



On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy

Carl R. Rogers , Peter D. Kramer (Introduction)

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The late Carl Rogers, founder of the humanistic psychology movement, revolutionized psychotherapy with his concept of "client-centered therapy." His influence has spanned decades, but that influence has become so much a part of mainstream psychology that the ingenious nature of his work has almost been forgotten. A new introduction by Peter Kramer sheds light on the significance of Dr. Rogers's work today. New discoveries in the field of psychopharmacology, especially that of the antidepressant Prozac, have spawned a quick-fix drug revolution that has obscured the psychotherapeutic relationship. As the pendulum slowly swings back toward an appreciation of the therapeutic encounter, Dr. Rogers's "client-centered therapy" becomes particularly timely and important.

On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy Details

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Karson says

This was the first book I read by Carl Rogers. I really like what i perceived as his foundation; that humans have pure wonderful cores that are surrounded by protective hurt layers. This premise rings true in my life. I believe that humans are capable of great beauty and great ugliness. I've seen wonderful people do ugly things, and vice versa, and I've always wondered why. Rogers draws on his unique history as an experienced psychoanalyst to try and answer this tough question. Something else I loved about this book was his discussion of the universal human desire to "know their truest selves;" to be in touch with who we genuinely are at our deepest point. This very search has been a preoccupation of mine for quite some time so i liked that i was reading a book by an author that was equally interested in this search. However! The book was really repetitive. Driving home the same points from slightly different perspectives over and over again. I skipped some sections about psychological research methods and discussions about behavioral sciences, etc. I am still looking forward to reading some of Rogers more personal works.

Morgan says

Read it many years ago, and his simple, trusting view that we humans need witness and listening, and that will go a long way toward enabling the person to find their own answers within themselves.

At the time my husband was a Rogerian counselor. Later, I studied at Center for Studies of the Person, Carl Roger's center in LaJolla, CA, and experienced what he was talking about. He was there with us for a day each of the 2 summers I participated in their 17-day workshops. (In my 2nd summer, my weekend group "kidnapped" Dr. Rogers, set him in a raised chair in the big hall (all 70 participants) and bowed down to him.

He said "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him. I am uncomfortable being raised above the rest of you; it is not what I believe."

When we told him we had been randomly kidnapping and elevating EVERYBODY in the larger group, he relaxed and had a good time.

He was a great man.

Adam Shand says

Holy crap. This book just changed my life. I'm going to have to think about how to write a review for it.

Annette says

He writes of significant things he learned in his experience and study:

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 that I am not. It does not help to act calm and pleasant when actually 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.

Most of the mistakes I make in personal relationships, most of the times in which I fail to be of help to other individuals, can be accounted for in terms of the fact that I have, for some defensive reason, behaved in one way at a surface level, while in reality my feelings run in a contrary direction."

2. "I find I am more effective when I can listen acceptably to myself, and can be myself. ...I have learned to become more adequate in listening to myself; so that I know...what I am feeling at any given moment

One way of putting this is that I feel I have become more adequate in letting myself be what I am....

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

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

Our first reaction to most of the statements which we hear from other people is an immediate evaluation, or judgment, rather than an understanding of it. When someone expresses some feeling or attitude or belief, our tendency is, almost immediately, to feel "That's right"; or "That's stupid"; "That's abnormal"; "That's unreasonable"; "That's incorrect"; "That's not nice." Very rarely do we permit ourselves to understand precisely what the meaning of his statement is to him. I believe this is because understanding is risky. If I let myself really understand another person, I might be changed by that understanding. And we all fear change. ...It is not an easy thing to permit oneself to understand an individual, to enter thoroughly and completely and empathically into his frame of reference. It is also a rare thing."

4. "I have found it highly rewarding when I can accept another person.

I have found that truly to accept another person and his feelings is by no means an easy thing, any more than is understanding. Can I really permit another person to feel hostile toward 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? All this is involved in acceptance, and it does not come easy. I believe that it is an increasingly common pattern in our culture for each one of us to believe, "Every other person must feel and think and believe the same as I do." We find it very hard to permit our children or our parents or our spouses to feel differently than we do about particular issues or problems. ...

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.

When I can accept another person...then I am assisting him to become a person..."

5. "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. I am much more content simply to be myself and to let another person be himself. ...

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."

6. "I can trust my experience. ...Evaluation by others is not a guide for me. The judgments of others, while they are to be listened to, and taken into account for what they are, can never be a guide for me. Experience is, for me, the highest authority."

(p. 16-23)

Steven Howard says

It's amazing how this 40+ year old book still has relevance today.

