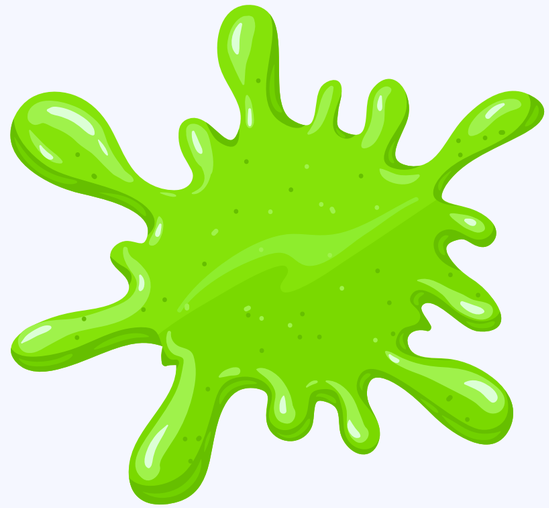
BEING HUMAN –

STAYING WITH THE STICKY BITS (USING PERSON-CENTRED CONCEPTS)





RESEARCH ON THE TOP ‘STICKIES’:

- Feeling responsible for a client who is not ‘improving’
- Having difficult feelings toward clients
- Ruptures in the therapeutic relationship
- Risk and responsibility, particularly suicidality
- Carrying clients emotionally after sessions
- Maintaining boundaries while genuinely caring
- Not knowing whether we are doing the ‘right’ thing
- High workload and lack of time
- Organisational and system pressures
- Poor supervision or professional isolation



HOW STICKY DO THINGS CURRENTLY FEEL?

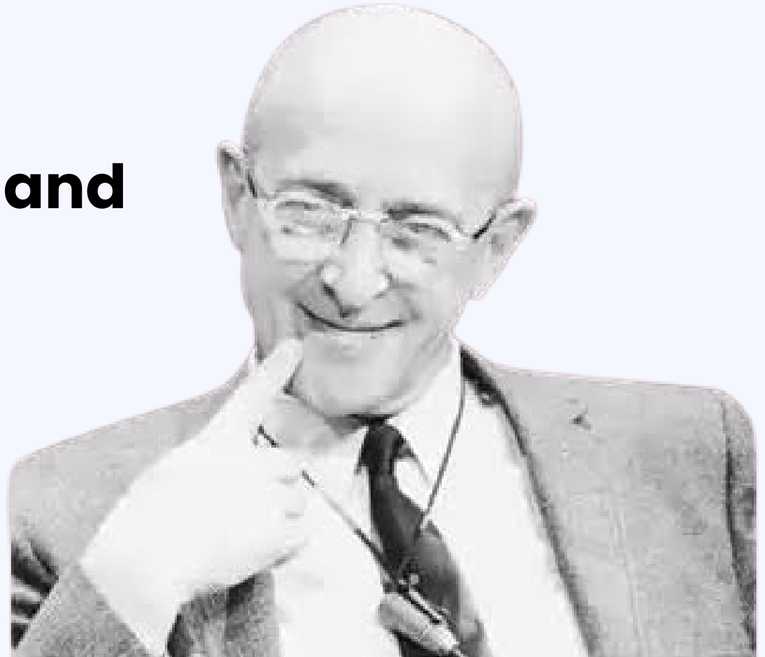




STICKY:
I am struggling to like or accept this client

“value the person, irrespective of… specific behaviors”
– Carl Rogers, 1959

“I have found that truly to accept another person and his feelings is by no means an easy thing.”
– Carl Rogers, 1961



STICKY: I am struggling to like or accept this client



- UPR: Genuinely valuing someone without imposing conditions, while remaining authentic

- Maintaining regard when we feel disturbed, bored, frustrated or judgemental

- How do we remain accepting without becoming false or performative? **congruence: noticing and attending to our own experience of the client, our own conditions of worth, stresses - importance of personal development. Respect for separateness, redoubling empathy, not abandoning ourselves and our boundaries. Our own stresses. (C)**

STICKY: I am struggling to like or accept this client

Perhaps not “Do I offer UPR?” but “When, with who, and under what conditions does my regard become less unconditional?”



STICKY: I'm preferring one part of the client over another



- Clients often present through different "configurations of self" (Mearns adn Thorne 1999) - for example, vulnerable, angry, compliant, defensive, or critical parts - and we may well have preferences!

- Mearns (2003): extend the core conditions to all configurations (or parts) of the client, not just the parts that feel easier to understand, accept, relate to or feel 'growthful'.

STICKY: I’m preferring one part of the client over another



Dangers of not offering the core conditions equally:

- Some parts of the client may feel rejected, judged or unwelcome.
- Difficult or conflicted parts of self may become hidden, defended or split off further.
- Client may learn that only certain ways of being are acceptable within therapy, e.g. I am liked when I make progress, but not when I don’t - in other words we may unintentionally reinforce the client’s existing conditions of worth.
- We miss an opportunity for our professional and personal growth?

STICKY: I want the client to move/change / go deeper



Rogers' Seven Stages of Process

- The stages describe differences in the way a person experiences and relates to self, feelings and experience, based on many hours of observation by Rogers and colleagues.

