

# GESTALT - INTERRUPTIONS TO CONTACT (BLOCKS)

## **1. DESENSITISATION - The need is out of my awareness**

Desensitisation is a kind of shutting down and numbing. Sensations and feelings are diluted, disregarded or even neglected. The self is anaesthetised and deadened. On the other end of this continuum, sensitivity is characterised as the individual being acutely aware of the here and now-stimuli, experiencing oneself and the world.

If I am desensitising I am ignoring, diluting or neglecting my sensations. I have become used to not being aware of my need. By doing so I keep pain and discomfort from emerging. Example from video: If someone shouts at you, you feel nothing.

## **2. DEFLECTION - Avoiding sensation on meaningful impact**

Deflection is a way of reducing one's awareness and feedback from self, others or the environment.

If I am deflecting I am batting away a need by turning aside from direct contact with myself or another person. Example from the video: If someone shouts at you and rather than acknowledge you shame or anger, you make a joke.

## **3. INTROJECTION - Being ruled by internalised shoulds and shouldn'ts**

Introjection is the 'swallowing' (the initial mechanism by which we take in food) of ideas and rules from significant others in our environment.

If I am introjecting I am looking out for what I should be doing. Example from the video: Bruce blocks his need for the loo and says 'I shouldn't interrupt Shirley's story' then doesn't go to the loo.

## **4. PROJECTION - Seeing in others what I do not acknowledge in myself**

Projection is a trait, attitude, feeling, belief or behaviour which actually belongs to our own personality but is not experienced as such: instead, we attribute it to objects or persons in the environment and then we experience them as directed towards us by them (Perls et al., 1951, 211).

If I am projecting I am putting my thoughts and feelings onto other people and experience them as directed towards me. Example from the video: Just before final contact, Bruce says "What if they hear me pee, they will think it is disgusting" and he may hold his pee in until he gets home.

## **5. RETROFLECTION - Resisting aspects of the self**

Retroflection means to resist an aspect of ourselves and not express how we feel, and then turning that emotion that we feel towards another onto ourselves.

If I am retroflecting I can become self-critical or I may suppress my emotions and responses. Example: rather than express anger to an abusive boss, I turn anger on myself and berate myself for being the kind of person who is always victimised.

## **6. CONFLUENCE - Going with someone else's need rather than my own**

If I am being Confluent I am merging with another into their beliefs, attitudes or feelings without recognising they are different. Two confluent people will behave as one person. The 'Royal' We. I relinquish my basic desire for separateness and surrender parts of my personalities. The idea of conflict seems to me to threaten the very foundation of my relationship. Permanent merging or meshing within 'the other' whether person or situation, leads to loss of self, to lack of satisfactory contact and ultimately to disintegration.

Example from the video: Bruce fancies a shepherds pie, but Shirley says how good the burgers are so Bruce orders a burger despite still preferring the shepherds pie.

## **7. EGOTISM - Blocking spontaneity by control**

Egotism in Gestalt is when an individual steps outside of themselves and becomes a commentator or spectator of themselves and their relationship to the environment. There is an excessive preoccupation with one's own thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and the effect on others. The preoccupation can be positive, admiring and self-congratulatory or critical and undermining – either way, it is an avoidance of real relational contact. It's as if this person gets trapped in their own thoughts.

Example from video: Bruce has eaten his burger and has satisfied his hunger but immediately begins to tell himself that he shouldn't have eaten that and now he is going to get fat.