

Summary of

On Becoming a Person

A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy

Carl R. Rogers
(1961)

This summary collects the views, ideas, thoughts and examples of the book that were most groundbreaking and important to me personally. I created it in a way that it concludes logically and is digestible and understandable without prior knowledge, but many personal notes and details had to be left out. In order to understand Rogers's perspectives more fully and thoroughly, I recommend reading the full book. Enjoy, Gergő

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Rogers's Significant Learnings

1) In my relationships with persons I have found that it does not help, in the long run, to act as though I were something I am not.

- It does not help to act calm and pleasant when I am angry and critical
- It does not help to act as though I know the answers when I do not
- It does not help to act as though I were a loving person if actually, at the moment, I am hostile
- It does not help to act as though I were full of assurance, if actually I am frightened and unsure
- It is not helpful to maintain a facade, to act in one way on the surface when I am experiencing something different underneath
- The above is not helpful to build constructive relationships with other individuals
- Most of my mistakes in personal relationships, or when I failed to help individuals was because of some defensive reason, I behaved one way at the surface level, while in reality my feelings run in a contrary direction

2) I find I am more effective when I can listen acceptantly to myself, and can be myself

- I have become more adequate in listening to myself, so that I know better what I'm feeling at the moment
- I have become more adequate in letting myself be what I am
- It becomes easier for me to accept myself as a decidedly imperfect person
- The curious paradox is that when I accept myself as I am, then I change
- We cannot change, we cannot move away from what we are, until we thoroughly accept what we are - then change seems to come about almost unnoticed
- Then relationships become real, vital and meaningful
 - Accepting that I am annoyed or bored by someone makes me more likely to accept his feelings in response - then I can also accept the changed feelings that are likely to occur
- Accepting the limit of my endurance, my desire to manipulate, feelings of warmth, interest, kindness, understanding
- It is when I do accept all these attitudes as a fact, as a part of me, that my relationship with the other person then becomes what it is, and is able to grow and change the most rapidly

3) I have found it of enormous value when I can permit myself to understand another person

- Permit myself to understand = no evaluation, judgement, label
 - Eg.: not using "That's right", "that's stupid", "that's not nice"
- Risky: understanding another person might change me by that understanding
- To understand is enriching in a double way: I can learn from someone else's experiences in ways that change me, and understanding others permits them to change

- Understanding permits them to accept their own fears, bizarre thoughts, tragic feelings, discouragements, as well as their moments of courage, kindness, love and sensitivity

4) I have found it enriching to open channels whereby others can communicate their feelings, their private perceptual worlds, to me.

- Reducing the barriers between others and me, so that they can, if they wish, reveal themselves more fully
 - By my own attitudes, create a safety in the relationship which makes such communication more possible
 - A sensitiveness of understanding which sees him as he is to himself, and accepts him as having those perceptions and feelings, helps too
 - Reducing the need for fear or defensiveness

5) I have found it highly rewarding when I can accept another person

- Not easy: Can I permit the other to feel hostile towards me? Can I accept his anger as a real and legitimate part of himself? Can I accept him when he views life and its problems in a way quite different from mine? Can I accept him when he feels very positively toward me, admiring me and wanting to model himself after me?
- Hard to permit others to think or feel differently than we do
- Yet it has come to seem to me that this separateness of individuals, the right of each individual to utilize his experience in his own way and to discover his own meanings in it - this is one of the most priceless potentialities of life
- Each person is an island unto himself, in a very real sense, and he can only build bridges to other islands if he is the first of all willing to be himself and permitted to be himself. So I find that when I can accept another person, which means specifically accepting the feelings and attitudes and beliefs that he has as a real and vital part of him, then I am assisting him to become a person: and there seems to me great value in this

6) The more I am open to the realities in me and in the other person, the less do I find myself wishing to rush in to “fix things”

- As I try to listen to myself and the experiencing going on in me, and the more I try to extend that same listening attitude to another person, the more respect I feel for the complex processes of life. So I become less and less inclined to hurry in to fix things, to set goals, to mold people, to manipulate and push them in the way that I would like them to go.
- It is a very paradoxical thing: that to the degree that each one of us is willing to be himself, then he finds not only himself changing, but he finds that other people to whom he relates are also changing.

7) I can trust my experience

- I have learned that my total organismic sensing of a situation is more trustworthy than my intellect. Eg. when an activity feels as though it is valuable or worth doing, it is worth doing
- I have never regretted moving in the direction which “felt right”, even though I have often felt lonely or foolish at the time
- When I have trusted some inner non-intellectual sensing, I have discovered wisdom in the move

- As I gradually come to trust my total reactions more deeply, I find that I can use them to guide my thinking
- The totality of my experience is fallible I am sure, but I believe it to be less fallible than my conscious mind alone

8) Evaluation of others is not a guide for me

- The judgements of others, while they are to be listened to, and taken into account for what they are, can never be a guide for me
- I have come to feel that only one person can know whether what I do is honest, thorough, open and sound, or false and defensive and unsound, and I am that person.
- I am happy to get all sorts of evidence regarding what I am doing and criticism and praise are part of such evidence. But to weigh this evidence and to determine its meaning and usefulness is a task I cannot relinquish to anyone else

9) Experience is, for me, the highest authority

- No other person's ideas and none of my own ideas are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me.
- Reading a theory < Formulating a theory < Direct experience
- My experience is not authoritative because it is infallible. It is the basis of authority because it can always be checked in new primary ways. In this way its frequent error or fallibility is always open to correction.

10) I enjoy the discovering of order in experience

- I seek for the meaning or the orderliness, or lawfulness in any large body of experience. It is this kind of curiosity which I find it very satisfying to pursue.
- It is justified because it is satisfying to perceive the world as having order, and because rewarding results often ensue when one understands the orderly relationships which appear in nature

11) The facts are friendly

- Every bit of evidence one can acquire, in any area, leads one that much closer to what is true. And being closer to the truth can never be a harmful or dangerous or unsatisfying thing.
- So while I hate to readjust my thinking, some deeper level I have come to realize that these painful reorganizations are what is known as learning, and that though painful they always lead to a more satisfying because of a somewhat more accurate way of seeing life.

12) What is personal is most general

- There have been times when I have expressed myself in ways so personal that I have felt I was expressing an attitude which it was probable no one else could understand, because it was so uniquely my own.
- In these instances I have almost invariably found that the very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is resonance in many other people.

- It has led me to believe that what is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if it were shared or expressed, speak most deeply of others.

13) It has been my experience that persons have a basically positive direction

- When I can sensitively understand the feelings which they are expressing, when I am able to accept them as separate persons in their own right, then I find that they tend to move in certain directions.
- The directions are: positive, constructive, moving toward self-actualization, growing toward maturity, growing toward socialization
- The more the individual is understood and accepted, the more he tends to move in a direction which is forward
- I am aware that out of the defensiveness and inner fear individuals can and do behave in ways which are incredibly cruel, horribly destructive, immature, regressive, anti-social and hurtful. Yet one of the most refreshing and invigorating parts of my experience is to work with such individuals and to discover the strongly positive directional tendencies which exist in them, in all of us, at the deeper levels.

14) Life at its best, is a flowing, changing process in which nothing is fixed

- When life is richest and most rewarding it is a flowing process
- I find that I'm the best when I can let the flow of my experience carry me, in a direction which appears to be forward, toward goals of which I am but dimly aware
- In this floating with the complex stream of my experiencing, and in trying to understand its ever-changing complexity, it should be evident that there are no fixed points - when I am thus able to be in the process, it is clear that there can be no closed system of beliefs, no unchanging set of principles which I hold.
- Life is guided by a changing understanding of and interpretation of my experience. It is always in process of becoming.
- I can thus only try to live by my interpretation of the current meaning of my experience, and try to give others the permission and freedom to develop their inward freedom and this their own meaningful interpretation of their own experience

How Can I Be of Help?

Some hypotheses regarding the facilitation of growth

1) Negative learning

- I cannot help individuals by means of any intellectual or training procedure. No approach, which relies upon knowledge, upon training, upon the acceptance of something that is taught, is of any use. It is possible to explain a person to himself, to prescribe steps which should lead him forward, to train him in knowledge about a more satisfying mode of life. But such methods are, in my experience, futile and inconsequential. The most they can accomplish is some temporary change, which soon disappears, leaving the individual more than ever convinced of his inadequacy.
- Change appears to come about through experience in a relationship

2) Therapeutic relationship

- If I can provide a certain type of relationship, the other person will discover within himself the capacity to use that relationship for growth, and change and personal development will occur.
 - The more I can be **genuine** in the relationship, the more helpful it will be. This means that I need to be **aware of my own feelings**, in so far as possible, rather than presenting an outward facade of one attitude, while actually holding another attitude at a deeper, unconscious level. Being genuine also involves the **willingness to be and to express**, in my words and my behavior, **the various feelings and attitudes which exist in me**. It is only this way that the relationship can have reality, and reality seems deeply important as a first condition. It is only by providing the genuine reality which is in me, that the other person can successfully seek for the reality in him. I have found this to be true even when the attitudes I feel are not attitudes with which I am pleased, or attitudes which seem conducive to a good relationship. It seems extremely important to be real.
 - The more **acceptance** and liking I feel toward this individual, the more I will be creating a relationship he can use. By acceptance I mean a warm regard for him as a person of **unconditional self-worth** - of value no matter what his condition, his behavior, his feelings. This acceptance of each fluctuating aspect of this other person makes it for him a relationship of warmth and safety, and the **safety of being liked and prized as a person** seems a highly important element in a helping relationship.
 - The relationship is significant to the extent that I feel a continuing desire to understand - a sensitive **empathy** with each of the client's feelings and communications as they seem to him at the moment. Acceptance does not mean much until it involves understanding. It is only as **I see them as you see them, and accept them and you**, that you feel really free to explore all the hidden nooks and frightening crannies of your inner and often buried experience.
 - This **freedom** is an important condition of the relationship. There is implied here a freedom to explore oneself at both conscious and unconscious levels, as rapidly as one can dare to embark on this dangerous quest. There is also a freedom from any type of moral or diagnostic evaluation, since all such evaluations are, I believe, always threatening.

