

Carl Rogers: Key Concepts

THE PERSON-CENTRED APPROACH

Carl Rogers (1902–1987) believed that people have an innate drive toward growth, and that the right relational conditions — not expert intervention — are what allow that growth to unfold. His ideas remain foundational to modern therapy and helping relationships.

The Three Core Conditions

What Rogers believed every helping relationship needs



Unconditional Positive Regard ACCEPTANCE

Accepting and valuing a person as they are, without conditions attached to their worth.



Empathic Understanding DEEP LISTENING

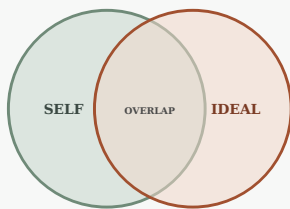
Sensing a person's inner world as if it were your own, without losing the "as if" quality.



Congruence GENUINENESS

Being real and transparent, rather than presenting a professional facade or mask.

SELF-CONCEPT & IDEAL SELF



The closer these two circles overlap, the more congruent — and psychologically healthy — a person tends to feel.

Conditions of Worth

When love or approval feels conditional on meeting others' expectations, people learn to value only the parts of themselves that were approved of — pushing the rest out of awareness.

- "I am only worthwhile if I succeed."
- "I am only lovable if I don't show anger."
- "I am only good enough if others approve."

The Fully Functioning Person

Rogers' vision of psychological health

1

OPEN TO EXPERIENCE

Able to feel and process emotions without needing to defend against them.

2

LIVES EXISTENTIALLY

Present and engaged in each moment, rather than rigidly bound to the past.

3

TRUSTS THEIR ORGANISM

Trusts their own felt sense as a reliable guide, alongside reason.

4

EXPERIENCES FREEDOM

Feels a genuine sense of choice and responsibility over their life.

5

IS CREATIVE

Adapts flexibly and contributes uniquely, rather than simply conforming.

External Locus of Evaluation

Worth is measured by others' opinions and standards. Choices are shaped by what will earn approval, rather than what feels genuinely true.

Internal Locus of Evaluation

Worth is measured from within. A person can hear feedback from others without needing it to determine their sense of self.

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change."

Carl Rogers

SOURCES

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