

RESPECT (UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD)

C. H. PATTERSON

From *The Therapeutic Relationship*, Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole. 1985. pp. 59-63.

RESPECT

In his 1957 article, Rogers included unconditional positive regard as one of the conditions for constructive personality change. Rogers credited Standaal with originating this term. (16). Positive regard is unconditional when it doesn't depend on the client's behavior. The client is regarded as a person, not as a collection of behaviors. Rogers has used other terms to describe this condition, including acceptance of the client as a person, with negative as well as positive aspects. Here we call it respect. In this section we look at the nature of respect as well as how it is measured and manifested.

The Nature of Respect

Caring about, prizing, valuing, and liking are other terms for the respect condition. It is a nonpossessive caring. The client is regarded as a person of worth; he or she is respected. The counselor's attitude is nonevaluative, nonjudgmental, without criticism, ridicule, depreciation, or reservations. This does not mean that the counselor accepts as right, desirable, or likeable, all aspects of the client's behavior or that he or she agrees with or condones all the client's behavior. "In the nonjudgmental attitude the [therapist] does not relinquish his own sense of values, his personal or social ethics. (17) Yet clients are accepted for what they are, as they are. There is no demand or requirement that they change or be different in order to be accepted, or that they be perfect. Imperfections are accepted, along with mistakes and errors, as part of the human condition.

Respect is expressed in the therapist's listening to the client and in the effort to understand the client, as well as in his or her communication of that understanding. On the other hand, respect increases with understanding. While there should be a basic respect for the client simply as a person, a human being, respect is augmented with understanding of his or her uniqueness.

Nonpossessive warmth is another term that has been applied to the respect condition. There is a real interest in the client, a sincere concern for him or her, a trust, a love. It "does not imply passivity or unresponsivity; nonpossessive warmth is an outgoing positive action involving active, personal participation." (18) Although initially respect is expressed by communicating "in at least minimally warm and modulated tones" the potential for warmth,"(19) respect can be communicated in many different ways.

We must emphasize that it is not always communicated in warm, modulated tones of voice; it may be communicated, for example, in anger. In the final analysis, it is the client's experience of the expression that counts, and the client may experience the therapist's attempt to share his own experience fully as an indication of the therapist's respect for the client's level of development. (20)

Being open and honest--real and genuine--with the client is also often a manifestation of respect for him or her.

The question of whether respect must be unconditional has been raised. Rogers has expressed some doubt about this, on the basis of a study by Spotts, which indicated that unconditionality contributed no variance apart from positive regard. (21) Barrett-Lennard has developed a relationship inventory for completion by clients that contains separate scales for positive regard and unconditional positive regard. (22) However, they do not appear to be independent. This does not resolve the issue of unconditionality, however; unconditionality may be the basic factor in both.

Carkhuff and Berenson feel that *unconditional positive regard*, as well as *nonpossessive warmth*, are misnomers. "Unconditionality would, instead, appear to be nothing more than the initial suspension of potentially psychotoxic feelings, attitudes, and judgments. (23) It would appear, however, that the nonjudgmental and nonevaluative attitude and the distinction between acceptance of the client as a person worthy of respect regardless of (unacceptable) behaviors constitute what is indicated by the word *unconditional*.

Measuring Respect

Truax developed a five-point Tentative Scale for the Measurement of Nonpossessive Warmth in 1962. (24) The variable of unconditionality is defined as an acceptance of the experience of the client without imposing conditions. Warmth involves a nonpossessive caring for the client as a separate person and, thus, a willingness to share equally his or her joys and aspirations as well as depressions and failures. It involves valuing the patient as a person, separate from any evaluation of his or her behavior or thoughts. (25) Carkhuff's revision of the scale to measure the communication of respect in interpersonal processes (26) follows.

Level 1

The verbal and behavioral expressions of the first person communicate a clear lack of respect (or negative regard) for the second person(s).

EXAMPLE: The first person communicates to the second person that the second person's feelings and experiences are not worthy of consideration or that the second person is not capable of acting constructively. The first person may become the sole focus of evaluation.

In summary, in many ways the first person displays a lack of respect or concern for the second person's feelings, experiences and potentials.

Level 2

The first person responds to the second person in such a way as to communicate little respect for the feelings, experiences, and potentials of the second person.

EXAMPLE: The first person may respond mechanically or passively or ignore many of the feelings of the second person.

Level 3

The first person communicates a positive respect and concern for the second person's feelings, experiences and potentials.

EXAMPLE: The first person communicates respect and concern for the second person's ability to express himself and to deal constructively with his life situation.

In summary, in many ways the first person communicates that who the second person is and what he does matter to the first person.

Level 3 constitutes the minimal level of facilitative interpersonal functioning.

Level 4

The facilitator clearly communicates a very deep respect and concern for the second person.

