Person-Centered Therapy

The Life of Carl Rogers (1902-1987)

- Born the fourth of six children
- Mother was a devout Christian (Protestant) and was very strict on Carl and his siblings, although he has described his family relationships as "warm and close"
- Carl was socially introverted as he was discouraged from playing
- He developed an active imagination and focused on academics. Because his family lived on a farm, Carl had many chores, therefore becoming very independent and self-disciplined
- As a college student, he was selected to go to Beijing for the "World Student Christian Federation Conference." There, he was exposed to different religious philosophies and began to question his own religious beliefs. This experienced shaped his views on human behavior
- Rogers joined the staff at the Western Behavioral Sc0iences Institute in La Jolla, California in 1964
- His theory became widely known during the 60's and 70's as the progression of psychotherapy into the humanistic movement

The Person-Centered Approach

- A humanistic theory—each of us has a natural potential that we can actualize and through which we can find meaning

- Shares with existentialism a focus on respect and trust for the client

Humanism vs. Existentialism…

- Humanism and Existentialism BOTH:
- Respect for client's experience and trust in clients ability to change
- Believe in freedom, choice, values, personal responsibility, autonomy, meaning

Humanism vs. Existentialism…

Existentialism

- Clients come into counseling because they are facing anxiety in trying to construct an identity in a world without intrinsic meaning

Humanism

- Clients do not suffer from anxiety in creating an identity
- Clients need to believe that they have the natural potential to actualize

The Concept of the "Third Force"

- 1st Force—Psychoanalysis
- 2nd Force—Behaviorism
- 3rd Force—Existentialism and Humanism

The Role of the Therapist

Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Change

- <u>Congruence</u>—genuineness, one's behavior congruent with emotions
- <u>Empathy</u>—accurate ability to view the world from client's perspective
- <u>Unconditional Positive Regard</u>—acceptance, caring

  Remember these if you remember nothing else from this lecture!!!

Growth Experiences

- Therapy is only one relationship that can foster growth
- Growth occurs naturally when one is in a situation with the proper conditions to encourage that growth (i.e., metaphor of the acorn)
- The therapist's job is to set the stage, and then the client is able to do what is necessary for positive growth and change

Goals of Person-Centered Therapy

- Increase the independence and integration of the client

- Focus on the person, not the problem

- Create the conditions necessary for positive growth

- Develop openness to new experiences, trust in themselves, internal source of evaluation, and willingness to continue growing

It should be noted…

- A major aspect of person-centered therapy is the belief that the therapist should not chose the goals of the client, but instead help the client define and clarify their own goals
- Goals should be expected to change as the client progresses through counseling

Important Points

- The relationship between client and therapist is *everything* in person-centered therapy
- The relationship is characterized by equality
- The therapist need not have any special skills or knowledge
- Diagnosis and collecting background history is not necessary

The Process of Therapy

- There are no real techniques, other than listening, empathizing, understanding, and responding to the client
- The client's self-assessment is of primary importance
- There are no specific stages to the process, as it is all about the client's own process of change and growth, which must happen at their own pace

Rogers' Contributions

- Emphasized that the therapeutic relationship is the primary agent of growth

- Created a style of therapy that can be used by various helping professionals
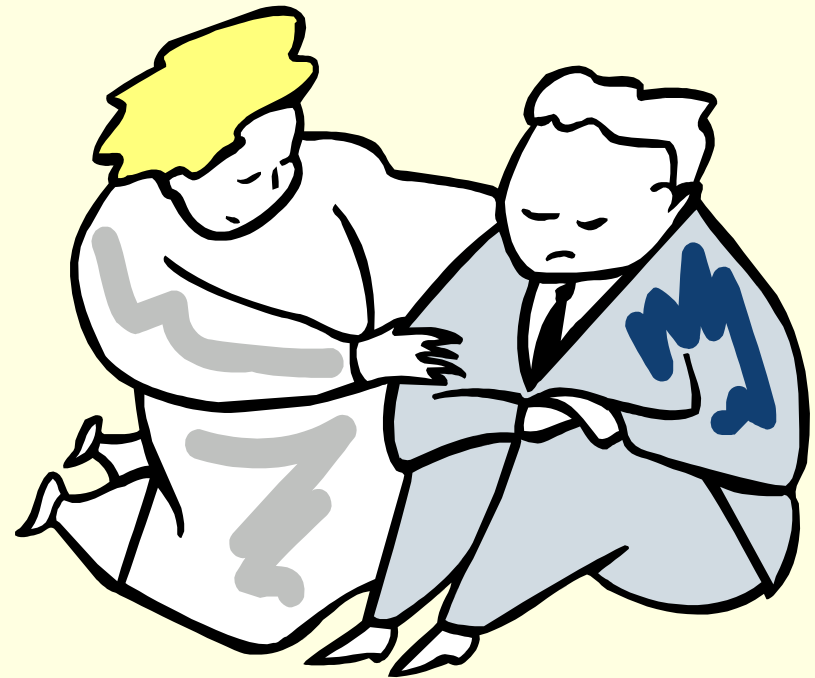
Limitations and Criticisms

- Most now feel these conditions are necessary but not sufficient

- Can become supportive without challenging the client, which makes change difficult

- Places limits on therapist's behavior within the session, such as limiting their teaching or guiding role

Multicultural Perspective

- Has been applied to numerous cultures and settings

- The core conditions are based on this culture, and can be difficult to apply to other cultures

- Some clients may want more structure or guidance than this approach provides

Why do you think we started with this theory?