3) The individual will discover within himself the capacity to use this relationship for growth

- In a suitable psychological climate the **forward-moving tendency towards maturity** is released, and becomes actual rather than potential.
- It is evident in the **capacity of the individual to understand** those aspects of his life and of himself which are causing him pain and dissatisfaction, an understanding which probes beneath his conscious

knowledge of himself into those experiences which he has hidden from himself because of their threatening nature.

- It is this urge which is **evident in all organic and human life** - to expand, extend, become autonomous, develop, mature - the tendency to **express and activate all the capacities of the organism**, to the extent that such activation enhances the organism or the self.
- This tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses, hidden behind elaborate facades which deny its existence, but it is my belief that **it exists in every individual**, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed.

4) In a therapeutic relationship, change will occur

- In such a relationship the individual will **reorganize himself** at both the conscious and deeper levels of his personality in such a manner as to cope with life more constructively, more intelligently, and in a more socialized as well as a more satisfying way.
- In such a relationship the individual becomes more **integrated**, more **effective**. He shows fewer of the characteristics which are usually termed neurotic or psychotic, and more of the **characteristics of the healthy, well-functioning person**. He changes his perception of himself, becoming more **realistic** in his views of self. He becomes more like the person he wishes to be. He **values himself** more highly. He is more **self-confident** and self-directing. He has a better **understanding of himself**, becomes more open to his experience, denies or represses less of his experience. He becomes more **accepting in his attitudes toward others**, seeing others as more similar to himself. He is **less frustrated** by stress and recovers more quickly. He becomes more **mature** in his everyday behavior. He is **less defensive**, more **adaptive**, more able to **meet situations creatively**.

5) The laws of a therapeutic relationship apply to all human relationships

- If certain attitudinal conditions exist, then certain definable changes will occur. Eg. parent-child, teacher-student, administrator-staff relationships

Characteristics of a helping relationship

- a) In parent-child relationships, "**acceptant-democratic**" attitudes seemed most growth facilitating. Warm and equalitarian attitudes showed accelerated intellectual development (increasing IQ), more originality, more emotional security and control, less excitability.
- b) Children with parents of "**Actively rejecting**" attitudes showed slightly decelerated intellectual development, poor use of abilities, lack of originality. They were more unstable emotionally, rebellious, aggressive and quarrelsome.
- c) A warmly emotional and expressive peer, respectful of the individuality of himself and of the other, exhibiting non-possessive caring probably facilitates self-realization.
- d) Treating schizophrenic patients: physicians looking for their **personal meaning**, rather than treating them as a case history or a descriptive diagnosis, and tending towards **personality-oriented goals** instead of

reducing symptoms, with **active personal participation**, less interpretation, instruction or advice achieved a higher degree of success and their patients trusted them more.

- e) Perceived **therapeutic help increases** when: they trust the therapist, are understood by the therapist, have a feeling of independence in making choices, and when the therapist openly stated feelings which the client has been approaching hazily and hesitantly.
- f) Perceived **therapeutic help decreases** when: they meet lack of interest, remoteness, distance, over-degree sympathy, receiving specific advice or emphasizing past history rather than present problems.
- g) **Guiding suggestions** are perceived neither helpful or unhelpful.
- h) **Expert therapist elements** are: ability to understand the client's meanings and feelings (or an attitude of desiring to understand), a sensitivity to the client's attitudes and a warm interest without any emotional over-involvement.
- i) **Success in therapy** is closely associated with a strong and mutual liking and respect between client and the therapist
- j) Without **warm acceptance and permissiveness** the organism organizes against threat
- k) Conclusion: the **attitudes and feelings of the therapist** perceived by the client are more important than the theoretical orientation, procedures or techniques.
- l) Least effective method: 1) pointing out and labeling the behaviors which had proved unsatisfying 2) exploring objectively with the client the reasons behind these behaviors 3) establishing through re-education more effective problem-solving habits. Besides this, the therapist permits little of his own personality to intrude as in humanly possible, and stresses personal anonymity. To **withhold one's self as a person** and to deal with the other person as an object does **not have a high probability of being helpful**.
- m) Necessary and sufficient conditions for **therapeutic change**: a) the degree of empathic understanding of the client's feelings as they seem to the client b) the degree of positive affective attitude (unconditional positive regard) c) the extent to which the counselor is genuine - the extent to which his words matched his feelings

How can I create a helping relationship?

1) Can I be in some way which will be perceived by the other person as trustworthy, as dependable or consistent in some deep sense?

- a) Research and experience indicates that this is very important
- b) Being **trustworthy** does not demand that I be rigidly consistent but that I be **dependably real**. Congruency means that whatever feeling or attitude I am experiencing would be matched by my awareness of that attitude. When this is true, then I am a unified or **integrated person** in that moment, and hence I can be whatever I deeply am. This is a reality which I find others experience as dependable.

- 2) **Can I be expressive enough as a person that what I am will be communicated unambiguously?**
 - a) When I fail to listen to what is going on in me, fail because of my own defensiveness to sense my own feelings, then this kind of failure seems to result. The most basic learning is that **it is safe to be transparently real**. If in any given relationship I am reasonably congruent, if no feelings relevant to the relationship are hidden either to me or the other person, then I can be almost sure that **the relationship will be a helpful one**.
 - b) If I can form a **helping relationship to myself** - if I can be sensitively aware of and acceptant toward my own feelings - then the likelihood is great that I can form a helping relationship toward another.
- 3) **Can I let myself experience positive attitudes towards this other person - attitudes of warmth, caring, liking, interest, respect?**
 - a) I find in myself and feel that I often see in others, a certain amount of **fear of these feelings**. We are afraid that if we let ourselves freely experience these positive feelings toward another we may be trapped by them. They may lead to **demands on us** or we may be **disappointed in our trust**, and these outcomes we fear. So as a reaction **we build up distance between ourselves and others**, an impersonal relationship.
 - b) If the person is perceived as an object, we can **keep ourselves from** experiencing the **caring** which would exist if we recognized the relationship as one between two persons.
- 4) **Can I be strong enough as a person to be separate from the other?**
 - a) Can I be a sturdy **respector of my own feelings**, my own needs, as well as his? **Can I own and**, if need be, **express my own feelings** as something belonging to me and separate from his feelings? Am I strong enough in my own separateness that I will not be downcast by his depression, frightened by his fear, nor engulfed by his dependency? Is my inner self hardy enough to recognize that I am not destroyed by his anger, taken over by his need for dependence, nor enslaved by his love, but that I exist separate from him with feelings and rights of my own?
 - b) If I can freely feel this **strength of being a separate person**, then I find that I can let myself go much more deeply in understanding and accepting others because I am not fearful of losing myself.
- 5) **Am I secure enough within myself to permit him his separateness?**
 - a) Can I **permit him to be what he is** - honest or deceitful, infantile or adult, despairing or over-confident? Can I give him the freedom to be? Or do I feel that he should follow my advice, or remain somewhat dependent on me, or mold himself after me?
 - b) A less competent counselor tends to induce conformity to himself, to have clients who model themselves after him. The more competent counselor can **interact with a client** through many interviews **without interfering with the freedom of the client** to develop a personality quite separate from that of his therapist.

- 6) **Can I let myself enter fully into the world of his feelings and personal meanings and see these as he does?**
 - a) Can I step into his private world so completely that I **lose all desire to evaluate or judge it**? Can I enter it so sensitively that I can **move about in it freely**, without trampling on meanings which are only implicit, which he sees only dimly or as confusion?
 - b) Even a minimal amount of understanding - a bumbling and faulty attempt to catch the confused complexity of the client's meaning - is helpful, though there is no doubt that it is most helpful when I can see and **formulate clearly the meanings in his experiencing** which for him have been unclear and tangled.
- 7) **Can I be acceptant of each facet of this other person which he presents to me?**
 - a) Can I **receive him as he is**? Can I communicate this attitude? Or can I only receive him conditionally, acceptant of some aspects of his feelings and silently or openly disapproving other aspects? It has been my experience that **when my attitude is conditional**, then **he cannot change or grow** in those respects in which I cannot fully receive him.
 - b) And when I try to discover why I have been unable to accept him in every respect, I usually discover that it is because **I have been frightened or threatened in myself** by some aspect of his feelings.
- 8) **Can I act with sufficient sensitivity in the relationship that my behavior will not be perceived as a threat?**
 - a) If I can **free him** as completely as possible **from external threat**, then he can begin to experience and to **deal with the internal feelings** and conflicts which he finds threatening **within himself**.
- 9) **Can I free him from the threat of external evaluation?**
 - a) In almost every phase of our lives - at home, at school, at work - we find ourselves under the **rewards and punishments of external judgments**.
 - b) In my experience, they **do not make for personal growth** and hence I **do not believe** that they are a **part of a helping relationship**. Curiously enough a positive evaluation is as threatening in the long run as a negative one, since to inform someone that he is good implies that you also have the right to tell him he is bad.
 - c) The more I can keep a relationship **free of judgment and evaluation**, the more this will permit the other person to reach the point where he recognizes that the locus of evaluation, the center of responsibility, **lies within himself**.
 - d) The **meaning and value of his experience** is in the last analysis something which is **up to him**, and no amount of external judgment can alter this.
- 10) **Can I meet this other individual as a person who is in process of becoming, or will I be bound by his past and by my past?**
 - a) If I am dealing with him as an immature child, an ignorant student, a neurotic personality or a psychopath, each of these concepts of mine **limits what he can be** in that relationship.
 - b) If I accept the other person as something fixed, already diagnosed and classified, already shaped by his past, then I am doing my part to confirm this

limited hypothesis. If I **accept him as a process of becoming**, then I am doing what I can to confirm or make real his potentialities.