Rogers provides clear reasoning and sound arguments for his beliefs, though this reader walked away wondering if Rogers believed that one can only become a person through therapy. I would love someone to take the gist of Rogers' thinking and apply this to the bulk of the population.

Warning: the eBook version contains numerous typos, some of which are quite disconcerting. Whoever converted this old text to the Kindle format should be admonished for their sloppy work. I would have rated the book lower because of these errors, but felt to do so was unfair to the author.

Taka says

Came at the right moment—

Bought this book about a year ago, but never got around to reading it. And then one day last month, I woke up with a definite feeling that I should read it. And so my instinct proved to be quite correct, as I devoured the book (though skipping some chapters I found to be a little too technical and not worth the time). The stages of growth Rogers describes were so similar to what I'd been going through with meditation that I was just riveted—it was as if he was diagnosing me. I also found his dynamic concept of process—as opposed to fixed states of happiness, nirvana, and contentment—fascinating, especially since I'd just read about dynamic inequality in Taleb's new book and since it shed new light on many aspects of Buddhism (e.g., "enlightenment" as a fixed state might not exist, and its dynamic nature is captured by the metaphor of the path, which doesn't necessarily have to have a destination; non-Self as the dissolution of an imposed self, a fixed self, etc.).

Highly recommended.

Cherene says

If anyone wants to know Rogers' theoretical framework, I can explain it to you in 5 minutes and spare you the grief of reading this long, redundant book. It was somewhat interesting, but too repetitive.

Lee Adams says

A beautifully written book written so the layman can understand and apply...simply life changing and brought me to tears in many places. I read the version with his own intro, a 'to the reader' and 'this is me' section which moved me. I just wish a lot of the more modern psychotherapy/psychology authors would put their writings in the simple to understand and accessible way that Rogers did. This is one of those books where you read a page and have to then put the book down to ponder and absorb. Rogers humility and warmth comes across in droves. A man I would definitely have loved to have a conversation with...and thank him.

Alex says

This book was a pleasure to read. Reading Rogers helps me whenever I lose faith in the efficacy of long term psychotherapy. It is so important when practicing to get over your own worries and anxieties in order to be truly responsive to your patient. Through his anecdotes, teachings, and overall philosophy, I have been able to make major breakthroughs in my own comfort sitting with my patients.

Dave Labranche says

this is an extremely valuable book for all "thinking humans" to read. It really helped me begin to understand myself, and it gave me insights that allowed me to eventually discover what makes me happy, what motivates me, what I truly need to AVOID in life (because I'm just not wired to deal with it) and in general it gives you a framework for finding your inner self.

Zoe Bell says

Bluntly; although what was written often seemed foolish, impractical and fantastical I found Roger's style of writing cohesive and difficult to stop following. I know little of psychology and its various approaches and perspectives but I intuitively felt that Roger was at the time the book was written, revolutionary, bringing forward into the light a new way of regarding clients of psychotherapy. Mind you; the book did seem to drag on. Repetition. Repetition. On, further and on further still. What was said often seemed to be mere common sense and yet, I found my views regarding my own feelings, my own fears and my own mistakes to be changing. I feel that for a short after reading this book my own, my way of viewing the world, my perceptions of what is and was were somehow changed in such a way that to me seemed progressive and positive. It was an imperfect eye opener, that despite all of its flaws, I would recommend to anyone.

James says

Everyone has long loved Carl. For him, it's all about being authentic. Not living in bad faith. You can give yourself your own authenticity score just by honestly answering for yourself a couple of questions:

1. What do you care most deeply about?
2. Given your everyday life, how much of it is dedicated to what you care most deeply about?

Authentic living consists of congruence between caring and living.

Tanvika says

'To be the self, one truly is' is the core thesis of this book. For realising our true self, the need is to free ourselves from all the facades : pleasing others, trying to be good etc. We can then begin by accepting our real feeling. With it, comes the beginning of trusting ourself. It is the rise of a creative human being who is willing to take life as a endless river in constant flux.

For unlocking our potentialities, the therapist or the other person must be himself aware of his own attitude. There is a significant emphasis on 'EMPATHETIC LISTENING'. It means that we listen to the other person without evaluation, judgements and negative attitudes. We listen to help the individual explore his self.

There is an interesting experiment mentioned in the book on classroom teaching. the students are allowed to say what they really experience, while Rogers engages in deep listening. At the end of the course, there are understanding and meaningful relationships between the people which facilitate growth. This can be applied in family, inter- group discussions etc.

