



## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

# Gestalt therapy groups

Gestalt therapy, developed by Fritz and Laura Perls and Paul Goodman, is a humanistic, experiential approach centered on present-moment awareness: what you're experiencing right now, in your body, your emotions, and your contact with others. In a group, it uses experiments, empty-chair work, and body awareness to make patterns visible and try something different in the moment.

## WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit if you want experiential rather than purely cognitive work.
- Not for a structured skill curriculum or acute crisis. In crisis? Call or text 988.
- Significant trauma may need preparation before body and chair work.

## What it's used for

Depression, anxiety, grief, self-esteem concerns, and personal growth.

Relationship difficulties and unresolved patterns that recur across contexts.

Good when you feel emotionally blocked or struggle to name what you feel.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

**1** Sessions usually run 90 minutes to two hours, with little fixed structure.

**2** The therapist tracks the room moment to moment and proposes experiments.

**3** It can be intense. One person's work often resonates with the whole room.

## Gestalt's formal evidence base is smaller than CBT's, but supportive.

- A 2019 systematic review found consistent evidence that Gestalt **reduces depression, anxiety, and interpersonal difficulties**, with effects comparable to other established therapies.<sup>1</sup>
- It sits within the broader humanistic and experiential family, which has substantial outcome research.
- Much of its support is practice-based and qualitative, by tradition as much as circumstance.

## MAKING THE MOST OF IT

**Notice the here-and-now.** What happens in the room is the material.

**Try the experiments.** Awareness grows through doing.

**Name what you avoid.** Contact begins where you'd pull back.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is the leader trained through a Gestalt institute?
- 2** Is it a closed group, an open group, or a weekend intensive?
- 3** What does it cost? Is there a sliding scale option?

## Ready to find a group?

Browse 2,000+ therapy and support groups in all 50 states.

Free to browse · No account needed · [thegroupguide.com](https://thegroupguide.com)



**If you're in crisis, call or text 988.**

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



## Sources

Gestalt therapy groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Raffagnino, R. Gestalt therapy effectiveness: a systematic review of empirical evidence. Open Journal of Social Sciences (2019).

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