

# THE CORE CONDITIONS RELATIONAL PRACTICE

Carl Rogers was one of the pioneers of person-centred or humanistic therapy in the 1940s. Whilst he was instrumental in laying the foundations and theory for the practice of counselling by non-medical practitioners, his approach, which recognised an inbuilt tendency of humans toward 'self-actualisation', is incredibly effective for life coaches to adopt for their practice. Life coaching should emulate Rogers' positive view of human psychology by accepting a client's innate desire to grow and engage in a meaningful self-exploration of feelings, beliefs and behaviour and to facilitate a growth process which empowers them to face current and future challenges. [1]

"It is that the individual has within himself or herself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering his or her self-concept, attitudes and self-directed behaviour - and that these resources can be tapped if only a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided" Carl Rogers [2]

Rogers believed that to create the conditions for change for the client, a life coach should be warm, genuine and understanding. Above any techniques, the humanist approach to life coaching prizes the relationship between the client and coach. It is considered an equal partnership, in which the coach is aiding the client to find their solutions and is, therefore, empowering for the client. [3]

Given the importance of this relationship, Rogers identified three core conditions that would enable this relationship to work in a life coaching setting:

## 1. CONGRUENCE OR GENUINENESS

Congruence is the primary attribute of the effective life coach. The congruence refers to the balance between their inner experience and outward expression. By being congruent, these two states match and therefore the coach is authentic: There is no façade for the presented to the client. This allows the building of trust in the relationship, while also serving as a model for the client. The coach is setting an example of being themselves, expressing their thoughts and feelings honestly and without wearing masks.

## 2. UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD - ACCEPTANCE

For the client to grow and realise their potential, Rogers believed that it is vital that they are valued as themselves. This entails acceptance of the client by the therapist, without judgement. Even more than that it requires that the coach genuinely cares about the client, and even when they might disapprove of an action of a client, they still maintain a positive attitude to the client.

## 3. EMPATHY

The ability of the coach to accurately understand the feelings and experiences of the client in a sensitive way. Rogers believed that we have a tendency to resist change, but through working to understand life from another person's perspective, we invite change in ourselves. Rogers described it, "to sense the client's private world as if it were your own, but without ever losing the "as if" quality-this is empathy, and this seems essential." [4] Rogers goes on to add list the benefits of applying empathy as observed through the research of Fiedler [5]:



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- The coach is well able to understand the client's feelings.
- The coach is never in any doubt about what the client means.
- The coach's remarks fit in just right with the client's mood and content.
- The coach's tone of voice conveys the complete ability to share the client's feelings.

If the coach can genuinely step outside of their own limiting beliefs and prejudices, see life through client's eyes and 'walk in their shoes', then they allow the possibility that both client and coach can 'truly blossom and grow in that climate'.

Although commenting specifically on the approach from a counselling perspective, Professor Jeanne Watson of The University of Toronto noted that with 60 years of research, empathy has consistently been proven to be the most potent factor in client progress;

"Therapists need to be able to be responsively attuned to their clients and to understand them emotionally as well as cognitively. When empathy is operating on all three levels - interpersonal, cognitive, and effective - it is one of the most powerful tools therapists have at their disposal." [6]

### References:

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