EXAMPLE: The facilitator's responses enable the second person to feel free to be himself and to experience being valued as an individual.

In summary, the facilitator communicates a very deep caring for the feelings, experiences, and potentials of the second person.

Level 5

The facilitator communicates the very deepest respect for the second person's worth as a person and his potentials as a free individual.

EXAMPLE: The facilitator cares very deeply for the human potentials of the second person.

In summary, the facilitator is committed to the value of the other person as a human being.

Examples of Respect

In this first example it is obvious that the therapist shows complete lack of respect and warmth for the client but is evaluative:

CLIENT: I just can't wait to get out of school-I'm so excited. I just want to get out and get started on my career. I know I'm going places.

THERAPIST: What's the matter, don't you like school?" (27)

The next example also involves disapproval of the client's behavior as well as evaluation and lack of warmth:

THERAPIST: ... another part here too, that is, if they haven't got a lot of schooling, there may be a good argument, that, that they-are better judges, you know.

CLIENT: Yeah . . .

THERAPIST: Now, I'm not saying that that's necessarily true, I'm just saying that's *reality*.

CLIENT: Yeah.

THERAPIST: And you're in a *position* that you can't argue with them. Why is it that these people burn you up so much?

CLIENT: They *get by with* too many things . . .

THERAPIST: Why should that bother you?

CLIENT: 'Cause I never got by with anything.

THERAPIST: They're papa figures, aren't they? (28)

Now contrast these with the following dialogue, in which the words can only give an indication of the warmth present:

CLIENT: ... ever recovering to the extent where I could become self supporting and live alone. I thought that I was doomed to hospitalization for the rest of my life and seeing some of the people over in the main building, some of those old people who are, who need a lot of attention and all that sort of thing, is the only picture I could see of my own future, just one of (Therapist: Mhm) complete hopelessness, that there was any . . .

THERAPIST: (Interrupting) You didn't see any hope at all, did you?

CLIENT: Not in the least. I thought no one really cared and I didn't care myself, and I seriously-uh-thought of suicide; if there'd been any way that I could end it all *completely* and not become a burden or an extra care, I would have committed suicide, I was that low. I didn't want to live. In fact, I hoped that I-1 would go to sleep at night and not wake up, because I, I really felt there was nothing to live for. (Therapist: Uh huh. [very softly]) Now I, I truly believe that this drug they are giving me helps me a lot, I think, I think it is one drug that really does me *good*. (Therapist: Uh hm.)

THERAPIST: But you say that, that during that time you, you felt as though no one cared, as to what (Client: That' s right.) what happened to you.

CLIENT: And, not only that, but I hated *myself* so that I didn't *deserve* to have anyone care for me. I hated myself so that I, I, I not only felt that no one did, but I didn't see any reason why they *should*.

THERAPIST: I guess that makes some sense to me now. I was wondering why it was that you were shutting other people off. You weren't letting anyone else care.

CLIENT: I didn't think I was worth caring for.

THERAPIST: So you didn't ev--maybe you not only thought you were-hopeless, but you wouldn't allow people . . . (Therapist's statement drowned out by client). (29)

NOTES

16. C. R. Rogers. *On becoming a person*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961. P. 283
17. F. P. Biestek. The nonjudgmental attitude. *Social Casework*, 1953, 34, 235-239.
18. C. B. Truax and K. M. Mitchell, Research on certain therapist interpersonal skills in relation to process and outcome. In A. E. Bergin and S. L. Garfield (Eds.) *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change: An empirical analysis*. New York: Wiley, 1971. P. 317.
19. R. R. Carkhuff. *Helping and human relations*. Vol. I, *Selection and training*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969. Reprinted by Human Resource Development Press, Amherst, MA, 1984. Page numbers are for 1969 printing. P. 205
20. R. R. Carkhuff and B. G. Berenson. *Beyond counseling and therapy*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967. P. 28.
21. C. R. Rogers. The interpersonal relationship: The core of guidance. *Harvard Educational Review*, 1962, 32, 416-429.
22. G. T. Barrett-Lennard. Dimensions of therapist response as causal factors in therapeutic change. *Psychological Monographs*, 1962, 76, (Whole No. 562).
23. Carkhuff and Berenson, *Beyond counseling*. P. 28.
24. C. B. Truax and R. R. Carkhuff. *Toward effective counseling and therapy*. Chicago: Aldine, 1967. Pp. 58-68.
25. *Ibid.*, P. 58.
26. Carkhuff, *Helping*, Vol. II. *Practice and research*. Pp. 317-318.
27. Carkhuff and Berenson, *Beyond counseling*, P. 34.
28. Truax and Carkhuff, *Toward effective counseling*, P. 61
29. *Ibid.*, P. 67.