

WHAT IS THE CLIENT CENTRED APPROACH

When I met Rogers

I was walking out of the hall with Carl Rogers after a lecture of his, and he asked me "Well Madeline, how is a therapist?". In a nick of time I went back to his lecture, but the answer came from my inner world: "On being myself and my feelings". "Right", he answered. My answer surely came from what I had just heard and experienced at his lesson.

Time proved it:

It's being myself together with the client's "frame of reference"; being with his feelings and my empathy. Being with his words at whatever "level" they are, and "felt meanings". Being with his story and my knowing what it should have been for the growing up child. Being with his telling and "our" reading of reality.

When I started working as a therapist, my main struggle was to "have faith" in what Rogers said: "keep with the client" wherever he goes, however he is, whatever he says. Just follow the flowing of the stream and he will lead you to the right places to explore.

And it's "there" where I need to use the "tools of life". Life in the sense of an organismic being.

On one side there is the client's reality, on the other side, there is what "it could or should have been". It's a helping to "workout" what has been; a helping to "work on" how he felt or is feeling.

A work on his life: present and past, when he "built" his "craving dreams" in order to attain what he authentically needed for his healthy growth, and seek together for what happened instead, and made him turn into a suffering being owing to streams of pain, disappointments, frustrations, punishments for not being like the grownups wanted, or owing to what the grownups disgracefully felt towards the growing up person.

Because the "reason" of some ways of being depends on the feelings parents had towards the children, causing them to behave in ways that were harmful for the organismic growth.

Years of working like this, gave me the opportunity to experience the theory is "inside" each person and belongs to "that" specific life. It's from there within that one can come out and turn into what one really feels to be and it will be in harmony with oneself and with the worlds of other "beings".

Science needs explanations and proofs. For the time being I have only the witness of my clients, some letters they wrote spontaneously and some metaphors I use. Nevertheless I hope that these can be the dwellings of future theory.

This means staying with the clients at whatever level he wants or needs to stay and explore. But when he wants to go beyond, the acceptance of what he is and the "freedom to be" and wants to change certain behaviors and wants to deal with those behaviors and patterns adopted, in order to attain what once were his rights, my task is to help him to get over those needs that "once upon a time" had a reason, but that now turn out to be boomerangs for his present life. It's my task to help him realize the defeat (he has lost the game) and help him to get over the challenge.

The present way of being actually corresponds to what Rogers call: "the

good reasons..."

The "what it would have been" is nothing but the "organismic tendency". Each one of us bears inside a developmental organismic pattern according to our needs as regards us and our growing self and as regards our interactions with the world outside and that should be satisfied (Martin Buber would say this regards the "I – Me" and the "I – Thou").

Many people don't want to know what happened, but just want to feel better. It's okay. Then, a cognitive therapy does a good work. Others want to go deep inside to understand what's going on. In this case it's necessary to go back and get in touch and identify the feelings, the pains left behind because too heavy and harmful to cope with. Realities too incomprehensible, feelings too challenging for the little growing child. With the Client Centered approach you can do a wonderful job!

Rogers gave me the tools and taught me the way to get there, I'll tell you what I found...

I CAN TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENS
I CAN TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENS
I CAN TELL YOU HOW IT HAPPENS
BUT NOT HOW TO GET THERE
I CANNOT SHOW THE WAY
BECAUSE YOU ARE THE JOURNEY
BUT I CAN STAND BY YOU
AND WALK SIDE BY SIDE

FROM A CLIENT

*For Madeline
Thank you for calling me friend
For being there while we travelled
In the Netherlands o
Warped pain and refusal
When your face would hit doldrums
When I saw reflected there
The nothingness I couldn't escape
Thank you for holding me
And crying with me
When the realist pain
I'd ever known ripped me apart
Leaving me empty but calm
Thank you for being my friend and sister
For unmasking your Australian self
Just long enough
For me to see
The warm furry Koala bear in you
Thank you.*