

Thirteenth Annual SW-USA AAGT Regional Conference
“Gestalt Therapy in a Time of Economic Upheaval”
November 6-9, 2008, Pacific Grove, California, USA
CONFERENCE EVALUATION SUMMARY

This is a summary of the Evaluation Forms completed by conference participants and returned to Lu Grey, on-site continuing education registrar, upon completion of the conference. The numbers in parentheses are the number of people in that category.

Forty people attended the 13th Annual SW-USA AAGT Conference the weekend of November 7-9 with Lu Grey conducting their annual Gestalt Writers’ Workshop the two days preceding. The conference was held seaside (*Pacific Ocean*) at Asilomar Conference Center in beautiful Pacific Grove, California.

The opening plenary session on Saturday morning was a presentation by AAGT’s Treasurer and recently elected Continuing Education Officer-elect, Peter Cole, and his lovely wife Daisy Reese, followed by dialogue and group discussion. Peter and Daisy’s presentation was entitled, "**Gestalt Therapy in a Time of Economic Upheaval**" based on their recently published book, *True Self, True Wealth: A Pathway to Prosperity* (2007, New York: ATRIA Books). AAGT president, Dan Bloom, flew in from NYC to participate in the conference.

In SW-AAGT’s traditional gestalt manner of conferencing, the mini-workshops and presentations were developed from emergent themes discussed in the opening session on Friday evening. Of course there are always conferees that come prepared to present on a topic, with the hope of there being sufficient interest to be selected as a workshop. The workshops that emerged for this program were: **Gestalt Therapy and Mindfulness Meditation, Essential Gestalt: What Makes Gestalt Gestalt?, Obama: Now What? How Can Gestalt Therapists Help?** and **Gestalt Therapy and the Enneagram**. Conferees participated in the usual community meetings, small group discussions, luncheons and dinners together along with a 3-hour block on Saturday afternoon to enjoy the beautiful Asilomar Grounds.

Following is a summary of the data on the evaluation forms of the 16 participants who returned them:

Conference Attendance 40, 18 of whom completed and returned their evaluation forms.

Your Professional Identity:

Psychologist (7), Social Worker (5), Marriage & Family Therapist (6)

Area(s) of Specialization:

Group Therapy (5), Couples Therapy (8), Children (2), Gestalt Trainer (5), Adolescents (1), Crisis & Trauma Interventionist (1), Individual therapy (1), Parenting Adult Children of Alcoholics (1)

How did you become aware of this conference? (Please check all that apply)

Colleague (5), Been here from the founding of SWAAGT (4), Friend (4), Employer/Supervisor (1), Professor/Trainer (1), Word of Mouth (3), Brochure/Flyer (1), AAGT Member List serve (3), AAGT Newsletter (1), AAGT Web site (2), Attended 2007 Conference (4)

Are you an AAGT member? Yes (12) No (6) If “No,” why not? NO COMMENTS

Number of SW-AAGT Conferences attended? 13 (4), 12 (2), 11 (1), 10 (2), 9 (1), 6 (2), 5 (1), 4 (2), 3 (2), 2 (1)
(Range: 2 to 13; Average 8.3 SW-AAGT conferences attended)

Number of AAGT Conferences attended? 6 (2), 5 (3), 4 (2), 3 (2), 2 (3), 1 (3), 0 (3) (Range: 0 to 6; Average: 2.6)

Consider attending AAGT 2010 Conference in Philadelphia? Yes (16 88%) No (2) **Email Info to:**

corpen@verizon.net (Christine Orpen, Santa Barbara),

What attracted or interested you that you chose to attend this conference.

The location and the group of people who come to these conferences. The Gestalt community. Joining with colleagues. Program topic and location. My friends were attending and I am interested in keeping up with gestalt theory and practices. I like the site/location, friends, colleagues and topics covered. I very much appreciated the in-depth discussion of where Barack Obama fits with Gestalt philosophy.

Circle the number that best reflects your overall opinion of these aspects of the program
0 = NOT APPLICABLE 1 = POOR 2 = FAIR 3 = SATISFACTORY 4 = GOOD 5 = EXCELLENT

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|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Pre-Conference: Gestalt Writers Workshop | 0 (9) | 1 | 2 | 3 (1) | 4 (2) | 5 (6) |
| Friday Evening Opening Session | 0 (1) | 1 | 2 | 3 (3) | 4 (7) | 5 (7) |
| Plenary Session | 0 | 1 | 2 (1) | 3 (3) | 4 (7) | 5 (7) |
| Saturday Afternoon Program | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 (3) | 4 (5) | 5 (10) |
| Saturday Evening Program/Activity | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 (3) | 4 (5) | 5 (10) |
| Sunday Morning Program | 0 (1) | 1 | 2 | 3 (2) | 4 (5) | 5 (10) |
| Community and Group Experiences | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 (3) | 4 (5) | 5 (10) |
| Gestalt Philosophy and Theory | 0 | 1 (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (4) | 4 (6) | 5 (5) |
| Gestalt Practices, Procedures and Processes | 0 | 1 (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (5) | 5 (7) |
| Overall Format of the Conference | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 (2) | 4 (6) | 5 (10) |
| My Professional Expectations were Fulfilled | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 (2) | 4 (6) | 5 (10) |
| Advertising, Marketing & Information | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 (5) | 5 (8) |
| Location/Setting/Physical Environment | 0 | 1 (2) | 2 | 3 | 4 (8) | 5 (8) |
| Coordination, Registration & Administration | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 (8) | 5 (10) |
| Continuing Education Procedures | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 (6) | 5 (12) |
| Cost of Conference | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 (1) | 4 (5) | 5 (12) |
| Hotel Accommodations/Guest Rooms | 0 | 1 (1) | 2 (1) | 3 | 4 (6) | 5 (10) |

Identify "learnings" from this conference that you hope to apply or use:

I appreciated the clarification of gestalt theory issues. Cultural paradigm shift and its relationship to gestalt therapy. The similarities and differences between awareness and mindfulness. The contribution that gestalt practitioners can make to creating contact across BIG differences such as McCain and Obama camps and campaigns. I just enjoy renewing myself in a gestalt framework – a way of thinking about clients and therapeutic work. The conference was conducive to active participation in the political process as related to our work as therapists. More discussion of Gestalt theory. The importance of knowing the parents' economic history and the importance of "money" in our clients' life. I gained a better understanding of Gestalt work. Mobilize gestalt therapists to social action.

Suggestions for topics and ways to improve future SW-AAGT conferences:

Better food with more choices. Presentations followed by discussion, not just open discussion. Optional programs on Friday night and Saturday afternoon. Do not go back to Asilomar as it is not comfortable enough. Time limits were too restrictive for meals and evening community gatherings. Invite Carolyn Lukensmeyer to spend a weekend with us. I wish we had taken time to discuss California's Proposition 8.

Learning Objectives reported being achieved (participants identifying/relating to topic is in parentheses):

The psychological influence of a family's income (or lack thereof) on the therapeutic relationship. (15)
Clarification of field theory related to Gestalt therapy helps me understand the cultural paradigm shift. (3)
Historical perspective on Paul Goodman's Gestalt therapy supports current social and political action. (10)
Aware of the similarities and differences between awareness and mindfulness and how today's CBT
mindfulness is very similar to early Gestaltists' view of mindlessness. As Fritz would say, "Get out of your
mind and come to your senses," or "Quit your mind-fucking and be aware of the obvious." (12)