

## THE GESTALT CENTRE, LONDON

*Applications invited now for October:*

On-going PRE-TRAINING GROUP

BASIC TRAINING (approx. 2 years)

ADVANCED (Practitioner) TRAINING (approx. 1 year)

**Also** - extensive OPEN PROGRAMME, PRIVATE SESSIONS, SUPERVISION, LOW-COST THERAPY.

Full details from: **ADRIANNE GESS (Centre Co-ordinator),**  
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## AGAINST FEELINGS

It is often said that humanistic psychotherapy emphasises feelings. There are even Institutes for Feeling Therapy, Centres for Feeling People, and therapists who continually talk about the importance of feelings. I have even met people who concentrate upon just one feeling above all others, so that you are not really getting it right unless you are expressing your anger, or your Pain.

As someone who uses Primal Integration as his main form of therapy, of course I, too, see a lot of deep feelings expressed, and believe that to be a very important part of the whole process in which clients are engaged. But somehow there is a falsity about saying that feeling is more important than sensing, thinking, intuiting, imagining, desiring, and so forth. So why do we concentrate so much upon feelings in therapy? There seem to be two main reasons:

- \* Feelings are smaller in number than are thoughts, intuitions, etc. This becomes even more true when we get down to deep fundamental feelings. Different people have different lists of basic feelings, but hardly anyone suggests that there are more than eight of them. This then makes it easier to focus on one thing and work with it.
- \* Feelings go back further than thoughts in that thoughts seem to need the cortex, while feelings can be tied in with much more primitive structures. So we get a longer time-span to deal with, and are able to go back into very early material. The limbic system, in particular, has been shown by Laborit to be particularly adapted to hold long-term memories.

All the other reasons given for working with feelings are, I think, demonstrably inadequate. We are told, for example, that - "What blocks, limits and programs people are uncontacted and unexpressed feelings". Not so: anything at all can block, limit or program somebody - decisions, imagination, desires, what have you - not just feelings. We are told that - "For genuine intimacy to take place, communication on a here-and-now feeling level is essential". But that is not all, by any means, that is essential. Honesty on a conceptual level, freed energy on an orgasmic level, clear demands on a desire level - all these and other things too are necessary for full intimacy.

The truth of the matter seems to be that in therapy what we are trying to do all the time is to encourage the real person to come out, and this means the whole person. We are trying to help the client get to the point where he or she can put his or her whole self, all of it, behind life and action.

A one-sidedly feeling person would be just as much a monster as a one-sidedly thinking person (or sensing, or intuiting, or imagining, desiring, etc). What we are helping the client towards in therapy is integration, not feelings.

**John Rowan**

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