

Gestalt Approach to Coaching

Optimising Individual and Team wellness

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connecting
the
dots

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"It is very hard to live with silence. The real silence is death and this is terrible. To approach this silence, it is necessary to journey to the desert. You do not go into the desert to find identity but to lose it, to lose your personality, to become anonymous. You make yourself void. You become silence. You must become more silent than the silence that surrounds you. And then something extraordinary happens: you hear silence speak."

—Edmond Jabès



Agenda

- **Section 1: Gestalt approach to Coaching**
 - Gestalt approach
 - Healthy Gestalt formation
 - A Gestalt Coaching process and model
- **Section 2: Case study**
 - Background
 - Aim and objectives
 - Interventions
 - Results
- **Section 3: Conclusions**



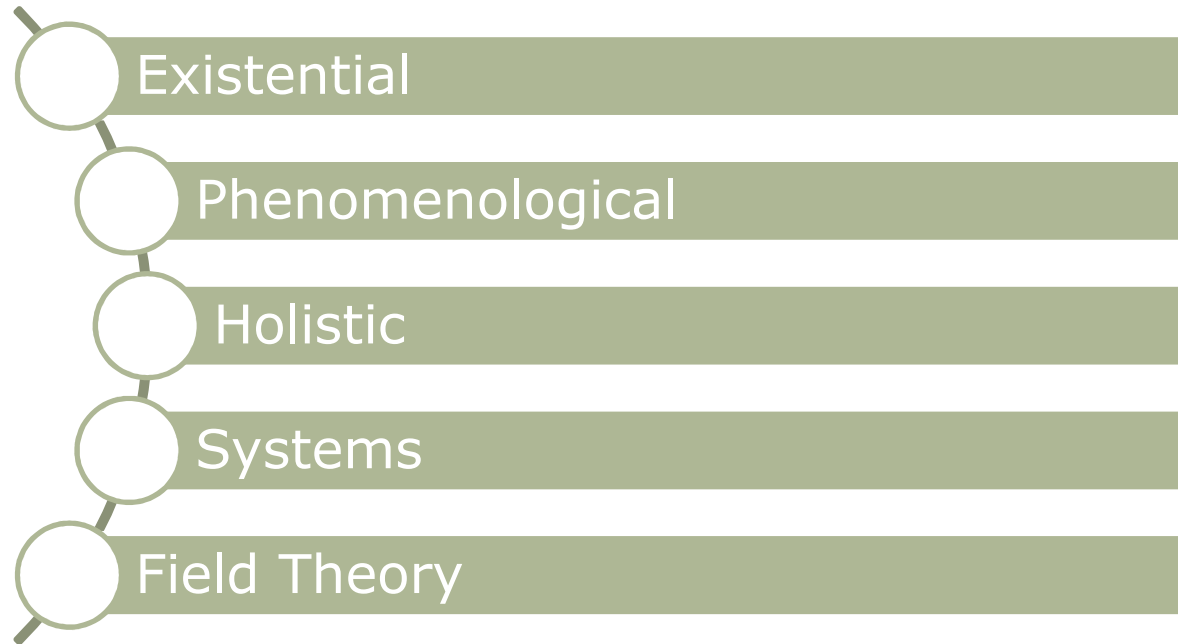
Section 1

GESTALT APPROACH TO COACHING

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What is Gestalt Coaching?

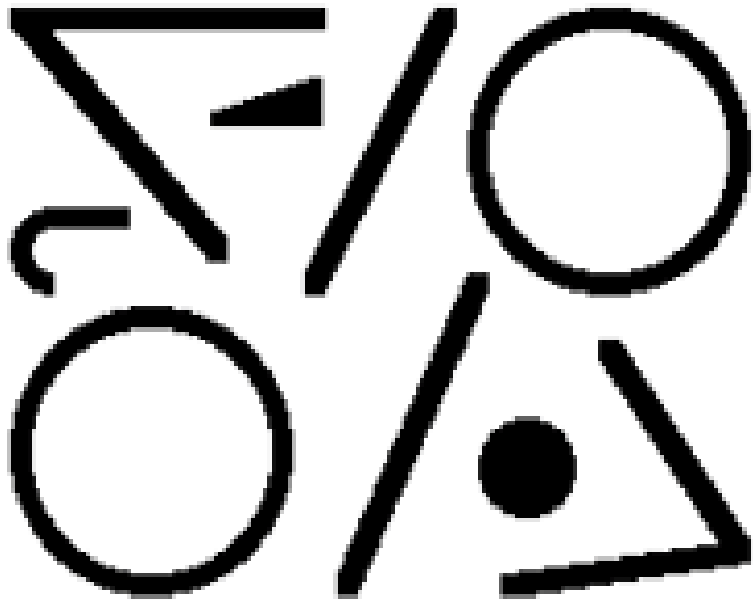


Gestalt coaching is about the sense of **being alive**, the excitement and the **awareness of choice** that everyone has in their daily lives.