This work can have transformative impact of the reader. there are profound questions raised on the nature of interactions we have with each other, what it is to be free etc.the answers have to be explored by us.

Thomas says

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

This book has helped me through two of the toughest weeks of my life, and everyone interested in self-improvement should read it. *On Becoming a Person* will appeal to anyone inclined toward psychology or therapy, as Rogers does a fantastic job discussing his client-centered approach and how his model of therapy transcends the limitations of past psychotherapeutic frameworks. Even though the book was first published in 1961, Rogers includes a variety of still-relevant techniques, such as allowing the client to guide the session and ensuring unconditional positive regard through the therapist's own congruence. He incorporates a gamut of psychological principles from areas such as developmental and social psychology, and he relates them all back to his thesis on clinical, humanistic therapy.

Not only does Rogers reach out to different branches of psychology, but he also connects client-centered therapy to education, leadership in the work place, and family life. Even though the book might feel a little repetitive in certain parts, it addresses several pertinent questions, like how therapists can reconcile their work with the conducting of research. In around 400 pages, Rogers dives deep into every facet of psychotherapy and how it relates to humans in general.

Overall, highly recommended to anyone with even a remote interest in self-growth, psychology, therapy, or being a better person. As Rogers would say, reading *On Becoming a Person* will not transform you into a perfect version of yourself - rather, it will set you on the path of creating a more accepting and honest self.

Carly says

This book is quite possibly the best book that I have read as a part of my graduate school experience thus far.

This is the third theory book that I have read (Skinner, Jung) and Rogers is the most easy to get along with and understand. Rogers is humble, and every step of the way takes you along his journey to how he developed person centered therapy. At no point does he insist that his theory is the right one, or the only, but he says that his theory is what he has developed from his own experiences.

I would definitely recommend!!

Ioana Creșu says

Cartea prezintă un tip de terapie ce aparține psihologiei umaniste - terapia centrată pe client -, formulată de Carl R. Rogers. Ea presupune ca terapeutul să fie autentic, să dea dovadă de o acceptare necondiționată? și de empatie față de client. Această relație va produce schimbare. Ideile prezentate se pot aplica la nivelul tuturor relațiilor interumane.

„În terapie, persoana adaugă experienței obișnuite conștientizarea deplină? și nedeformată a experiențelor sale - a reacțiilor sale senzoriale și viscerale. Ea încețează să mai deformeze experiența când o conștientizează, sau cel puțin reduce deformările. Poate fi conștient de ceea ce trăiește cu adevărat, nu doar de ceea ce-și permite să trăiască după o triere minuțiosă? printr-un filtru conceptual. În acest sens, persoana întruchipează pentru prima oară întregul potențial al organismului uman, elementul conștientizării fiind adăugat liber la aspectele fundamentale ale reacțiilor senzoriale și viscerale, și îmbogățindu-le. Persoana ajunge să fie ceea ce este, după cum spun atât de des clienții în terapie. Aceasta pare să însemne că individul ajunge să fie - la nivel de conștientizare - ceea ce este - la nivel de experiență. Altfel spus, este un organism uman întreg și cu funcționare deplină.

Presimt deja reacțiile unora dintre cititori. „Vrei să spui că, în urma terapiei, omul devine nimic altceva decât un organism uman, un animal uman? Cine-l va controla? Cine-l va socializa? Va renunța el de-acum la toate inhibițiile? N-ai făcut nimic altceva decât să eliberezi fiara?” La asta, răspunsul cel mai adecvat pare a fi: „În terapie, individul a devenit de fapt un organism uman, cu toată bogăția pe care o presupune acest lucru. Este capabil de autocontrol realist și este socializat incorigibil în dorințele sale. Nu există fieră în om. În om există doar om, și asta este ceea ce am putut să eliberez.”

În relațiile mele cu alte persoane am constatat că, pe termen lung, nu folosește la nimic să mă port ca și cum

a? fi ceva ce nu sunt. Nu ajut? s? m? port calm ?i agreabil când, de fapt, sunt furios ?i critic. Nu ajut? s? m? port ca ?i cum a? cunoa?te r?spunsurile atunci când nu le ?tiu. Nu ajut? s? m? port ca ?i cum a? fi o persoan? iubitoare dac?, de fapt, în acel moment sunt ostil. Cu alte cuvinte, am constatat c? nu folose?te la nimic ?i nici nu este eficient, în rela?iile mele cu al?i oameni, s? încerc s? între?in o masc?, s? m? port la suprafa?? într-un fel, când în interior tr?iesc ceva foarte diferit. Cred c? asta nu m? face s? fiu util în încercarea de a forma rela?ii constructive cu al?ii.