11) Conclusion

- a) I cannot give a positive answer to all these questions, I can only **work in the direction of the positive answer**.
- b) The degree to which I can create relationships which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons is a **measure of growth I have achieved in myself**.

What we know about psychotherapy

1) We have made progress in determining those ingredients in a relationship which promote personal growth.

- a) This seems to be inherent in the organism, just as we find similar tendency in the human animal to develop and mature physically, provided minimally satisfactory conditions are provided. Therapy plays an extremely important part in releasing and facilitating the tendency of the organism toward psychological development or maturity, when this tendency has been blocked.

2) Objective knowledge

- a) When the psychotherapist is what he is, when in the relationship with his client he is genuine and without "front" or facade, openly being the feelings and attitudes which at that moment are flowing in him. **This is congruence**. Each of us knows individuals whom we trust because we sense that they are being what they are, that we are dealing with the person himself, not with a polite or professional front.
- b) When the therapist is experiencing a warm, positive and acceptant attitude toward what is in the client, this facilitates change. It involves the therapist's genuine willingness for the client to be whatever feeling is going on in him at that moment. It means that the therapist cares for the client, in a non-possessive way. This means an outgoing positive feeling without reservations, without evaluations. **This is unconditional positive regard**.
- c) The third condition is **empathic understanding**. When the therapist is sensing the feelings and personal meanings which the client is experiencing in each moment, when he can perceive these from "inside" as they seem to the client, and when he can successfully communicate something of that understanding to his client, then this third condition is fulfilled.
- d) This kind of understanding is extremely rare. It's not: "I understand what is wrong with you", or "I understand what makes you act that way" or "I too have experienced your trouble and I reached very differently" - these are evaluative understandings from the outside.
- e) But when someone understands how it feels and seems to be me, without wanting to analyze me or judge me, then I can blossom and grow in that climate. When the therapist can grasp the moment-to-moment experiencing which occurs in the inner world of the client as the client sees it and feels it, without losing the separateness of his own identity in this empathic process, then change is likely to occur.

3) The dynamics of change

- a) As the client finds someone else listening acceptantly to his feelings, he little by little becomes able to listen to himself. As he becomes more open to what is going on within him he becomes able to listen to feelings which he always denied and repressed.
- b) While he is learning to listen to himself he also becomes more acceptant of himself. Slowly he moves toward taking the therapist's attitude of consistency and unconditional positive regard for him and his feelings. He listens more accurately to the feelings within and becomes less evaluative and more acceptant toward himself, moving towards greater congruence.
- c) As these changes occur, as he becomes more self-aware, more self-acceptant, less defensive and more open, he finds that he is at last free to change and grow in the directions natural to the human organism.

4) The Process

- a) In regard to feelings and personal meanings, he moves away from a state in which feelings are unrecognized, unowned, unexpressed. He moves toward a flow in which ever-changing feelings are experienced in the moment, knowingly and acceptingly, and may be accurately expressed.
- b) This process involves a change in the manner of his experiencing. He moves from a remote experiencing, intellectualizing to what actually is going on within him. Toward an immediacy of experiencing in which he lives openly in his experiencing, and knows that he can turn to it to discover its current meanings.
- c) The process involves a loosening of the cognitive maps of experience. From construing experience in rigid ways, which are perceived as external facts, the client moves toward developing changing, loosely held constrictings of meaning in experience, constructs which are modifiable by each new experience.
- d) The process moves away from fixity, remoteness from feelings and experience, rigidity of self-concept, remoteness from people, impersonality of functioning. It moves towards fluidity, changingness, immediacy of feelings and experience, acceptance of feelings and experience, tentativeness of constructs, discovery of a changing self in one's changing experience, realness and closeness of relationships, a unity and integration of functioning.

5) The results of therapy

- a) The client changes and reorganizes his concept of himself. He moves away from perceiving himself as unacceptable to himself, as unworthy of respect, as having to live by the standards of others. He moves toward a conception of himself as a person of worth, as a self-directing person, able to form his standards and values upon the basis of his own experience. He develops much more positive attitudes toward himself.
- b) He becomes less defensive, and hence more open to his experience of himself and others. He becomes more realistic and differentiated in his perceptions. His aims and ideals for himself change so that they are more achievable. The initial discrepancy between the self that he is and the self that he wants to be is greatly diminished.

- c) Tension of all types is reduced - physiological tension, psychological discomfort, anxiety. He perceives other individuals with more realism and more acceptance.

6) Conclusion

- a) The more that the client perceives the therapist as real or genuine, as empathic, as having an unconditional regard for him, the more the client will move away from a static, fixed, unfeeling, impersonal type of functioning, and the more he will move toward a way of functioning marked by a fluid, changing, acceptant experiencing of differentiated personal feelings. The consequence of this movement is an alteration in personality and behavior in the direction of psychic health and maturity and more realistic relationships to self, others and the environment.

The Therapist's Experience

"Here is this other person, my client. I'm a little afraid of him, afraid of the depths in him as I am a little afraid of the depths in myself. Yet as he speaks, I begin to feel a respect for him, to feel my kinship to him. I sense how frightening his world is for him, how tightly he tries to hold it in place. I would like to sense his feelings, and I would like him to know that I understand his feelings. I would like him to know that I stand with him in his tight, constricted little world, and that I can look upon it relatively unafraid. Perhaps I can make a safer world for him. I would like my feelings in this relationship with him to be as clear and transparent as possible, so that they are a discernible reality for him, to which he can return again and again. I would like to go with him on the fearful journey into himself, into the buried fear and hate and love which he has never been able to let flow in him. I recognize that this is a very human and unpredictable journey for me, as well as for him, and that I may, without even knowing my fear, shrink away within myself, from some of the feelings he discovers. To this extent I know I will be limited in my ability to help him. I realize that at times his own fears may make him perceive me as uncaring, as rejecting, as an intruder, as one who does not understand. I want fully to accept these feelings in him, and yet I hope also that my own real feelings will show through so clearly that in time he cannot fail to perceive them. Most of all I want him to encounter a real person in me. I do not need to be uneasy as to whether my own feelings are "therapeutic". What I am and what I feel are good enough to be a basis for therapy, if I can transparently be what I am and what I feel in a relationship to him. Then perhaps he can be what he is, openly and without fear."

The Process of Becoming a Person

Directions in Therapy

- 1) We know that if the therapist hold within himself attitudes of deep respect and full acceptance for this client as he is, and similar attitudes toward the client's potentialities for dealing with himself and his situations, if these attitudes are suffused with a sufficient warmth, which forms them into the most profound type of liking or affection for the core of the person, and if a level of communication is reached so that the client can begin to perceive that the therapist understands the feelings he is experiencing and accepts him at the full depths of that understanding, then we may be sure that the process is already initiated.

- 2) Scientific evidence shows that certain persistent characteristics will emerge in the process: increase in insightful statements, maturity of reported behavior, positive attitudes, changes in perception, acceptance of the self, incorporation of previously denied experience into the self-structure, shift in the locus of evaluation from outside to inside the self, characteristic changes in personality structure, behavior and psychological condition.

The experiencing of the potential self

- 1) In the security of the relationship with a client-centered therapist, in the absence of any actual or implied threat to self, the client can let himself examine various aspects of his experience as they actually feel to him.
- 2) Many these prove to be in extreme contradiction to the concept of self, and could not ordinarily be experienced in their fullness, but in a safe relationship they can be permitted to slip through into awareness without distortion.
- 3) "I was sure that I could not be my experience, but now I am beginning to believe that I can be all of my experience."

Seven Stages of the Process of Becoming a Person

Let me then try to portray the way in which I see the successive stages of the process by which the individual changes from fixity to flowingness, from a point nearer the rigid end of the continuum to a point nearer the "in-motion" end of the continuum. It may be well to remind ourselves that a person is never wholly at one or another stage of the process. A client's expressions may be made up of expressions and characteristic of stage three, with frequent instances of rigidity characteristic of stage two or greater loosening of stage four. It doesn't seem likely that one will find examples of stage six in clients.

1) The individual in this stage is in the stage of fixity and remoteness of experiencing.