Illustration of Gestalt formation

The unified whole is different to the sum of the parts... -



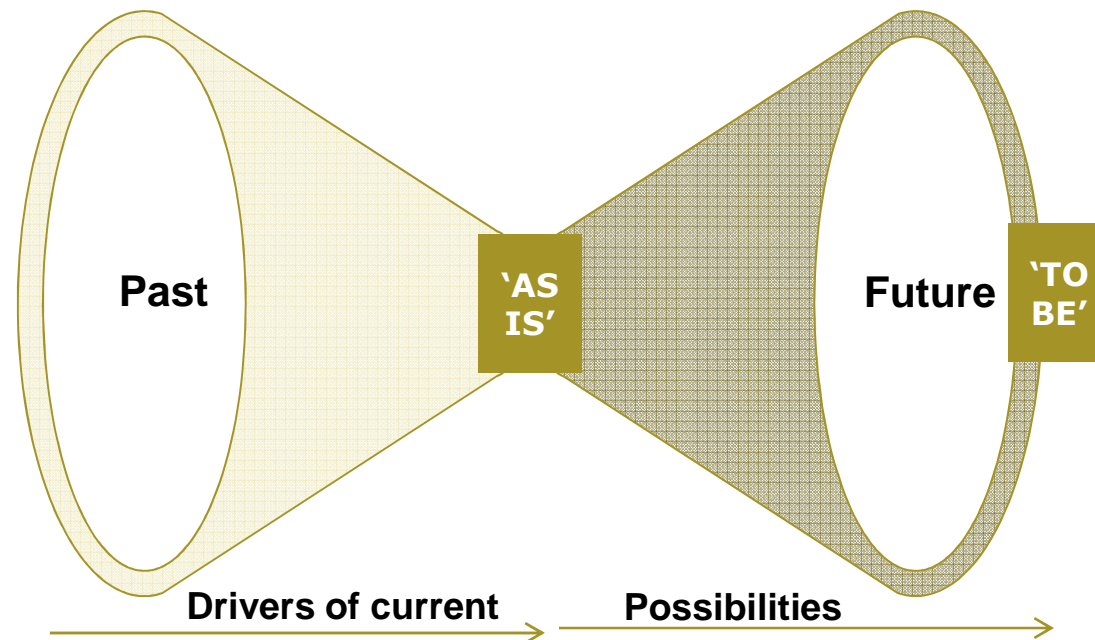
What is a Healthy Gestalt?

- Living in the **present moment** with awareness, cognisant of the past and filled with excitement of the future.
- To move with vigour and liveliness towards **higher levels of growth** is healthy functioning.

