

# Gestalt Therapy

How Reconnecting with Present Experience Can Help Your Loved One Heal



## What is Gestalt Therapy?

**Gestalt Therapy** is an experiential, humanistic form of psychotherapy that focuses on present-moment awareness and the relationship between unresolved emotional experiences and current behavior. Rather than analyzing the past in isolation, it helps clients recognize how unfinished emotional business shapes their choices, relationships, and responses. By working through what has gone unresolved, clients develop a more honest and integrated understanding of themselves.

## How It Works: Core Elements of Gestalt Practice

- 1) Build Present Awareness**  
Direct attention to current thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations as they arise.
- 2) Identify Unfinished Business**  
Surface unresolved emotional experiences that continue to shape present-day behavior.
- 3) Experiment and Express**  
Use guided experiential techniques to access and process blocked or avoided feelings.
- 4) Examine Contact Patterns**  
Recognize how avoidance, deflection, or withdrawal interrupt authentic emotional connection.
- 5) Integrate the Experience**  
Transform emotional insight into lasting changes in self-awareness and behavior.

## Goals of Gestalt Therapy

- Develop awareness of present thoughts and feelings
- Recognize patterns of emotional avoidance
- Resolve long-held conflicts and emotional pain
- Strengthen authentic contact with self and others
- Build personal responsibility for current thoughts and actions

## Therapeutic Benefits

- Less emotional reactivity and avoidance behaviors
- Improved ability to process grief and loss
- Stronger capacity for authentic relationships
- Greater stability and sense of personal identity
- Practical present-moment awareness skills for relapse prevention

## **Gestalt Therapy is Highly Effective For Treating the Following Conditions:**

- Substance Use Disorder
- Relational Difficulties
- Depression
- Personality Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- PTSD

## Gestalt Therapy at Burning Tree Ranch

Most programs introduce Gestalt therapy through brief experiential exercises, without the time or repetition needed to reach the deeper emotional material. For chronic relapsers, a single session does not address years of unfinished business driving the relapse cycle.

Our **long-term, progress-based model** integrates Gestalt throughout treatment, giving clients months to surface avoided emotions, work through unresolved conflict, and build genuine present-moment awareness. Clients advance when they demonstrate real behavioral change, not when a calendar marks them complete.



*“Gestalt asks clients to stop talking about what happened and start experiencing what it did to them. Over time, that honesty changes behavior in ways that can’t be done with analysis alone.”*

 **Brook McKenzie, LCDC**  
CEO, Burning Tree Ranch



## Dual Diagnosis Treatment Using Gestalt Therapy

Gestalt therapy has proven effective in dual-diagnosis treatment, where unresolved emotional patterns and substance use reinforce one another across months and years. For chronic relapsers, untreated emotional pain is often a key mechanism behind the relapse cycle.

At Burning Tree Ranch, we integrate Gestalt therapy with EMDR, individual therapy, and group therapy as part of a comprehensive dual-diagnosis approach. This combination allows us to address both the emotional roots and the behavioral patterns of chronic relapse, supporting clients and families toward lasting, sustainable sobriety.

### Dual Diagnosis Defined:

The presence of **both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



### Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation’s only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at [www.BurningTree.com](http://www.BurningTree.com).

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