- a) There is an unwillingness to communicate self. Communication is only about externals.
- b) Feelings and personal meanings are neither recognized nor owned.
- c) Personal constructs are rigid
- d) Close and communicative relationships are construed as dangerous.
- e) No problems are recognized or perceived at this stage
- f) There is no desire to change.
- g) The individual has little or no recognition of the flow of the feeling life within him. The ways in which he construes experience have been set by his past, and are rigidly unaffected by the actualities of the present. He reacts to the situation of now by finding it to be like a past experience and then reacting to that past, feeling it. He tends to see himself as having no problems, or the problems he recognizes are perceived as entirely external to himself.

2) In any event, where the client experiences himself as received, a slight loosening and flowing of symbolic expression occurs, which tends to be characterized by the following.

- a) Expression begins to flow in regard to non-self topics. Eg. "*I guess that I suspect my father has often felt very insecure in his business relations.*"
- b) Problems are perceived as external to self. Eg. "*Disorganization keeps cropping up in my life*"
- c) There is no sense of personal responsibility in problems. Eg.: same as above

- d) Feelings are described as unowned, or sometimes as past objects. Eg. *"My symptom is just being very depressed"*
 - e) Feelings may be exhibited, but are not recognized as such or owned
 - f) Experiencing is bound by the structure of the past. Eg. *"I suppose the compensation I always make is, rather than trying to communicate with people or have the right relationship with them, to compensate by, well, shall we say, being on an intellectual level"*.
 - g) Personal constructs are rigid, unrecognized as being constructs, but are thoughts of as facts. Eg. *"I can't ever do anything right - can't ever finish it"*
 - h) Differentiation of personal meanings and feelings is very limited and global. Eg. same as above: *"I can't ever"* is one instance of black and white differentiation, as is also the use of "right" in this absolute sense
 - i) Contradictions are expressed, but with little recognition of them as contradictions. Eg. *"I want to know things, but I look at the same page for an hour"*
- 3) In the slight loosening and flowing in the second stage is not blocked but the client feels himself in these respects to be fully received as he is, then there is a still further loosening and flowing of symbolic expression.**
- a) There is a freer flow of expression about the self as an object. Eg. *"I try hard to be perfect with her - cheerful, friendly, intelligent, talkative - because I want her to love me"*.
 - b) There is also an expression about self-related experiences as objects. Eg. *"And yet there is a matter of, well, how much do you leave yourself open to marriage, and if your professional vocation is important, and that's the thing that's really yourself at this point, it does place a limitation on your contacts."* Talking about herself as a remote object.
 - c) There is also expression about the self as a reflected object, existing primarily in others. Eg. *"I can feel myself smiling sweetly the way my mother does, or being gruff and important the way my father does sometimes - slipping into everyone else's personalities but mine"*
 - d) There is much expression about or description of feelings and personal meanings not now present. Eg. *"There were so many things I couldn't tell people - nasty things I did. I felt so sneaky and bad. And this feeling that came into me was just the feeling that I remember as a kid."*
 - e) There is little acceptance of feelings. For the most parts feelings are revealed as something shameful, bad or abnormal ,or unacceptable in other ways.
 - f) Personal constructs are rigid, but may be recognized as constructs, not external facts. Eg. *"I felt guilty for so much of my young life that I felt I deserved to be punished most of the time anyway. If I didn't feel I deserved it for one thing, I felt I deserved it for another."* He sees it as the way he has construed experience rather than as a settled fact. Or *"I'm so afraid whenever affection is involved it just means submission. And this I hate, but I seem to equate the two, that if I'm going to get affection, then it means that I must give in to what the other person wants to do"*.
 - g) Differentiation of feelings and meanings is slightly sharper, less global than in previous stages. Eg. *"This time I really felt it. And is it any wonder that I felt so*

darn lousy when this was the way it was. And conversely, I was no angel about it, I realize that."

- h) There is a recognition of contradictions in experience. Eg. Client explains that on one hand he has expectations of doing something great, on the other hand he feels he may easily end up as a bum.
- i) Personal choices often seem as ineffective. Eg. The client "chooses" to do something, but finds that his behaviors do not fall in line with this choice.

4) There is a gradual loosening of constructs, a freer flow of feelings which are characteristics of movement up the continuum.

- a) The client describes more intense feelings of the "not-now-present" variety. Eg. *"Well, I was really - it hit me down deep"*.
- b) Feelings are described as objects in the present. Eg. *"It discourages me to feel dependent because it means I'm kind of hopeless about myself"*.
- c) Occasional feelings are expressed as in the present, sometimes breaking through almost against the client's wishes.
- d) There is a tendency toward experiencing feelings in the immediate present, and there is distrust and fear of this possibility. Eg. *"I feel bound - by something or other. It must be me! There's nothing else that seems to be doing it. It can't blame it on anything else. There's this knot - somewhere inside of me... It makes me want to get mad - and cry- and run away!"*
- e) There is little open acceptance of feelings, though some acceptance is exhibited. The preceding example indicates that the client exhibits sufficient acceptance of his experience to approach some frightening feelings. But there is little conscious acceptance of them.
- f) Experiencing is less bound by the structure of the past, is less remote, and may occasionally occur with little postponement.
- g) There is a loosening of the way experience is construed. There are some discoveries of personal constructs, there is the definite recognition of these constructs, and there is a beginning questioning of their validity. Eg. *"Humor has been my bulwark all my life, maybe it's a little out of place in trying to look at myself."* Here there seems to illustrate the jolting, shaking consequences of questioning a basic construct, in this case his use of humor as a defense.
- h) There is an increased differentiation of feelings, constructs, personal meanings, with some tendency towards seeking exactness of symbolization.
- i) There is a realization of concern about contradictions and incongruences between the experience and the self. Eg. *"I'm not living up to what I am" How many hours I spent on the toilet in this position with Mother saying, 'Don't come out til you've done something.' Produce!... That happened with lots of things"*.
- j) There are feelings of self responsibility in problems, though such feelings vacillate.
- k) Though a close relationship still seems dangerous, the client risks himself, relating to some small extent on a feeling basis.

This stage and the following one constitute much of psychotherapy as we know it. These behaviors are very common in any form of therapy.

5) As we go on up the continuum, further loosening is set into motion, and the freedom of organismic flow is increased.

- a) Feelings are expressed freely as in the present. Eg. *"I expected kinda to get a severe rejection - this I expect all the time... somehow I guess I even feel it with you... It's hard to talk about because I want to be the best I can possibly be with you."* Here feelings regarding the therapist and the client in relationship to the therapist, emotions often most difficult to reveal, are expressed openly.
- b) Feelings are very close to being fully experienced. They "bubble up", "seep through", in spite of the fear and distrust which the client feels at experiencing them with fullness and immediacy. Eg. *"That kinda came out and I just don't understand it. I'm trying to get hold of what that terror is."* *"I don't know what was happening (she cries)... I must have been getting a little too close to something I didn't want to talk about, or something."* Here the feeling has almost seeped through into awareness in spite of her.
- c) There is a beginning tendency to realize that experiencing a feeling involves a direct referent. The examples above illustrate this. In each case the client knows he has experienced something, knows he is not clear as to what he has experienced. But there is also the dawning realization that the referent of these vague cognitions lies within him, in an organismic event against which he can check his symbolization and his cognitive formulations.
- d) There is surprise and fright, rarely pleasure, at the feelings which "bubble through" Eg. *"I'm still amazed at the strength of this. It seems to be so much the way I feel"*.
- e) There is an increasing ownership of self feelings, and a desire to be these, to be the "real me". Eg. *"The real truth of the matter is that I'm not the sweet, forbearing guy that I try to make out that I am. I get irritated at things. I feel like snapping at people, and I feel like being selfish at times, and I don't know why I should pretend I'm not that way."*
- f) Experiencing is loosened, no longer remote, and frequently occurs with little postponement. There is little delay between the organismic event and the full subjective living of it. A beautifully precise account of this is given by a client. Eg. *"I'm still having a little trouble trying to figure out what this sadness - and weepiness - means. I just know I feel it when I get close to a certain kind of feeling - and usually when I do get weepy, it helps me to kinda break through a wall I've set up because of things that have happened. I feel hurt about something and then automatically this kind of shields things up and then I feel like I can't really touch or feel anything very much... and if I'd be able to feel, or could let myself feel the instantaneous feeling when I'm hurt, I'd immediately start being weepy right then, but I can't."* Here we see him regarding his feeling as an inner referent to which he can turn for greater clarity. As he senses his weepiness he realizes that it is a delayed and partial experiencing of being hurt. He also recognizes that his defenses are such that he cannot, at this point, experience the event of hurt when it occurs.
- g) The ways in which experience is construed are much loosened. There are many fresh discoveries of personal constructs as constructs, and a critical

examination of questioning of these. Eg. *"This idea of needing to please - of having to do it - that's really been kind of a basic assumption of my life (he weeps quietly). It's kind of, you know, just one of the very unquestioned axioms that I have to please. I have no choice. I just have to."* Here he is clear that this assumption has been a construct, and it is evident that its unquestioned status is at an end.