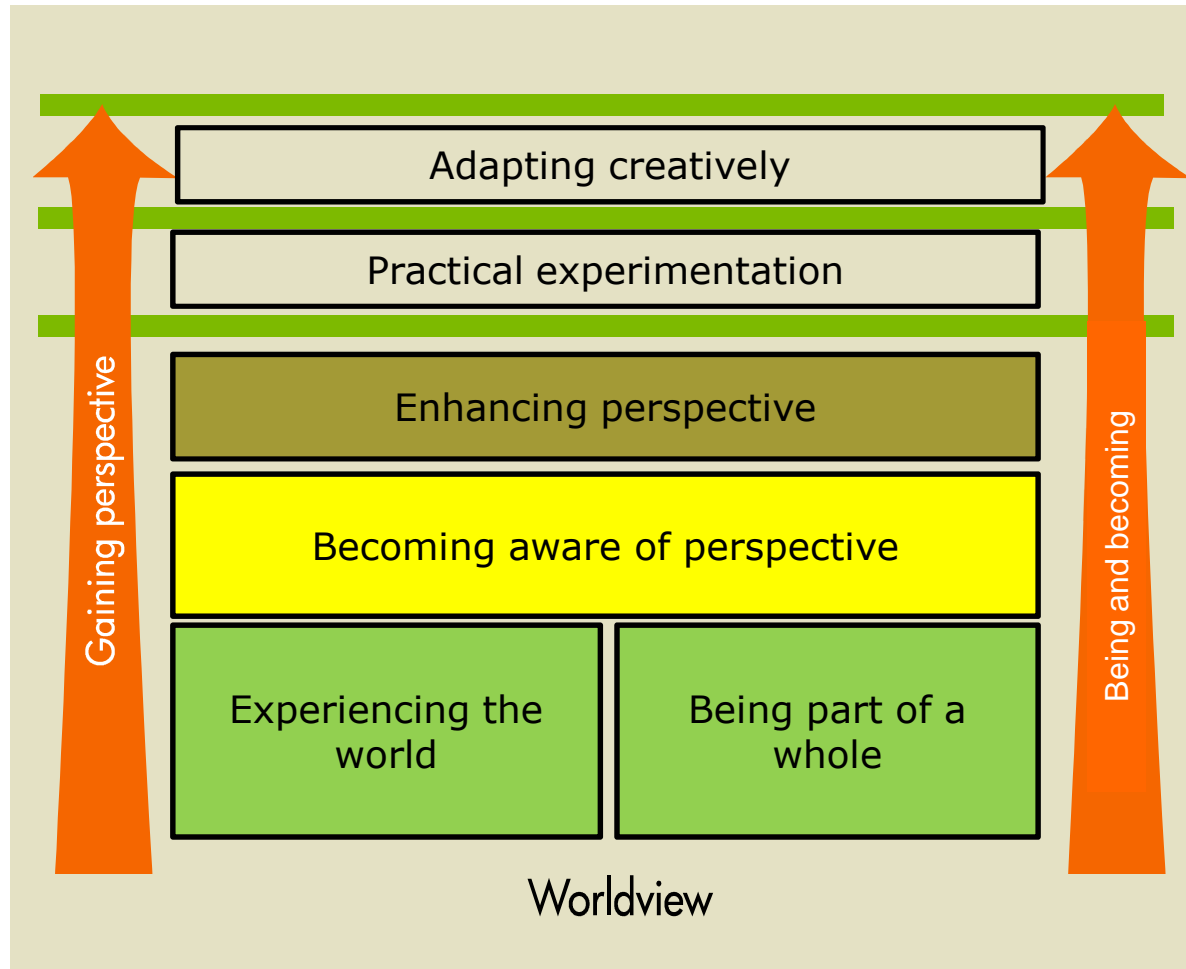


Gestalt Coaching Process – Past, Present and Future ...

Everything in the universe is in a state of **being and of becoming**.
'The **present** is the experience of the particular that one has become, dissolving into **several meaningful possibilities**, and the reforming of these possibilities toward a single, concrete new particular'. (Frits Perls)



Gestalt Coaching Model



Section 2

CASE STUDY

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Background

- Strategic Business Unit within SA university, n = 20
- 3 year engagement, long term intervention
- Drivers:
 - Wellness, one of the strategic thrusts for 2010/ 2011, and wellness specifically one of seven strategic goals
- Wellness conceptualised at individual, team and organisational levels



Aims and Objectives

Aim:

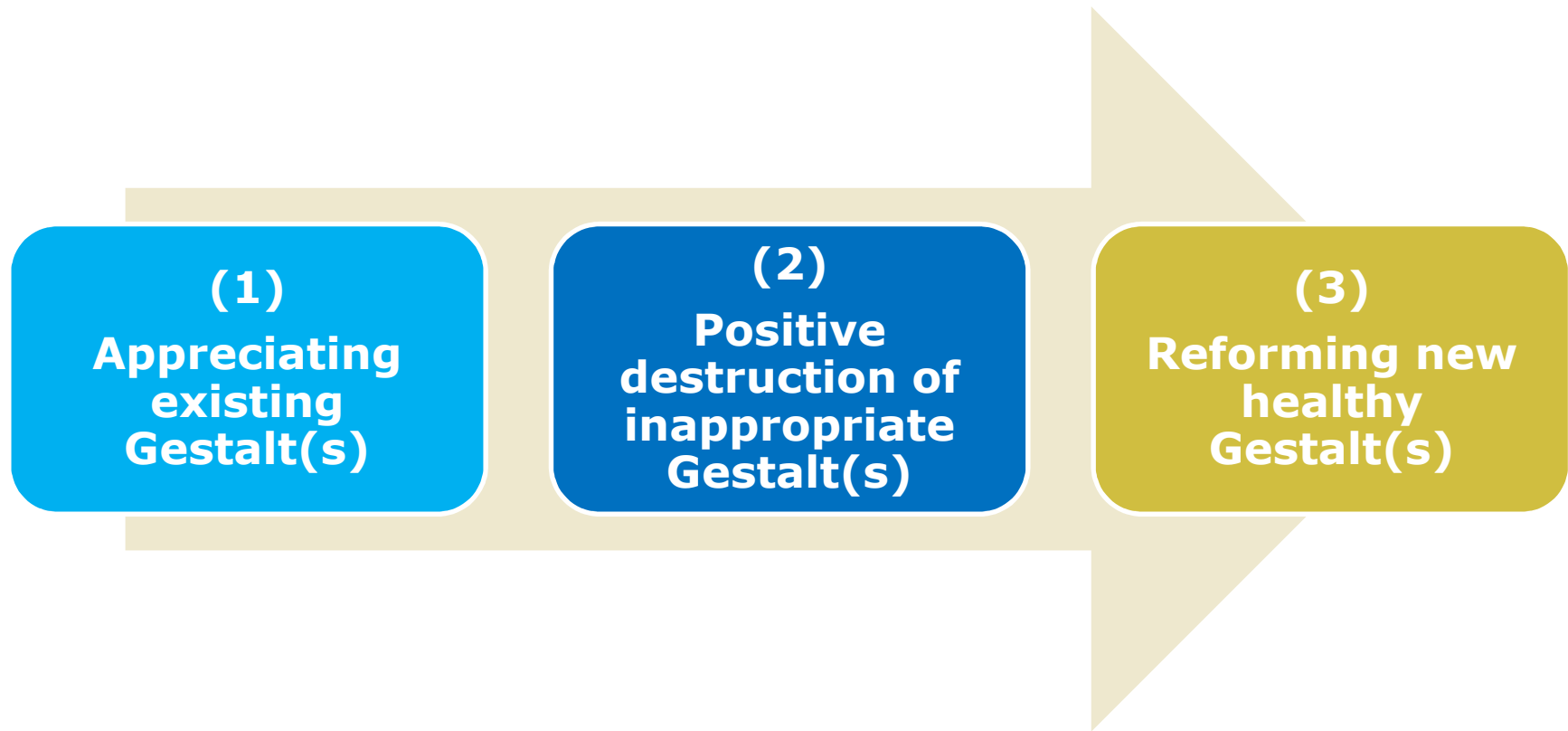
- Create adjustment in the organisational environment through facilitating the creation of meaningful wholes which will:
 - Create **sustainability** in psychological fitness levels
 - Increase **team cohesion** and **performance levels**

Objective:

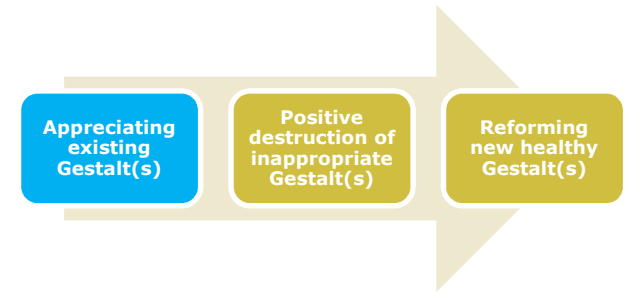
- Increase participants sense of **subjective well-being**



Three phases of Gestalt Coaching



Intervention 1



- **Purpose:**

- To create awareness/ align perspectives around the **current state** of wellness from a systemic perspective

- **Tools and methods:**

- Psychometric assessment (EQ, SWISI, TESI)
- Focus group discussions
- OHFB ©
- Climate survey
- Stakeholder interviews



Gestalt Process



Intervention 1: Findings

- **Burnout** an immediate risk for 9% employees
- Most members were functioning effectively and managing daily stressors adequately, although the sustainability of psychological fitness levels at risk
- Effective level of **resilience** was found due to:
 - positive use of emotional skills and available resources
 - collegial atmosphere
 - intellectual stimulation and meaningful engagement
- Specific **sources of work stress** which could affect wellbeing negatively were identified as:
 - role and career ambiguity
 - relationships
 - lack of autonomy
 - work/ home interface



Intervention Framework

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND COACHING

Executive positioning and strategic impact

STRATEGIC POSITIONING

Organisational identity

Positioning amongst stakeholders

Define value proposition

Role and function of unit

Define services

BUSINESS FRAMEWORK

Individual roles and responsibilities

Service level agreements

Capacity mapping

INDIVIDUAL WELLNESS INTERVENTIONS

Emotional Intelligence

Work-life balance

Individual autonomy

OUTCOMES

BUSINESS:

Increase impact and value

Improve stakeholder relationships

Increased productivity

PEOPLE:

