The client's awareness (three zones of awareness)

Fritz Perls (1969) identified three zones of awareness:

1. Inner Zone – Concerned with internal phenomena such as feelings, emotions, dream world and bodily sensations.
2. Outer Zone – Where we make contact with our outer world through our contact functions. This is concerned with our perception of our world and the behaviours and actions we move into.
3. Middle Zone – This includes our cognitive processes, our memories, imaginings, fantasies and daydreams.

The middle mode at best integrates/moderates between inner and outer zones of awareness but it can also function in a controlling and limiting way and serve to avoid updating creative adjustments, keeping fixed gestalts in place.

You may recall the I see . . . I feel . . . I imagine . . . exercise I introduced earlier (Point 5), each of these areas relates to one of the three zones of awareness. By being attentive to each of these areas we can heighten our awareness and increase our ability to attune to our current environment and the way in which we creatively adjust to our environment. Consequently, we can improve our relationship with our perceived world. In healthy functioning there is usually rapid shuttling between all three zones of awareness with the middle zone functioning to facilitate awareness of what is.

As stated previously awareness is a prerequisite for full and vibrant contact with the environment. In order for the gestalt therapist to be able to work optimally she needs to be aware of how she functions in each of the three awareness zones. In moving fluidly between these zones there is an ‘aggressive destructiveness and re-constructiveness’ (PHG, 1951: 67) as one moves from one awareness to another. The birth of a new awareness brings about the death of the previous awareness – such is the nature of healthy gestalt form destruction. It is this destruction that we remain with what is relevant gestalt to exist.

The client’s awareness is blocked, moderated and out of consideration for the instances where a dullness if such a process is induced it could at best be like.

Tanya suffered an abnormally by desensitize armouring and māhinā ability to make such works for the emerging scenarios she has the just does what is necessary to her current environment when she has seen her current environment.

Contact is mark sufficiently supported or unsupported it leads by moderating consciousness of the support field-incongruent meaning.

We should not consider this as an introverted self-awareness, but awareness is awareness. If open to the now born, integrating and but the sum of all (F. Perls, 1969).
healthy gestalt formation that emerging figures are destined for
destruction. It is through this on-going process of formation and
destruction that we maintain contact with what is, rather than
remain with what was, by freeing our foreground for the next
relevant gestalt to emerge from our background.

The client’s awareness can be diminished, numbed, automatic,
blocked, moderated or interrupted (as can the therapist’s). But
we are not on a crusade for ever-increasing awareness without
consideration for the client’s situation. There are many circum-
stances where a dulling of awareness will serve the client well, but
if such a process is incongruent with the client’s current situation
it could at best be limiting and at worst be life-threatening.

Tanya suffered an abusive childhood and survived her abuse cre-
atively by desensitizing and retroreflecting to protect herself through
armouring and minimizing contact with her toxic environment. Her
ability to make such creative adjustments is still useful today. She
works for the emergency services and when faced with horrifying
scenarios she has the ability to move into ‘coping mode’ when she
just does what is needed in the crisis. However, there are times in
her home life when she distances herself from her caring husband,
particularly around intimacy. Alarmingly there have been occasions
when she has seemingly desensitized herself from the dangers in
her current environment when walking home alone late at night.

Contact is marked by excitement when that contact is suf-
ficiently supported by the environment. When the person feels
unsupported it leads to anxiety/fear that needs to be managed
by moderating contact. The key is heightening the client’s aware-
ess of the supports that are now available; otherwise outdated,
field-incongruent moderations to contact may persist.

We should not confuse meaningful awareness with an internally
focused introspection that some may mistakenly consider
self-awareness, but is in fact more akin to egotism. Meaningful
awareness is awareness of self in relation at the contact boundary.
If open to the novelty implicit in that meeting new gestals are
born, integrating past disparate awareness. ‘Reality is nothing
but the sum of all awareness as you experience it here and now’
(F. Perls, 1969).