- h) There is a strong and evident tendency toward exactness in differentiation of feelings and meanings. Eg. *"... some tension that grows in me, or some hopelessness or some kind of incompleteness - and my life actually is very incomplete now... I just don't know. Seems to me, the closest thing it gets to, is hopelessness."* Obviously, he is trying to capture the exact terms which for him symbolizes his experience.
- i) There is an increasingly clear facing of contradictions and incongruences in experience. Eg. *"My conscious mind tells me I'm worthy. But some place inside I don't believe it. I think I'm a rat - a no-good. I've no faith in my ability to do anything."*
- j) There is an increasing quality of acceptance of self-responsibility for the problems being faced, and a concern as to how he has contributed. There are increasingly freer dialogues within the self, an improvement in and reduced blockage of internal communication. Sometimes these dialogues are verbalized. Eg. *"Something in me is saying, 'What more do I have to give up? You've taken so much from me already'. This is me talking to me - the me way back in there who talks to the me who runs the show. It's complaining now, saying, 'You're getting too close! Go away!'"*

In the first place this phase is several hundred psychological miles from the first stage described. Here many aspects of the client are in flow, as against the rigidity of the first stage. He is very much closer to his organic being, which is always in process. He is much closer to being in the flow of his feelings. His constructions of experience are decidedly loosened and repeatedly being tested against referents and evidence within and without. Experience is much more highly differentiated, and thus internal communication, already flowing, can be more exact.

6) This stage is a very crucial, distinctive and often dramatic one.

- a) A feeling which has previously been "stuck" has been inhibited in its process quality, is experienced with immediacy now. A feeling flows to its full result. A present feeling is directly experienced with immediacy and richness. This immediacy of experiencing, and the feeling which constitutes its content, are accepted. This is something which is, not something to be denied, feared, struggled against. Eg. *"I could even conceive of it as a possibility that I could have a kind of tender concern for me... Still, how could I be tender, be concerned for myself, when they're one and the same thing? But yet I can feel it so clearly... You know, like taking care of a child. You want to give it this and give it that... I can kind of clearly see the purposes for somebody else... but I can never see them for... myself, that I could do this for me, you know. Is it possible that I can really want to take care of myself, and make that a major purpose of my life? That means I'd have to deal with the whole world as if I were guardian of the most cherished and most wanted possession, that this I*

was between this precious me that I wanted to take care of and the whole world. ...It's almost as if I loved myself - you know - that's strange - but it's true." The recording would help to convey the fact that here is a feeling which has never been able to flow in him, which is experienced with immediacy, in this moment. It is a feeling which flows to its full result, without inhibition. It is experienced acceptantly, with no attempt to push it to one side, or to deny it.

- b) There is a quality of living subjectively in the experience, not feeling about it. The client, in his words, may withdraw enough from the experience to feel about it, as in the above example, yet the recording makes it clear that his words are peripheral to the experiencing which is going on within him, and in which he is living.
- c) Self as an object tends to disappear. The self, at this moment, is this feeling. This is a being in the moment, with little self-conscious awareness, but with primarily a reflexive awareness, as Sartre terms it. The self is, subjectively, in an existential moment. It is not something one perceives.
- d) Experiencing, at this stage, takes on a real process quality. Eg. One client, a man who is approaching this stage, says that he has a frightened feeling about the source of a lot of secret thoughts in himself. He goes on: *"The butterflies are the thoughts closest to the surface. Underneath there's a deeper flow. I feel very removed from it all. The deeper flow is like a great school of fish moving under the surface. I see the ones that break through the surface of the water - sitting with my fishing line in one hand, with a bent pin on the end of it - trying to find a better tackle - or better yet, a way of diving in. That's the scary thing. The image I get is that I want to be one of the fish myself."*
- e) Another characteristic of this stage of process is the physiological loosening which accompanies it. Moistness in the eyes, tears, sighs, muscular relaxation, are frequently evident. Often there are other physiological components. Eg. *"It's funny how real it feels... it's like a burning sensation, kind of, and when they say something which makes me anxious I can feel it right here (pointing). Kind of like in my gut here. It's so hard to define the feeling that I feel there."*
- f) In this stage, internal communication is free and relatively unblocked. This is quite adequately illustrated in the examples given. Indeed the phrase "internal communication" is no longer quite correct, for as each of these examples illustrates, the crucial moment is a moment of integration, in which communication between different internal foci is no longer necessary, because they become one.
- g) The incongruence between experience and awareness is vividly experienced as it disappears into congruence. The relevant personal construct is dissolved in this experiencing moment, and the client feels cut loose from his previously stabilized framework. Eg. *"Won't you let me have this? I kind of need it. I can be so lonely and scared without it. I get a sense of - it's kind of pleading little boy. It's this gesture of begging. I've got such a confusing feeling. One is, it's such a wondrous feeling to have these new things come out of me. It amazes me so much each time, and there's that same feeling, being scared that I've*

so much of this. (Tears)... I just don't know myself. Here's suddenly something I never realized, hadn't any inkling of - that it was some thing or way I wanted to be." Here we see a complete experiencing of his pleadingness, and a vivid recognition of the discrepancy between this experiencing and his concept of himself. Yet this experiencing of discrepancy exists in the moment of its disappearance. From now he is a person who feels pleading, as well as many other feelings. As this moment dissolves the way he has construed himself he feels cut loose from his previous world - a sensation which is both wondrous and frightening.

- h) The moment of full experiencing becomes a clear and definite referent. The client is often not too clearly aware of what has "hit him" in these moments. Yet this does not seem too important because the event is an entity, a referent, which can be returned to, again and again, if necessary, to discover more about it, until he has satisfied himself as to what they are. It is, perhaps, that they constitute a clear-cut physiological event, a substratum of the conscious life, which the client can return to for investigatory purposes.
- i) Differentiation of experiencing is sharp and basic. Because each of these moments is a referent, a specific entity, it does not become confused with anything else. The process of sharp differentiation builds on it and about it.
- j) In this stage, there are no longer "problems", external or internal. The client is living, subjectively, a phase of his problem. It is not an object. I trust it is evident that in any of these examples, it would be grossly inaccurate to say that the client perceives his problem as internal, or is dealing with it as an internal problem. We need some way of indicating that he is further than this, and of course enormously far in the process sense from perceiving his problem as external. The best description seems to be that he neither perceives his problem nor deals with it. He is simply living some portion of it knowingly and acceptingly.

I have dwelt so long on this sixth definable point on the process continuum because I see it as a highly crucial one. My observation is that these moments of immediate, full, accepted experiencing are in some sense almost irreversible. To put this in terms of the examples, it is my observation and hypothesis that with these clients, whenever a future experiencing of the same quality and characteristics occurs, it will necessarily be recognized in awareness for what it is. And, it might be remarked in passing, once an experience is fully in awareness, fully accepted, then it can be coped with effectively, like any other clear reality.

7) In those areas in which the sixth stage has been reached, it is no longer so necessary that the client be fully received by the therapist, though this still seems helpful. However, because of the tendency for the sixth stage to be irreversible, the client often seems to go on into the seventh and final stage without much need of the therapist's help. This stage occurs as much outside of the therapeutic relationship as in it, and is often reported, rather than experienced in the therapeutic hour.

- a) New feelings are experienced with immediacy and richness of detail, both in the therapeutic relationship and outside. The experiencing of such feelings is used as a clear referent. The client quite consciously endeavors to use these referents in order to know in a clearer and more differentiated way who he is,

what he wants, and what his attitudes are. This is true even when the feelings are unpleasant or frightening.

- b) There is a growing and continuing sense of acceptant ownership of these changing feelings, a basic trust in his own process. Eg. *"In therapy here, what has counted in sitting down and saying, 'this is what's bothering me', and play around with it for a while until something gets squeezed out through some emotional crescendo, and the thing is over with - looks different. Even then, I can't tell just exactly what's happened. It's just that I exposed something, shook it up and turned it around, and when I put it back it felt better. It's a little frustrating because I'd like to know exactly what's going on... This is a funny thing because it feels as if I'm not doing anything at all about it - the only active part I take is to.. To be alert and grab a thought as it's going by... And there's sort of a feeling 'Well now, what will I do with it, now that I've seen it right?' There's no handles on it you can adjust or anything. Just talk about it awhile, and let it go. And apparently that's all there is to it. Leaves me with a somewhat unsatisfied feeling though - a feeling that I haven't accomplished anything. It's been accomplished without my knowledge or consent... I seem to work best when my conscious mind is only concerned with facts and letting the analysis of them go on by itself without paying any attention to it."*
- c) Experiencing has lost almost completely its structure-bound aspects and becomes process experiencing - that is, the situation is experienced and interpreted in its newness, not as the past.
- d) The self becomes increasingly simply the subjective and reflexive awareness of experiencing. The self is much less frequently a perceived object, and much more frequently something confidently felt in process.
- e) Personal constructs are tentatively reformulated, to be validated against further experience, but even then, to be held loosely. Eg. *"I can see.. What it would be like - that it doesn't matter if I don't please you - that pleasing you or not pleasing you is not the thing that is important to me. If I could just kinda say that to people - you know?... the idea of just spontaneously saying something - and it not mattering whether it pleases or not - oh God! You could say almost anything... but that's true, you know?"* A little later he asks himself: *"You mean if I'd really be what I feel like being, that that would be all right?"* He is struggling toward a reconstruing of some very basic aspects of his experience.
- f) Internal communication is clear, with feelings and symbols well matched, and fresh terms for new feelings. There is the experiencing of effective choice of new ways of being. Eg. *"I'm trying to encompass a way of talking that is a way out of beings scared of talking. Perhaps just kind of thinking out loud is the way to do that. But I've got so many thoughts I could only do it a little bit. But maybe I could let my talk be an expression of my real thoughts, instead of just trying to make the proper noises in each situation."* Here he is sensing the possibility of effective choice. Another client comes in telling of an argument he had with his wife. *"I wasn't so angry with myself. I didn't hate myself so much. I realized 'I'm acting childish' and somehow I chose to do that"*

