6 / Specialist Gestalt Application**

This module focus is on an application of Relational Gestalt Therapy. It is a residential training event facilitated by a GTA faculty or a guest trainer with expertise in a specialist area of counselling and psychotherapy practice. This is a whole school event.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED):**

### **Advanced Clinical Training In Relational Gestalt Psychotherapy**

Yr 3 & 4 is a two-year course that expands on the relational gestalt psychotherapy practice of the previous two years. The modules are:

#### **Module 1 / Gestalt Personal Abilities**

This module focuses on the personal development of the psychotherapist. The module includes students being engaged in experiences that develop essential capacities for dialogic relation as well as understanding and integrating their self-experience with relation to their core organising themes. The module is based on relational principles, illustrates Gestalt ideas and demonstrates Gestalt methods thus providing students with a “lived experience” of the relational Gestalt approach. Core learning opportunities will be provided through exploration of the students experience on a personal, relationship and group level.

#### **Module 2 / Relational Gestalt Theory**

This module focuses on the foundation principles of Relational Gestalt theory. The module explores relational principles as the foundation from which Gestalt theory emerges, as well as all core Gestalt theory and related concepts. The breadth of relational philosophy is condensed into a range of practice principles that encompass the core elements of the Gestalt approach. Emphasis is given to the theory that informs both the core ideas and the methods of the relational Gestalt approach to psychotherapy.

#### **Module 3 / Relational Gestalt Methods**

This module provides the methodological framework of Relational Gestalt therapy. The module integrates relational principles, Gestalt theory and methods, common factors evidence-based practice and mental health practitioner competencies and provides an opportunity for students to deepen their investigation into psychotherapy processes and ethical considerations. Students inquire into how each psychotherapy process is influenced by their core organising themes. This integrative approach helps students to better understand how their personal experience organises their professional practice.

#### **Module 4 / Skill Development Practice**

This module focuses on practicing Relational Gestalt ideas and methods. The module provides opportunities for advanced skill development in small practice and supervision groups. Specific micro-skills are reinforced but with a new focus on identifying and working with emerging themes and psychotherapy processes. Relational principles and gestalt methodology are highlighted and practised in small groups with coaching and live supervision.

#### **Module 5 / Specialist Gestalt Practice**

This module focuses on a specialist application of Gestalt practice in the clinical setting. The focus is on working with specific mental health complexities such as trauma.

#### **Module 6 / Specialist Gestalt Application**

This module focus is on an application of Relational Gestalt Therapy. It is a residential training event facilitated by a GTA faculty or a guest trainer with expertise in a specialist area of counselling and psychotherapy practice. This is a whole school event.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

### **Student Internship**

ConnectGround Internships provide an opportunity to work with clients in a supportive and collegial learning environment. Interns carry a caseload of 3 clients per week, attend fortnightly group supervision, fortnightly individual supervision (with the senior therapist) and have access to 4 additional professional development training opportunities per year.

The internship provides students with the opportunity to implement and consolidate the knowledge and skills they are developing during the program, by offering people from our community meaningful, affordable, medium to long term psychotherapy. The clinic staff balance the needs of both students and clients with a focus on providing a high-quality counselling and psychotherapy service to the community.

Upon graduation from the training program, you will be eligible for student membership of PACFA.

For full membership, you will need to log 200 hours face to face client contact hours. You can count all of your internship client contact hours for this purpose, and hours made in other settings.

To support this goal, and for more opportunities to practice, some interns will continue in the clinic and others return post-graduation as volunteers (you must have completed and passed all GTA assessments to volunteer). Most interns will complete 100 hours of client work whilst in the clinic.

Group and individual supervision are mandatory for all active interns. All these hours can be counted towards the course's supervision requirements.

You can apply for an exemption from the internship if you are deemed to have sufficient experience and opportunities to practice throughout the course of your studies (see below). Students may apply for an exemption from the internship for the following reasons:

- The student has already completed a professionally recognised training program, has an established practice and holds professional membership to a relevant body (AASW, APS, ACA, PACFA etc).
- The student is currently engaged in providing face to face counselling in either an organisation or sufficiently established private practice, has access to equipment to video sessions, and access to clients who are willing to be filmed
- The student receives individual supervision regularly and has access to some group supervision.