Simt c? sunt mai eficient atunci când m? pot asculta pe mine însumi cu o atitudine de acceptare ?i pot fi eu însumi. Un mod de a formula acest lucru este c? am devenit mai priceput la a-mi da voie s? fiu a?a cum sunt. Astfel îmi este mai u?or s? m? accept pe mine însumi ca pe o persoan? categoric imperfect?, care nu func?ioneaz? în niciun caz tot timpul a?a cum ar vrea s? func?ioneze. Probabil c? unii consider? c? aceasta este o direc?ie foarte ciudat? în care s? te îndrep?i. Mie îmi pare c? are valoare în virtutea unui paradox straniu: când m? accept pe mine însumi a?a cum sunt, m? schimb. Cred c? am înv??at asta de la clien?ii mei, ca ?i din propriile-mi experien?e - nu ne putem schimba, nu ne putem distan?a de ceea ce suntem pân? când nu accept?m în întregime ceea ce suntem. Iar când o facem, schimbarea pare s? se produc? aproape pe neobservate. Un alt rezultat ce pare s? decurg? din faptul de a fi eu însumi este acela c? rela?iile devin reale. Rela?iile reale au capacitatea incitant? de a fi pline de via?? ?i semnifica?ie. A?adar, constat c? este eficient s?-mi permit s? fiu ceea ce sunt în atitudinile mele, s? ?tiu când am ajuns la limita rezisten?ei sau a toleran?ei ?i s? accept asta ca pe o realitate care exist? în mine. Mi-ar pl?cea s? accept aceste sentimente tot atât de bine ca pe cele de c?ldur?, interes, îng?duin??, bun?tate, în?elegere, care sunt ?i ele o parte foarte real? din mine. Atunci când accept cu adev?rat toate atitudinile ca pe o realitate, ca pe o parte din mine, rela?ia mea cu cealalt? persoan? devine ceea ce este ?i poate s? creasc? ?i s? se schimbe mai u?or.

A-mi da voie s? în?eleg o alt? persoan? are o valoare imens?. Felul în care am formulat aceast? afirma?ie poate s? v? par? ciudat. E nevoie s?-?i dai voie s? în?elegi pe altul? Eu cred c? da. Prima noastr? reac?ie la majoritatea afirma?iilor pe care le auzim de la al?ii este o evaluare sau o judecat? imediat?, ?i nu o în?elegere a lor. Când cineva î?i exprim? un sentiment, o atitudine sau o convingere, tindem s? gândim aproape imediat: „A?a e” sau „E o prostie”, „E anormal, ira?ional, e incorrect”, „Nu-i frumos”. Foarte rar ne d?m voie s? în?elegem exact ce semnifica?ie are pentru cel?lalt afirma?ia sa. Eu cred c? se întâmpl? a?a fiindc? a în?elege pe cel?lalt e riscant. Dac?-mi dau voie cu adev?rat s?-1 în?eleg pe altul, acea în?elegere ar putea s? m? schimbe. ?i to?i ne temem de schimbare.

Kirkegaard arat? c? disperarea cea mai des întâlnit? e aceea cauzat? de faptul de a nu alege sau a nu vrea s? ffi tu însu?i, dar c? forma cea mai adânc? de disperare vine din a alege „s? ffi altul decât tu însu?i”. Pe de alt? parte, „a fi acel sine care e?ti cu adev?rat constituie într-adev?r opusul disper?rii”, ?i aceast? alegere reprezint? cea mai profund? responsabilitate a omului. Explorarea clien?ilor devine ?i mai perturbatoare când se trezesc implica?i în în?turarea chipurilor false despre care nu ?tiu c? sunt chipuri false. Clien?ii încep s? se angajeze în sarcina îns?imânt?toare de a explora sentimente turbulente ?i uneori violente pe care le nutresc. Îndep?rtarea unei m??ti despre care credeai c? face parte din adev?ratul t?u sine poate fi o experien? profunda tulbur?toare; totu?i, când are libertatea de a gândi, a sim?i ?i a fi, individul se îndreapt? spre un astfel de ?el.