When the individual has, in his process of change, reached the seventh stage, we find ourselves involved in a new dimension. The client has now incorporated the quality of motion, of flow, of changingness, into every aspect of his psychological life, and this becomes its outstanding characteristic. He lives in his feelings, knowingly and with basic trust in them and acceptance of them. The ways in which he construes experience are continually changing as his personal constructs are modified by each new living event. His experiencing is a process in nature, feeling the new in each situation and interpreting it anew, interpreting in terms of the past only to the extent that the now is identical with the past. He experiences with a quality of immediacy, knowing at the same time that he experiences. He values exactness in differentiation of his feelings and of the personal meanings of his experience. His internal communication between various aspects of himself is free and unblocked. He communicates himself freely in relationships with others, and these relationships are not stereotyped, but person to person. He is aware of himself, but not as an object. Rather it is a reflexive awareness, a subjective living in himself in motion. He perceives himself as responsibly related to his problems. Indeed, he feels a fully responsible relationship to his life in all its fluid aspects. He lives fully in himself as a constantly changing flow of process.

Summary of the seven stages of the process of becoming a person

This process involves a loosening of feelings. At the lower end of the continuum they are described as remote, unowned and not now present. They are then described as present objects with some sense of ownership by the individual. Next they are expressed as owned feelings in the terms closer to their immediate experiencing. Still further up the scale they are experienced and expressed in the immediate present with a decreasing fear of this process. Also, at this point, even those feelings which have been previously denied to awareness bubble through into awareness, are experienced, and increasingly owned. At the upper end of the continuum living in the process of experiencing a continually changing flow of feelings become characteristic of the individual.

The process involves a change in the manner of experiencing. The continuum begins with a fixity in which the individual is very remote from his experiencing and unable to draw upon or symbolize its implicit meaning. Experiencing must be safely in the past before a meaning can be drawn from it and the present is interpreted in terms of these past meanings. From this remoteness in relation to his experiencing, the individual moves toward the recognition of experiencing as a troubling process going on within him. Experiencing gradually becomes a more accepted inner referent to which he can turn for increasingly accurate meanings. Finally he becomes able to live freely and acceptantly in a fluid process of experiencing, using it comfortably as a major reference for his behavior.

The process involves a shift from incongruence to congruence. There is an increasingly sharp recognition of the contradictions and discrepancies existing within himself to the experiencing of incongruence in the immediate present in a way which dissolves this. At the upper end of the continuum, there would never be more than temporary incongruence between experiencing and awareness since the individual would not need to defend himself against the threatening aspects of his experience.

The process involves a change in a manner in which, and the extent to which the individual is able and willing to communicate himself in a receptive climate. The continuum runs from a complete unwillingness to communicate self, to the self as a rich and changing

awareness of internal experiencing which is readily communicated when the individual desires to do so.

The process involves a loosening of the cognitive maps of experience. From construing experience in rigid ways which are perceived as external facts, the clients moves toward developing changing, loosely held construing of meaning in experience, constructions which are modifiable by each new experience.

There is a change in the individual's relationship to his problems. At one end of the continuum problems are unrecognized and there is no desire to change. Gradually there is a recognition that problems exist. At a further stage, there recognition that the individual has contributed to these problems, that they have not arisen entirely from external sources. Increasingly, there is a sense of self-responsibility for the problems. Further up the continuum, there is a living or experiencing of some aspect of the problems. The person lives his problems subjectively, feeling responsible for the contribution he has made in the development of his problems.

There is a change in the individual's manner of relating. At one end of the continuum the individual avoids close relationships, which are perceived as being dangerous. At the other end of the continuum, he lives openly and freely in relation to the therapist and to others, guiding his behavior in the relationship on the basis of his immediate experiencing.

In general, the process moves from a point of fixity, where all elements are separately understandable, to the flowing peak moments of therapy in which all these elements become inseparably woven together. Feeling and cognition interpenetrate, self is subjectively present in the experience, volition is simply the subjective following of a harmonious balance of organismic direction. Thus, as the process reaches this point the person becomes a unity of flow, of motion. He has changed, but what seems most significant, he has become an integrated process of changingness.

Directions taken by clients

1) Away from facades

The client moves away from a self that he is not. He might have no recognition of what he might move toward, but he is moving away from something, and in doing so, he is beginning to define, however negatively, what he is.

Eg. *"I am afraid that they will find out that I am not so hot."* This expression of this fear is a part of becoming what he is. Instead of simply being a facade, as if it were himself, he is coming closer to being himself, namely a frightened person hiding behind a facade because he regards himself as too awful to be seen.

2) Away from "shoulds"

The client moves away from the image of what he "should be". Some individuals have absorbed deeply from their parents the concepts "I should be good" or "I have to be good", and find it a great struggle to move away from it. There are also a number of individuals who regard themselves as "bad", and it is this concept of themselves that they are moving away from. Eg. *"I don't know how I got this impression that being ashamed of myself was such an appropriate way to feel. Being ashamed of me was just the way I had to be... If you are something which is disapproved of very much, then I guess the only way you can have any kind of self-respect is to be ashamed of that part of*

you which isn't approved of... as if someone said 'The way you will have to be is to be ashamed of yourself - so be that way! And I accepted it for a long long time, saying OK, that's me! And now I'm standing up against that somebody, saying I don't care about what you say. I'm not going to feel ashamed of myself!' Obviously he is abandoning the concept of himself as shameful and bad.

3) Away from meeting expectations

Other clients find themselves moving away from what the culture expects them to be. There is an enormous pressure to become an "organization man", subordinating individuality to fit into the group needs. Over against these pressures from conformity, I find that when clients are free to be any way they wish, they tend to resent and to question the tendency of the organization, the college or the culture to mould them to any given form. Eg. *"I've been so long trying to live according to what was meaningful to other people, and what made no sense at all to me, really. I somehow felt so much more than that, at some level."*

4) Away from pleasing others

Eg. *"I finally felt that I simply had to begin doing what I wanted to do, not that I thought I should do, and regardless of what other people feel I should do. This is a complete reversal of my whole life. I've always felt I had to do things because they were expected of me, or more important, to make people like me. The hell with it! I think from now on I'm going to be just me - rich or poor, good or bad, rational or irrational, logical or illogical, famous or infamous."*

5) Toward self-direction

The client moves towards becoming autonomous, he chooses the goals towards which he wants to move, he becomes responsible for himself. He decides what activities and ways of behaving have meaning for him. First cautiously, fearfully, with almost no confidence at all. He chooses and then learns from the consequences. So clients find this a sobering but exciting kind of experience. As one client says: "I feel frightened and vulnerable and cut loose from support, but I also feel a sort of surging up or force or strength in me."

6) Towards being a process

Clients seem to move toward more openly being a process, a fluidity, a changing. They are not disturbed to find that they are not the same from day to day, that they do not always hold the same feelings toward a given experience or person, that they are not always consistent. They are in flux, and seem more content to continue in this flowing current.

7) Towards being complexity

The client's overall attitude is that he can be, quite openly and transparently, all of his complex and changing and sometimes contradictory feelings in the relationship - not only part of his feelings, and partly facade or defense. This desire to be all of oneself in each moment - all the richness and complexity, with nothing hidden from oneself, and nothing feared in oneself - is a common desire in those who show much movement in therapy.

8) Toward openness to experience

The individual moves towards living in an open, friendly, close relationship to his own experience. Often as the client senses some new facet of himself, he initially rejects it - but gradually he comes to accept and embrace them as a part of himself. He opens himself to internal feelings that - are even though not new to him -, he has never been able fully to experience. Now that he can permit himself to experience them, he will find them less terrible, and he will be able to live closer to his own experiencing.

Gradually clients learn that experiencing is a friendly resource, not a frightening enemy. Eg. "What is it that I'm feeling? I want to get next to it. I want to learn what it is." He realizes that his own inner reactions and experiences, the messages of his senses and his viscera, are friendly. He comes to want to be closer to his inner sources of information rather than closing them off. Self actualized people have a wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naively, the basic goods of life with awe, pleasure, wonder and even ecstasy, however dry these experiences may be for other people.

9) Toward acceptance of others

As a client moves toward being able to accept his own experience, he also moves toward the acceptance of the experience of others. He values and appreciates both his own experience and that of others for what it is. One does not complain about water because it is wet, nor about rocks because they are hard. As the child looks out upon the world with wide, uncritical and innocent eyes, simply noting and observing what is the case, without either arguing the matter or demanding that it be otherwise, so does the self-actualizing person look upon human nature both in himself and in others.

10) Toward trust of self

The client trusts and values the process which is himself. They dare to feel their own feelings, live by values which they discover within, and express themselves in their own unique ways. They go from "good people do this or that" towards "I do it like this". Thinking their own thoughts, toward being as truly and deeply themselves as they could.

