

You are encouraged to read the whole book, and please make a proper citation if needed.

Rogers, C.R. (1995). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

1. Professional thinking and personal philosophy:

- In my relationships with persons I have found that it does not help, in the long run, to act as though I were some thing that I am not.
- I find I am more effective when I can listen acceptantly to myself, and can be myself.
- I have found it of enormous value when I can permit myself to understand another person.
- I have found it enriching to open channels whereby others can communicate their feelings, their private perceptual worlds, to me.
- I have found it highly rewarding when I can accept another person.
- 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'.
- I can trust my experience.
- Evaluation by others is not a guide for me.
- Experience is, for me, the highest authority.
- I enjoy the discovering of order in experience.
- What is most personal is most general.
- It has been my experience that persons have a basically positive direction.
- Life, at its best, is a flowing, changing process in which nothing is fixed.

2. Directions in therapy:

- The liking of one's self
- The discovery that the core of personality is positive
- The experiencing of the potential self
- The full experiencing of an affectional relationship
- Being one's organism, one's experience

3. How can I create a helping relationship?

- Can I be in some way which will be perceived by the other person as trustworthy, as dependable or consistent in some deep sense?
- Can I be expressive enough as a person that what I am will be communicated unambiguously?
- Can I let myself experience positive attitudes toward this other person – attitudes of warmth, caring, liking, interest, respect?

- Can I be strong enough as a person to be separate from the other?
- Am I secure enough within myself to permit him his separateness?
- Can I let myself enter fully into the world of his feelings and personal meanings and see these as he does?
- Can I receive him as he is? Or can I only receive him conditionally, acceptance of some aspects of his feelings and silently or openly disapproving of other aspects?
- Can I act with sufficient sensitivity in the relationship that my behavior will not be perceived as a threat?
- Can I free him from the threat of external evaluation?
- 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?

4. The conditions of psychological growth:

- **Congruence:** It has been found that personal change is facilitated when the psychotherapist is what he is, when in the relationship with his client he is genuine and without “front” or façade, openly being the feelings and attitudes which at the moment are flowing in him. By “congruence” we mean that the feelings the therapist is experiencing are available to him, available to his awareness, and he is able to live these feelings, be them, and able to communicate them if appropriate. No one fully achieves this condition, yet the more the therapist is able to listen acceptantly to what is going on within himself, and the more he is able to be the complexity of his feelings, without fear, the higher the degree of his congruence.
- **Unconditional positive regard:** 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 the moment, - fear, confusion, pain, pride, anger, hatred, love, courage, or awe. It means that the therapist cares for the client, in a non-possessive way. It means that he prizes the client in a total rather than a conditional way. By this I mean that he does not simply accept the client when he is behaving in certain ways, and disapprove of him when he behaves in other ways. It means an outgoing positive feeling without reservations, without evaluations.
- **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.

The implications of client-centered therapy for family life

1. I am not particularly interested in setting up some model for family life in general, or in proposing the manner in which you should live in your family situation. I simply wish to present the gist of the experience of some very real people in some very real and often difficult family situations. Perhaps their struggles to live in a satisfying fashion will have some meaning for you. (315)
2. More expressive of feeling: Parents and children, husbands and wives, come closer to expressing the feelings which really exist in them, rather than hiding their true feelings from the other person, or from the other person and themselves. They find that, as in this instance, expression of feelings is a deeply satisfying thing, where formerly it has nearly always seemed destructive and disastrous. When a person is living behind a front, a façade, his unexpressed feelings pile up to some explosion point, and are then apt to be triggered off by some specific incident. But the feelings which sweep over the person and are expressed at such a time – in a temper storm, in a deep depression, in a flood of self-pity, and the like – often have an unfortunate effect on all concerned because they are so inappropriate to the specific situation and hence seem so unreasonable. The individual finds himself expressing his feelings when they occur, not at some much later point after they have burned and festered in him. (318)
3. Relationship can be lived on a real basis: The client discovers that a relationship can be lived on the basis of the real feelings, rather than on the basis of a defensive pretense. (318)
4. Improvement in two-way communication: They learn something about how to initiate and maintain real two-way communication. To understand another person's thoughts and feelings thoroughly, with the meanings they have for him, and to be thoroughly understood by this other person in return – this is of the most rewarding of human experiences, and all too rare. Individuals who have come to us for therapy often report their pleasure in discovering that such genuine communication is possible with members of their own families. When we are living behind a façade, when we are trying to act in ways that are not in accord with our feelings, then we dare not listen freely to another. We must always have our guard up, lest he pierce the pretense of our façade. But when a client is living in the way I have been describing, when he tends to express his real feelings in the situation in which they occur, when his family relationships are lived on the basis of the feelings which actually exist, then he is no longer defensive and he can

really listen to, and understand, another member of this family. He can let himself see how life appears to this other person. (324)

5. Willingness for another to be separate: It is quite noticeable that our clients tend in the direction of permitting each member of the family to have his own feelings and to be a separate person. This may seem a strange statement, but is actually a most radical step. Many of us are perhaps unaware of the tremendous pressure we tend to put on our wives, our husbands, our children, to have the same feelings we do. Now the tendency which we see in our clients is the opposite of this. There is a willingness for the other person to have different feelings, different values, different goals. In short, there is a willingness for him to be a separate person. It is my belief that this tendency develops as the person discovers that he can trust his own feelings and reactions – that his own deep impulses are not destructive or catastrophic, and that he himself need not be guarded, but can meet life on a real basis. As he thus learns that he can trust himself, with his own uniqueness, he becomes more able to trust his wife, or his child, and to accept the unique feelings and values which exist in this other person. (325)
6. Suppose a child were permitted to have his own unique feelings – suppose he never had to disown his feelings in order to be loved. Suppose his parents were free to have and express their own unique feelings, which often would be different from his, and often different between themselves. I like to think of all the meanings that such an experience would have. It would mean that the child would grow up respecting himself as a unique person. It would mean that even when his behavior had to be thwarted, he could retain open “ownership” of his feelings. It would mean that his behavior would be a realistic balance, taking into account his own feelings and the known and open feelings of others. He would, I believe, be a responsible and self-directing individual, who would never need to conceal his feelings from himself, who would never need to live behind a façade. He would be relatively free of the maladjustments which cripple so many of us. (327)
7. It seems that the individual discovers that it is more satisfying in the long run to live a given family relationship on the basis of the real interpersonal feelings which exist, rather than living the relationship on the basis of a pretense. A part of this discovery is that the fear that the relationship will be destroyed if the true feelings are admitted, is usually unfounded, particularly when the feelings are expressed as belonging to oneself, not as stating something about the other person. (327)
8. Our clients find that as they express themselves more freely, as the surface character of the relationship matches more closely the fluctuating attitudes which underlie it, they can lay aside some of their defenses and truly listen to the other

person. Often for the first time they begin to understand how the other person feels, and why he feels that way. Thus mutual understanding begins to pervade the interpersonal interaction. (327)

9. Finally, there is an increasing willingness for the other person to be himself. As I am more willing to be myself, I find I am more ready to permit you to be yourself, with all that that implies. This means that the family circle tends in the direction of becoming a number of separate and unique persons with individual goals and values, but bound together by the real feelings – positive and negative – which exist between them, and by the satisfying bond of mutual understanding of at least a portion of each other's private worlds. (328)