„Î?i spui c? trebuie s? creezi tu însu?i tiparul, dar sunt atât de multe elemente ?i e atât de greu s? vezi care e locul fiec?ruia! Uneori le pui unde nu trebuie ?i, cu cât ai mai multe elemente puse în locul gre?it, cu atât e nevoie de eforturi mai mari ca s? le ?ii în loc, pân? când ajungi s? ffi atât de obosit, încât pân? ?i confuzia teribil? e mai bun? decât s? continui. ?i atunci descoperi c?, l?sate de capul lor, elementele amestecate î?i g?sesc firesc locul propriu ?i rezult? un tipar de via?? f?r? ca tu s? ffi f?cut un efort. Ai doar misiunea s?-1 descoperi ?i, f?când asta, te vei g?si pe tine însu?i ?i-?i vei g?si propriul loc. Trebuie chiar s?-?i la?i experien?ele s?-?i spun? singure ce înceamn?; în clipa în care le spui tu ce înceamn?, te afli în r?zboi cu tine însu?i.” - S? vedem dac? pot s? traduc exprimarea poetic? a clientei în semnifica?ia pe care o au pentru mine

afirma?iile ei. Cred c? ea spune c? a fi ea îns??i înseamn? s? g?seasc? tiparul, ordinea subiacent? care exist? în curgerea mereu schimb?toare a experien?elor ei. În loc de a încerca s?-?i ?in? for?at experien?a în forma unei m??ti sau s-o constrâng? într-o form? ori structur?, alta decât cea care este, a fi ea îns??i înseamn? s? descopere unitatea ?i armonia ce exist? în sentimentele ?i reac?iile ei actuale. Asta înseamn? c? sinele adev?rat e ceva ce se descoper? în mod confortabil în experien?ele proprii, nu ceva ce se impune asupra lor.

Se pare c? individul exploreaz? treptat, în mod dureros, ceea ce se afl? în spatele m??tilor pe care le arat? lumii ?i chiar ?i în spatele m??tilor cu care s-a indus pe sine însu?i în eroare. El face experien?a profund? ?i deseori intens? a diferitelor elemente din sine care au fost ascunse în?untrul lui. Astfel devine tot mai mult el însu?i - nu o fa?ad? de conformism cu al?ii, nu o negare cinic? a oric?ror sentimente, nici un paravan de ra?ionalitate intelectual?, ci un proces viu, care respir?, simte, fluctueaz? - pe scurt, devine persoan?.

Un mod de a exprima fluiditatea prezint? într-o astfel de vie?uire experien?ial? (deschidere fa?? de experien?ele noi, lips? absolut? de defensivitate) este acela de a spune c? sinele ?i personalitatea decurg din experien??, în loc ca experien?a s? fie tradus? ori deformat? pentru a se potrivi cu structura preconcep?ut? a sinelui. Asta înseamn? c? individul devine participant la proces ?i observator ar lui, al experien?ei la nivel de organism, proces aflat în permanent? desf??urare, în loc s?-l controleze.”

Jahn says

Thought this was a pretty interesting read. As a psychology major in college, it is somewhat inevitable that some classes will concern themselves with therapy and therapy techniques, regardless of whether or not an individual wants to become a therapist, and this was where I first encountered the book. Nonetheless, all information is good and relevant in some way, and this book was incredibly interesting to me. I graduated, am not a therapist and have no interest in becoming a therapist, but I still found this book to be enlightening and engaging. So much so that I picked it up and continued reading it after we were done with it in class. I feel like it was fairly well written and difficult to put down, and that the things he wrote about made me re-examine some of the things I did and do in my own life and relationships, and improve them. Carl Rogers' work was, and is, influential in the field and I recommend this read for anybody who is interested in the field of psychology or gaining more insight into themselves and others.

Logan says

There are two categories of people: Those who know what's up and those who don't.

Carl Rogers knew what's up.

I don't know how rare it is for someone to possess the kind of humanistic insight Rogers had, but I do know it's very rare for such a person to apply that kind of insight to his writing and his field. The influence Rogers had on client-centered therapy is huge, yet I had never heard of the man until my third year in college. . .why?

Alexander says

Picked this one up for a course I was taking in college- Personal Development.

It turned out to be one of the best psychology-related books I have ever read. It described the therapeutic process in a personal way, rather than clinical. Since this process was from the point of view of Carl Rogers himself as a therapist, I felt I was able to discern how we develop as a person using relationships.

I felt like I was given more insight into how people change from this book than from any other piece of literature, honestly.

Read this if you are interested in psychology, and want to get greater insight into the backbone of the Humanist movement!

Jyotika Varmani says

This book is as beautiful as the person who wrote it. It is wonderful how Roger's never gave importance to techniques but rather the process of psychotherapy. And I can connect to it.

This book is written straight from the heart and though the length requires lot of patience, it is well worth the effort. The approach of the therapist is vital to therapy and the philosophy of this book is not restricted to therapists alone, but can be easily practiced in everyday relationships.