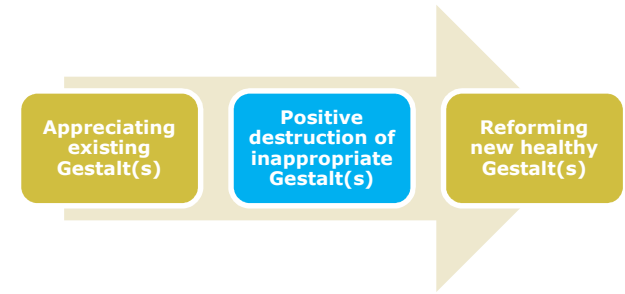
Increased emotional well-being

Increased relationship effectiveness

Increase inner strength

Decrease stress

Intervention 2



- Purpose:
 - To start preparing incumbents at **individual level** for **shared perspectives** around team level functioning
- Tools and methods:
 - Individual coaching sessions
 - Executive leadership 360 and dialogue
 - Building emotional and social intelligence
 - Pro-active agility



Gestalt Process

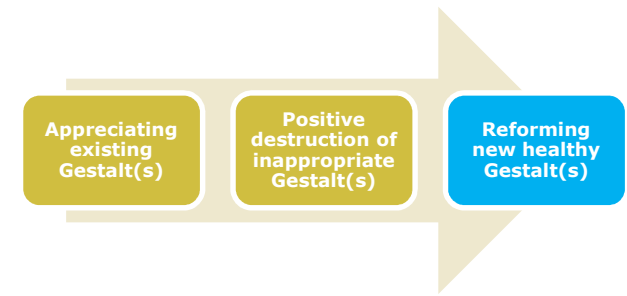


Findings

- Leaders developed integrated perspectives around executive team strengths and development areas ... and action plans around these



Intervention 3



- Purpose:
 - To create a **healthy meaningful Gestalt** of future wellness at individual and team levels
- Tools and methods:
 - String model: metaphor for organisational wellness in client particular context
 - Scenario's: possible meaningful futures to consider



Gestalt Process



Intervention 3: Findings

- Facilitate **creative tension** utilising knowledge and insight pertaining to current perspectives ...

Dimension	Contextual definition	Score
Hunting ability	Unit entrepreneurship to be strengthened to produce valid and appropriate work	40
Rotational flexibility	Unit need to adapt to SH's changing requests through increasing sphere of influence without creating unnecessary expectations	55
Infobility	General perception of good grasp on FET sector in general, with the ability to interpret and customise national policy issues. Need more pro-active knowledge on stakeholder info requirements	70
Organic integration	Collegial support and absence of politics ensure mutual support for joint projects	80



Intervention 3: Findings, cont'd

- Utilise scenario building blocks to envision future positioning for the Unit/ team

DRIVING FORCES	PREDETERMINED ELEMENTS	KEY UNCERTAINTIES
Worldwide move towards showing scholarship (publishing, conferences, etc.)	Staff changes/ new appointments and turnover	Changing HE landscape: spin offs from university ('demerger in disguise')
Higher Education Sector second cycle of audits – different approach	Limited resources: financially and staff competency	Institutional stability determined by external political forces
Need MIS to enable information dissemination and managerial decision making	Continuously changing environments	Future and current role of positional reporting relationships
Equality one of driving forces of strategic plan – affect Unit	Increase flexibility: addressing changing environment, coping with bigger system	Staffing: what skills will be needed – are we suitably equipped? How will we look like?



What is a Healthy Gestalt for Wellness?

Individual

- Engagement

Team

- Experiencing meaning
- Collegial atmosphere
- Team success

Organisation

- Stakeholder perception of performance
- Unit positioning
- Executive positioning of the Unit leader



Section 3

CONCLUSION

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Conclusions

Case study

- **Active presence** in the client system
 - Provide feedback to client
 - Meaningful communication and contact
 - Supporting the development of energy levels
- Team has taken **ownership** of creative adaptation process
 - Allowed team / individuals to reframe their understanding of the system
 - Pulling the coaches along with them now
- Created **excitement and growth**
- Improvements in hard and soft criteria



Conclusions

Gestalt approach to coaching:

- Positive approach
- Useful at individual and team levels in any systemic context
- Coach is part of the system and adopts various roles
- Present-centred respect for past and creative adaptation to future
- Well suited to process methodology, dialogue
- Provides a range of macro and micro processes to work with clients
- Focus turns to real change – when clients are ready for it
- Freedom regarding methods, tools and instruments



Questions

THANK YOU

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