In some circumstances, a student who meets the above criteria will opt for a shorter placement for the experience. This would require a minimum 6-month commitment from the student.

**You can visit the ConnectGround website to see the variety of services we offer to clients, students and other professionals. [www.connectground.com.au](http://www.connectground.com.au)**

# APPLYING TO BE A STUDENT AT GTA

Please note our 4-year course has post-graduate PACFA accreditation as a Specialist Training. As such, graduates of our program are required to have an undergraduate degree (or equivalent) to join the PACFA register. This includes qualifications in a broad cross section of pathway careers in mental health, health science, social science, nursing, education, pastoral care. etc.

If you meet GTA's entry criteria based on other experience and training, but do not have a relevant higher education degree, you can still do our course. In these circumstances, you may consider doing some other studies concurrently (for example, a post grad diploma in counselling) or go on to complete the Graduate Entry Masters of Gestalt at GTA.

## KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

- An undergraduate degree in a relevant field such as counselling, psychology, social work, nursing, psychiatric nursing, occupational therapy, medicine, teaching, welfare and community development, or pastoral care. *In some circumstances, provision may be made to accept an application on the basis of an individual demonstrating relevant life or work experience, a history of personal therapy and an identifiable capacity to become a counsellor.*
- Two years of relevant work experience with professional supervision or mentoring (i.e. work experience after completing a relevant undergraduate degree). We will accept work done in a voluntary capacity, and willingness to gain experience as you study.
- Attendance at both the group and individual interviews and confirmation of suitability from personal and professional referees.
- Demonstrated ability to understand and practice ethical behaviour with a willingness to have an ethical stance integral to participating in this education program. GTA training program teaches to the PACFA Code of Ethics ([www.pacfa.org.au](http://www.pacfa.org.au)) but also references the APS and AASW Code of Ethics.
- The successful applicant will be required to sign the Course Contract and Professional Integrity Policy. A copy of the policy is available on our website.

Please talk to one of our staff if you have any questions about this.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

The process of admission to the GTA training program involves completing an online application. This will ask you to address the following:

1. Introducing yourself and explain why you have chosen this course and how it fits your personal and professional development needs.
2. Details of personal therapy including date, duration and therapist.
3. A detailed professional CV.
4. Contact details of two referees (one each personal and professional).
5. Payment of \$200 non-refundable application fee.

You will then be invited into the interview process and referees will be contacted at this point.

**First round applications close on the Friday 14 October 2022**

**Our online application: <https://www.tfaforms.com/5002553>**

*Please note: numbers are limited to 16 students per group (total 32). Early application is a way to secure a place in the 2023 intake.*

*There is a lot more information about the Gestalt Centre and Gestalt Therapy Australia on our website. Here you can see some faculty and other community members' profiles and read more about community and PD activities run through the centre. Visit us here:*  
[www.gestalttherapyaustralia.com.au](http://www.gestalttherapyaustralia.com.au)

## **INTERVIEW PROCESS**

GTA considers admission to the education and training program a mutual selection process with both GTA and prospective students actively engaged in deciding about an applicant's suitability.

To assist this, GTA makes every effort to be clear with applicants about what is being offered in the education and training program. The applicant will be required to attend a group interview and an individual interview. Within this process both the applicant and Gestalt Therapy Australia will have a chance to discuss readiness and suitability.

The process of student selection is non-discriminatory on the grounds of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, religion or any disability or belief that does not directly interfere with the capacity of students to competently fulfil the education and training program.

Upon receipt of an application form and payment, applicants will be contacted for the group interview.

### **STEP 1. GROUP INTERVIEW**

The group interview will be held at the Gestalt Centre Training Centre in Parkville on the **19 October**. The group interview will involve an experiential exercise including an opportunity to share your experience and engage in some dialogue with other participants in the group. It may also give you an opportunity to experience what it is like to be in a group setting. At the group interview, you will be able to book your individual interview so please bring your diaries.

### **STEP 2. INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW**

The 30-minute individual interview will be an opportunity for applicants to expand further on their experience and their interest in joining the training program. In this interview, there will be an opportunity to ask questions about the course. Individual interviews will take place on **24 & 25 October 2022**, or by other arrangement.