11) The General Direction

The individual moves toward being, knowingly and acceptingly, the process which he inwardly and actually is. He moves away from being what he is not, being a facade. He is not trying to be more than what he is, with the attendant feelings of insecurity or bombastic defensiveness. He is not trying to be less than he is, with the attendant feelings of guilt or self-depreciation. He is increasingly listening to his depths of his physiological and emotional being, and finds himself increasingly willing to be that self which he most truly is. One client asks himself wonderingly and with incredulity in one interview: "You mean if I'd really be what I feel like being, that that would be all right?" It is not simply an intellectual value choice, but seems to be the best description of the uncertain, hesitant behaviors by which he moves exploringly toward what he wants to be.

Some implications

1) Fixity

Change is facilitated, probably maximized, when one is willing to be what he truly is. It is only as he can become more of himself, can be more of what he has denied in himself, that there is any prospect of change.

2) On the concept of evil

Does being what one truly is mean to be bad, evil, uncontrolled, destructive? Would it unleash some kind of monster on the world? Some clients say *"If I dare to let the feelings flow which are dammed up within me, if by some chance I should live in those feelings, then this would be catastrophe."* - especially when moving towards unknown parts of themselves. The whole course of his experience in therapy contradicts these fears. He finds that gradually he can be his anger, when anger is his real reaction, but that such accepted or transparent anger is not destructive. He finds that he can be his fear, but that knowingly to be his fear does not dissolve him. He finds that he can be self-pitying, and it is not "bad". He can feel his sexual feelings, or his "lazy" feelings, or his hostile feelings, and the roof of the world does not fall in. The reason seems to be that the more he is able to permit these feelings to flow and to be in him, the more they take their appropriate place in a total harmony of his feelings. He discovers that he has other feelings with which these mingle and find a balance. He feels loving and tender and considerate and cooperative, as well as hostile or lustful or angry. His feelings, when he lives closely and acceptingly with their complexity, operate in a constructive harmony rather than sweeping him into some uncontrollably evil path.

A Therapist's View of the Good Life: The Fully Functioning Person

A good therapist's attitude

Entering into an intensely personal and subjective relationship with the client - relating not as a scientist but as a person to a person. He feels the client to be of unconditional self-worth: of value no matter what his condition, his behavior, or his feelings. It would mean that the therapist is genuine, hiding behind no defensive facade, but meeting the client with feelings which organically he is experiencing. He is sensing what it feels like to be the client at each moment of the relationship. He provides a climate which will permit the client the utmost freedom to become himself. For the client, this optimal therapy would mean an exploration of increasingly strange and unknown and dangerous feelings in himself, the exploration proving possible only because he is gradually realizing that he is accepted unconditionally. He discovers that he has experienced himself, that he is all these feelings. He approaches the realization that he no longer needs to fear what experience may hold, but can welcome it freely as a part of his changing and developing self.

What is not a good life

It's not any fixed state, not a state of virtue or contentment or nirvana or happiness. It is not a condition on which the individual is adjusted or fulfilled or actualized. To use psychological terms, it is not a state of drive-reduction, tension-reduction or homeostasis.

What is a good life

The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination. The direction which constitutes the good life is that which is selected by the total organism, when

there is psychological freedom to move in any direction - and the general qualities of this selected direction appear to have a certain universalities.

The characteristics of the process of a good life

a) An increasing openness to experience

It is the polar opposite of defensiveness (an organism's response to experiences which are perceived or anticipated as threatening, as incongruent with the individual's existing picture of himself, or of himself in relationship to the world. A large part of the process of therapy is the continuing discovery by the client that he is experiencing feelings and attitudes which he has not been aware of, which he has not been able to own as being a part of himself. If a person could be fully open to his experience, every stimulus would be freely relayed through the nervous system without being distorted by any defensive mechanism. There would be no need for the mechanism of "subception" whereby the organism is forewarned of any experience threatening to the self. On the contrary, whether the stimulus was the impact of configuration of form, color or sound in the environment on the sensory nerves, or a memory trace from the past or a fear or pleasure or disgust, the person would be "living it", would have it completely available to awareness. The individual is becoming more able to listen to himself, to experience what is going on within himself. He is more open to his feelings of fear and discouragement and pain. He is also more open to his feelings of courage and tenderness and awe. He is free to live his feelings subjectively, as they exist in him, and also free to be aware of these feelings. He is more able to fully live the experiences of his organism rather than shutting them out of awareness.

b) Increasingly existential living

A tendency to live fully in each moment. I believe it would be evident that for the person who was fully open to his new experience, completely without defensiveness, each moment would be new. *"What I will be in the next moment and what I will do, grows out of that moment, and cannot be predicted in advance either by me or by others."* The self and personality emerge from experience, rather than experience being translated to fit preconceived self-structure. One becomes a participant in and an observer of the ongoing process of organismic experience, rather than being in control of it. Such living in a moment means an absence of rigidity, of tight organization, maximum adaptability, a discovery of structure in experience, a flowing, changing organization of self and personality.

c) An increasing trust in his organism

As a means of arriving at the most satisfying behavior in each existential situation. In choosing how to act, not relying upon guiding principles, a code of action laid down by a group or institution, upon the judgement of others or upon his own behavior in some similar past situation. He trusts his total organismic reaction to a new situation because they discover that if they are open to their experience, "doing what feels right" proves to be a competent and trustworthy guide to behavior which is truly satisfying. The person who is fully open to his experience would have access to all of the available data in the situation on which to base his behavior, the social demands, his own complex and conflicting needs, his memories etc. The data would be very complex, but he could permit his total organism to consider each stimulus, need, demand and their relative intensity and importance, and discover the course of action that would come closer to satisfying all his needs in the situation.

The defects which usually make this process untrustworthy are the inclusion of information that does not belong to this present situation (memories and previous learnings that seem

like this situation), or the exclusion of information which does (threatening experiences inhibited from awareness).

If he is open to his full experience, the response would not be infallible, but would always give the best possible answer based on the available data, and in case of a mistake or error, any following of behavior which was not satisfying would be quickly corrected. As they become more open to their experiences, they find it increasingly possible to trust their reactions. If they feel like expressing anger, they do so - as they are equally alive to all of their other desires for affection, affiliation and relationship.

d) The process of functioning more fully

Using all his organismic equipment to sense, as accurately as possible, using all of the information his nervous system can supply, using it in awareness, but recognizing that his total organism may be wiser than his awareness. He is able to put more trust in his organism in this functioning, not because it is infallible, but because he can be fully open to the consequences of each of his actions and correct them if they prove to be less than satisfying. He is more able to experience all of his feelings, and is less afraid of any of his feelings, more open to evidence from all sources.

e) The basic trustworthiness of human nature

The basic nature of the human being, when functioning freely, is constructive and trustworthy. When we are able to free the individual from defensiveness, so that he is open to the wide range of his own needs, as well as the wide range of environmental and social demands, his reactions may be trusted to be positive, forward-moving, constructive. We do not need to ask who will socialize him, for one of his own deepest needs is for affiliation and communication with others. We do not need to control his aggressive impulses, for as he becomes open to all his impulses, his need to be liked by others and his tendency to give affection will be as strong as his impulses to strike out or to seize for himself. He will be aggressive in situations in which aggression is realistically appropriate, but there will be no runaway need for aggression.

Man's behavior is exquisitely rational, moving with subtle and ordered complexity toward the goals of his organism is endeavoring to achieve. The tragedy is that our defenses keep us aware of this rationality, so consciously we move in one direction, while organismically we are moving in another. The only control of impulses which would exist is the natural and internal balancing of one need against another, and the discovery of behaviors which approximate the satisfaction of all needs.

f) The greater richness of life

To be a part of this process means that one is involved in the frequently frightening and frequently satisfying experience of a more sensitive living, with greater range, greater variety, greater richness. Clients in advanced therapy live more intimately with their feelings of pain, but also more vividly with their feelings of ecstasy. Anger is more clearly felt, but so also is love; fear is an experience they know more deeply, but so is courage. And the reason they can live in this wider range is that they have this underlying confidence in themselves as trustworthy instruments for encountering life.

I believe it is evident why, for me, adjectives such as happy, contented, blissful, enjoyable, do not seem quite appropriate to having a good life - even though the person would experience these at appropriate times. The adjectives more fitting are enriching, exciting, rewarding, challenging, meaningful.

This process is not for the faint-hearted. It involves stretching and growing and becoming more and more of one's potentialities. It involves the courage to be. It means launching oneself fully into the stream of life

The conditions of learning in psychotherapy

1) For the client: facing a problem

The client is up against a situation which he perceives as a serious and meaningful problem. A problem with which he has tried to cope, and found himself unsuccessful. He is therefore eager to learn, even though at the same time he is frightened that what he discovers in himself may be disturbing.

2) For the Therapist: Congruence

It is necessary that the therapist is, in the relationship a unified, or integrated or congruent person. He is not a facade, or a role, or a pretense. Congruence describes this accurate matching of experience with awareness. It is when the therapist is fully and accurately aware of what he is experiencing at this moment in the relationship, that he is fully congruent. It means that he not only means exactly what he says, but that his deepest feelings also match what he is expressing. He is acceptant of his immediate feelings. We say of such a person that we know "exactly where he stands". We tend to feel comfortable and secure in such relationships.