### **RECEIVING AN OFFER**

Acceptance into the course is communicated personally by telephone and followed up with an enrolment package. Applicants confirm their place by completing the Online enrolment form and paying the a non-refundable on-boarding fee of \$1,500.

## **MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STUDYING AT GTA**

### **PERSONAL INTEGRITY & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS POLICY**

Applicants are asked to sign a statement agreeing to comply with all the conditions of the Personal Integrity & Professional Standards Policy. This is available on the website and will be included in the application process. You will be asked to make any relevant disclosures as appropriate. It is important that you read this document before submitting your application.

Please note all those entering the 3rd year of the program will need to complete a Working with Children and Police Check.

## **MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STUDYING AT GTA (cont)**

### **ACCREDITATION**

Our four-year training program is accredited by PACFA as a Specialist Training (Post-Grad), and graduates of our program who meet PACFA's Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) requirements are eligible for membership and registration.

PACFA recognise a broad cross section of qualifications as RPL. Please talk to us about your qualifications if you have any doubt. Other pathways to PACFA membership include undertaking the Graduate Entry Masters of Gestalt at Gestalt Therapy Brisbane upon completion of your studies at GTA, or a completing a Graduate Certificate in Counselling concurrent with your GTA studies.

Applicants come to GTA from many professional backgrounds. Many are already working in the field with relevant qualifications and memberships of professional organisations. Others will not yet be eligible for full professional membership. These students may be interested in gaining registration with an organisation like the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) or the Australian Counselling Association (ACA). We recommend that you research your options and make enquiries to the relevant accreditation bodies that suit your circumstances. GTA staff are also available to talk to you about this.

### **COURSE FEES**

There is an annual course fee. For 2023 the course fee is \$9,555. This includes all training fees and full accommodation for both residential weekends held in August and October. The fee can be paid by a single invoice (5% discount) or 4 invoices across the year.

Additional fees in 3rd and 4th years:

- ConnectGround Student Internship in 3rd & 4th Years. Currently these fees are \$725 per term (\$2,900 per year). On average students spend 12-18 months completing their client hours.
- \$250 for the 4th year of the course to cover additional assessment costs.

### **PERSONAL THERAPY & SUPERVISION SESSIONS**

While preferring students to be in individual therapy for the duration of the training program, a total of 50 hours of individual therapy is required to be completed by the end of 2nd year. It is highly recommended that you do some or all of this with a Gestalt Therapist.

In the 3rd & 4th-year students are required to undertake at least 100 hours of supervised client contact. Most students will do this as a part of the ConnectGround internship and will see the Senior Therapist for supervision approximately fortnightly (this is currently \$110 per session).

### **GESTALT THERAPY AUSTRALIA TRAINING CENTRE**

Our training centre is located at 27 Royal Parade Parkville. Each class takes place over 23 weeknights and 12 days (5 weekends). Classes are conducted in the evening, usually between 5.30 to 8.45 pm. We also run an afternoon class between 1.00 and 4.15 pm.

We follow the school term and our classes run from February to October. Of the five weekends, 2 are residential and are held at the Yarra Valley Estate. The cost of these events are included in your fees. Please note we do not operate on public holidays.

If you require further information, contact Katrina, our client services coordinator.

**P: 9489-6300 or E: [admin@gestaltcentre.com.au](mailto:admin@gestaltcentre.com.au)**

# RELATIONAL GESTALT THERAPY

## Relational Gestalt Therapy (RGT) supports people to live well & relate well

RGT supports people to become vital, healthy, and connected. We believe isolation is the main cause of human suffering and mental illness. RGT supports a transformation of isolated individuals into relational beings that are skilled for better connection. We build capacity for awareness, allowing people to be more receptive to their own needs, the experience of others, and the world. With the support of therapy, we build better relationships, families, and communities and improve mental health.

The worldview that underpins the relational gestalt approach at Gestalt Centre holds that all human experience occurs in a relational context: that is we are mutually influencing all other people in a relational field. Within this field, each person makes sense of their own experience based on their unique perspective. We therefore hold that all meaning is personal (subjective), context dependent and clarified through interaction.

Relational Gestalt Therapy seeks to explore the experiential world of people, and understands therapy as collaboration that attends to awareness through the process of inquiring into emergent experience. In this way health is indicated by flexibility and responsiveness across a spectrum of human experience including body, mind and heart.

At the heart of a gestalt approach is a centring of experience, of attending to 'what is' and the necessity to see things 'as they are'. Not only does this represent a critical shift in approaching health and growth, referencing as it does the importance of understanding context and relationality, it remains a pressing and urgent need in our current world. The need to see things as they are, to understand the many critical and urgent concerns pressing in upon us and to take action that is meaningful and substantive is the personal and professional challenge we all face. Gestalt supports this focus on experience (phenomenology) and gives us a way of working with and seeing through the patterns of denial, avoidance and defensiveness (core organising themes) that so often get in the way of seeing things with this much needed clarity (field theory). Our tools of dialogical engagement support us to engage in this work with courage, compassion and a commitment to meaningful change, in terms of how we understand ourselves, how we respond to each other and the world in which we live.

## The 6 Relational Gestalt Foundations underpin all we do at the Gestalt Centre.

### Aware / Embodied Awareness

Awareness is the goal of Relational Gestalt Therapy.

Awareness supports connection, wisdom, spontaneity & health.

We bring attention to our body through embodied awareness because our needs, longings & fears emerge contextually first as sensation.

Beginning with embodied experience, we are more aware of the here-and-now and more likely to know what we need in any given moment and more able to act to satisfy these needs and meet the needs of others.

Awareness sets us up to be more receptive and responsive in all aspects of our life.

*Opposites: Unaware, constrained & frustrated*

### Present / Attuned and Transformational Presence

Presence is at the heart of Relational Gestalt Therapy.

Presence provides a way of being in the here-and-now with openness and flexibility, able to respond to the fullness of the moment.

In this place of presence, we are aware of the ways our history and other contextual conditions might organise our current experience.

From presence we are more able to confirm the humanity of others. With compassion, we hold others with deep care.

Gestalt training supports the development of therapeutic presence.

*Opposites: Absent, distracted & reactive*

# RELATIONAL GESTALT THERAPY

The 6 Relational Gestalt Foundations underpin all we do at the Gestalt Centre.

## **Receptive / Enlivened & Responsive Relating**

Tuned into our own experience, more present in the here and now, we can orient ourselves to others and the world we live in.

We become more spontaneous and receptive to our needs, and the needs of others, as they emerge in contact.

We build interest in deep satisfying interpersonal relating.

We become curious about the ways we habitually meet others and the changes and challenges of life.

As we become more aware of our habitual patterns in relating to others and meeting our needs flexibly we begin to create change, healing, or transformation.

*Opposites: Closed, denying & isolated*

## **Choiceful / Compassionate & Experimental Living**

In Gestalt, change often includes acceptance of our lived experience. We understand that some of what causes distress is a response to earlier adversity and challenge (adaption).

With support we can identify and begin to let go of unhelpful pathologising narratives. Instead of trying to be 'someone else', we can allow ourselves to be who we are.

We become more compassionate and curious.

We experiment in the world to create novel opportunities for growth and development. We become more creative and flexible moment-to-moment.

*Opposites: Rigid, blaming & shaming*

## **Situated / Cultural & Environmental Sensitivity**

Our curiosity helps us to grapple with the ways we are situated in cultural and environmental worlds (contexts).

We develop in the context of complex relational worlds of family, school, culture, and environment. We recognise that these worlds inevitably shape how we relate to ourselves and others.

Gestalt therapy seeks to contextualise all experience, breaking down ideas of individual pathology, shame, and blame.

We ask the question 'how does this make sense?'

We also seek to become more meaningfully engaged in responding to issues of ecology, diversity, power, and privilege.

*Opposites: Unaccountable, self-interested & isolated*

## **Engaged / Ethical, justice & Community Minded**

Within a relational Gestalt framework, the true goal of therapy is to be engaged in the world, with a developed sense of self and an understanding of the co-emergent experiencing in relationship, family, communities large and small.

Therapy supports more than the individual who attends; it builds capacity for community.

We support people to become more ethical. Ethical in the sense of responsive, responsible, and willing to act for justice.

*Opposites: Self-absorbed, disconnected & lonely*

Please Note: The information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publishing (July 2022), things can (and do) change over time. We will update this document as necessary.