With another person we recognize that what he is saying is almost certainly a front or a facade. We wonder what he really feels, what he is really experiencing. We also wonder if he knows what he really feels. With such a person we tend to be cautious and wary. It is not the kind of relationship in which defenses can be dropped.

Therefore, a good therapist is feely, deeply and acceptantly himself, with this actual experience of his feelings and reactions matched by an accurate awareness of these feelings and reactions as they occur and as they change.

3) For the Therapist: Unconditional positive regard

A therapist experiences warm caring for the client - not demanding, with no conditions of worth attached to it. It involves as much feeling of acceptance for the client's expression of negative, "bad", painful, fearful and abnormal feelings as for his expression of "good", positive, mature, confident and social feelings. Caring for the client as a separate person, with a permission for him to have his own feelings and experiences, and find his own meanings in them.

4) An empathic understanding

A therapist experiences an accurate understanding of the client's world as seen from the inside. To sense the client's private world as if it was his own. To sense the client's anger, fear, or confusion as if it was his own, yet without his own anger, fear or confusion getting bound up in it. By this, the therapist can communicate his understanding of what is clearly known to the client, and can also voice meanings in the client's experience of which the client is scarcely aware.

5) Fifth condition

It's not enough that the therapist experiences congruence, acceptance and empathy, the client should experience or perceive something of these, therefore to some degree, they have to be successfully communicated.

Dealing with breakdowns in communication

Psychotherapy is good communication

The whole task of psychotherapy is the task of dealing with failure in communication. The emotionally maladjusted person's communication within himself has broken down, and as a result of this, his communication with others has been damaged. His parts which are unconscious, repressed, denied to awareness have become blocked off, so that they no longer communicate themselves to the conscious or managing part of himself. As long as this is true, there are distortions in the way he communicates himself to others, and he suffers both within himself, and in his interpersonal relations. The task of psychotherapy is to achieve good communication within himself. It's good communication within and between men. Good communication between or within men is always therapeutic.

Major factors blocking communication:

- 1) Our natural tendency to judge, evaluate, approve/disapprove the statement of the other person or the other group. Our primary reaction is to evaluate what has just been said to us, evaluate if from our point of view, our own frame of reference. Making evaluations is most likely where feelings and emotions are deeply involved. The stronger the feelings are, the most likely that there will be no mutual element in communication. There will be just two ideas, two feelings, two judgments missing each other in psychological space. Real communication occurs when we listen with understanding. It means seeing the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about. This is the most effective agent we know for altering the basic personality structure of an individual, and improving his relationships and his communications with others. If I can understand how it seems to him, can see its personal meaning for him, can sense the emotional flavor of his fears of various things, it will be of the greatest help to him in altering those fears. We know from our research that understanding with the person, not about him can bring about major changes in personality. This takes courage, and a very real risk is involved. If you really understand another person in this way, if you are willing to enter his private world and see the way life appears to him, without any attempt to make evaluative judgements, you run the risk of being changed yourself. You might see it his way, you might find yourself influenced in your attitudes and personality. Most of us are afraid to take that risk.
- 2) When emotions are strongest. it is the most difficult to achieve the frame of reference of the other person or group. Once there is a third party, able to lay aside his own feelings and evaluations, he can assist greatly by listening with understanding to each person or group, clarifying the views and attitudes each holds. When the parties in dispute realize that they are being understood, that someone sees how the situation seems to them, the statements grow less exaggerated and less defensive, and it is no longer necessary to maintain the attitude "I am 100% right and you are 100% wrong". The influence of such an understanding catalyst in the group permits the members to come closer and closer to the objective truth involved in the relationship.

A general law of interpersonal relationships

The concept of congruence

Congruence is the term we have used to indicate an accurate matching of experiencing and awareness. It may be still further extended to cover a matching of experience, awareness and communication. Perhaps the simplest example is an infant. If he is experiencing hunger at the physiological and visceral level, then his awareness appears to match this experience, and his communication is also congruent with his experience. He is hungry and dissatisfied, and this is true of him at all levels. He is one unified person all the way through, whether we tap his experience at the visceral level, the level of his awareness or the level of communication. Probably one of the reasons why most people respond to infants is that they are so completely genuine, integrated or congruent. If an infant expresses affection or anger or contentment or fear, there is no doubt in our minds that he is this experience, all the way through. He is transparently fearful or hungry or loving.

As an example of incongruence, let's take a man who becomes angrily involved in a group discussion. His face flushes, his tone communicates anger, he is shaking his fists. Despite this, he might say "I'm not angry! I don't have any feelings about this at all!" It seems clear that at a physiological level he is experiencing anger, which is not matched by his awareness. Consciously he is not experiencing anger, nor is he communicating this. There is incongruence between experience and awareness, experience and communication - therefore his communication is actually ambiguous and unclear. In this case, the individual himself is not a sound judge of his own degree of congruence.

When there is incongruence between experience and awareness, it is usually spoken of as defensiveness, or denial to awareness. When there is incongruence between awareness and communication, it is usually thought of as falseness or deceit.

If an individual is at this moment entirely congruent, his communication cannot contain any expression of an external fact. We never experience such "facts". Accurate awareness of experience would always be expressed as feelings, perceptions, meanings from an internal frame of reference. I never know that he is stupid, that you are bad, that this rock is hard. I can only perceive that they seem this way to me. If the person is thoroughly congruent then it is clear that all of his communication would necessarily be put in a context of personal perception. I believe all of us tend to recognize congruence and incongruence with whom we deal.

As a general law we can say: The greater the congruence of experience, awareness and communication on the part of one individual, the more the ensuing relationship will involve: a tendency toward reciprocal communication with a quality of increasing congruence; a tendency toward more mutually accurate understanding of the communications, improved psychological adjustment and functioning in both parties, mutual satisfaction in the relationship.

A theory of creativity

When an individual is "open" to all of his experience, then his behavior will be creative, and his creativity may be trusted to be essentially constructive. The conditions of maximizing the likelihood of an emergence of constructive creativity:

A) Psychological safety

- a) Accepting the individual as of unconditional worth. This attitude can be probably genuine only when we sense the potentialities of the individual and

are able to have an unconditional faith in him, no matter what his present state.

- b) Providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent. Evaluation is always a threat, always creates a need for defensiveness, always means that some portion of experience must be defined to awareness. Ceasing evaluating another is not to cease having reactions. It may, as a matter of fact, free one to react. "I don't like your idea" is not an evaluation, but a reaction. It is subtly but sharply different from a judgement which says, "What you are doing is bad (or good), and this quality is assigned to you from some external source." The first statement permits the individual to maintain his own locus of evaluation. It holds the possibility that I am unable to appreciate something which is actually very good. The second statement, whether it praises or condemns, tends to put the person at the mercy of outside forces. He is being told that he cannot simply ask himself whether this product is a valid expression of himself; he must be concerned with what others think. He is being led away from creativity.
 - c) Understanding emphatically. This addition provides the ultimate in psychological safety. If I understand you empathically, see you and what you are feeling and doing from your own point of view, enter your private world and see it as it appears to you - and still accept you - then this is safety indeed. In this climate you can permit your real self to emerge, and to express itself in varied and novel forms as it relates to the world.
- B) Psychological freedom
- a) When we allow another person a complete freedom of symbolic expression, creativity is fostered. This permissiveness gives the individual complete freedom to think, to feel, to be, whatever is most inward within himself. It fosters the openness and the playful and spontaneous juggling of percepts, concepts and meanings, which is a part of creativity.

Client-centered Teaching and Learning

Personal thoughts on teaching and learning

- a) It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no significant influence on behavior.
- b) I realize increasingly that I am only interested in learnings which significantly influence behavior.
- c) I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning.
- d) Such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another. As soon as an individual tries to communicate such experience directly, often with a quite natural enthusiasm, it becomes teaching, and its results are inconsequential.
- e) When I try to teach, as I do sometimes, I am frightened by the results, which seem a little more than inconsequential, because sometimes teaching appears to succeed. When this happens, I find that the results are damaging. It seems to cause the

individual to distrust his own experience, and to prevent significant learning. Hence I have come to feel that the outcomes of teaching are either unimportant or hurtful.

- f) When I look back at the results of my past teaching, the real results seem the same - either damage was done, or nothing significant occurred. This is frankly troubling.
- g) As a consequence, I realize that I am only interested in being a learner, preferably learning things that matter, that have some significant influence on my own behavior.
- h) I find it very rewarding to learn, in groups, in relationships with one person as in therapy, or by myself.
- i) I find that one of the best, but most difficult ways for me to learn is to drop my own defensiveness, at least temporarily, and to try to understand the way in which this experience seems and feels to the other person.
- j) I find that another way of learning for me is to state my own uncertainties, to try to clarify my puzzlements, and thus get closer to the meaning that my experience actually seems to have.
- k) It seems to mean letting my experience carry me on, in a direction which appears to be forward, toward goals that I can but dimly define, as I try to understand at least the current meaning of that experience.

The implications of the above would mean that

- a) We would do away with teaching. People would get together if they wished to learn.
- b) We would do away with examinations. They measure only inconsequential type of learning.
- c) The implication would be that we would do away with grades and credits for the same reason.
- d) We would do away with degrees as a measure of competence partly for the same reason. Another reason is that a degree marks an end or a conclusion of something, and a learner is only interested in the continuing process of learning.
- e) It would imply doing away with the exposition of conclusions, for we would realize that no one learns significantly from conclusions.