- A person can be at different stages with different issues.

- Not a scale of progress a client 'should' make, but a way to understand a client better and guide us to calibrate our empathy, allowing natural movement to occur.

- If empathy stays too much on the surface, the client may feel missed or unseen; if it goes too deep too quickly, they may feel exposed, invaded, or misunderstood (but getting it wrong can also be helpful!).

Sticky bit: I want the client to move / change /go deeper



Note: Rogers didn't name the stages, only numbered them. These are not his titles, but summaries

- **Stage 1 – Fixed and remote:** experience is largely denied or kept at a distance; problems tend to be located outside the self.

- **Stage 2 – Beginning to loosen:** feelings are talked about, but as distant, external or belonging to the past.

- **Stage 3 – Talking about the self:** feelings and experiences are described more personally, though still with some distance and limited ownership.

- **Stage 4 – Feelings come closer:** present feelings begin to emerge; contradictions and incongruence become more apparent. understanding the self become less rigid.

Sticky bit: I want the client to move / change / go deeper



Stages 1–2: “The problem is outside me.”

Stages 3–4: “Maybe this has something to do with me.”

Stage 5: “I can recognise and own what I am feeling.”

Stage 6: “I am experiencing it fully, here and now.”

Stage 7: “I can live more flexibly and trust my own experience.”

Sticky bit: I want the client to move / change / go deeper

“Don’t get hooked on growth.” - Mearns, 2003

- **Stage 5 - Greater ownership:** feelings are experienced more directly and accepted more readily; ways of

- **Stage 6 - Immediate experiencing:** previously blocked experience can be felt fully in the present moment, sometimes with a marked sense of movement or release.



- **Stage 7 - Fluidity:** the person increasingly trusts immediate experience, holds self-concept more lightly and responds flexibly to new experience.

Everything seems to land harder than I expect



“Clients in the middle of fragile process are asking if their way of experiencing themselves at that moment has a right to exist in the world.” - Margaret Warner

- Fragile process (Warner, 1991): the client’s inner experience can feel difficult to access, trust, or hold onto - Feelings may become either too much or seem to disappear altogether.

- May look like overwhelm, flooding, panic, blankness, flattening, shutting down, losing words, dissociation-like distance, or rapid shifts between “nothing” and intense feeling.

- Fragile process is not a diagnosis and does not necessarily describe the whole person. A client may process most areas of life quite robustly but become fragile around particular experiences such as shame, rejection, attachment, trauma, sexuality, anger, loss, or abandonment.

Everything seems to land harder than I expect



- The client may know that something is there but find it difficult to identify, symbolise, or trust. Once they begin to contact the experience, they may also struggle to regulate or stop it.

- Misattunement can feel particularly powerful. A response that seems only slightly inaccurate to the therapist may feel to the client as though their experience has been misunderstood, overridden, or even wiped out.

- Client may also notice subtle shifts in the therapist's tone, facial expression, attention, or wording. Empathy needs to be gentle, tentative, precise, and closely paced to the client: "There's something there that feels difficult to put into words… am I close?" rather than "You feel abandoned."

Everything seems to land harder than I expect



- Difficulty hearing another perspective: while trying to hold onto their own fragile experience, another person's viewpoint can feel as though it wipes out or annihilates their own. Warner specifically highlighted this difficulty.

- If the therapeutic relationship is helping the client hold experience at a tolerable level, a holiday, cancellation, change of room, changed appointment time, ending, or perceived shift in the therapist can disturb that regulating relationship (K).

STICKY/STUCK/TRAPPED









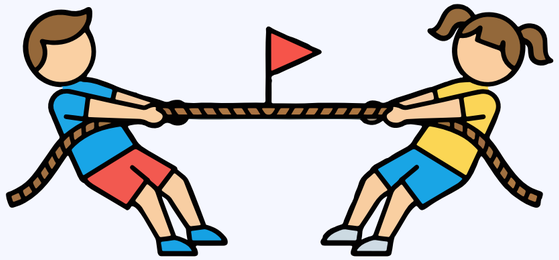














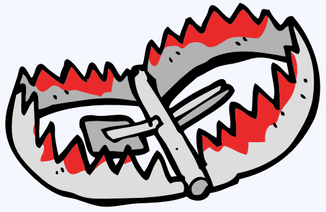


















Extra Notes

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” - Rogers, On Becoming a Person (1961). This is useful for linking self-acceptance with our capacity to accept others.

“I have found it highly rewarding when I can accept another person.” Rogers immediately adds that genuinely accepting another person and their feelings is “by no means an easy thing.”

“Can I really permit another person to feel hostile toward me?” This is a particularly good question: UPR becomes more difficult when the client’s feelings challenge us personally.

Rogers also asks whether we can accept someone who “views life and its problems in a way quite different from mine?” This captures the need to notice our own values and tolerate difference rather than expecting the client to see things as we do.

He also says: “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.’” This points towards developing UPR through greater awareness of ourselves and less need to direct or change the client.

Extra Notes:

A few other important things Rogers noticed about the **seven-stage process**:

Change is gradual, not all-or-nothing. He saw clients as moving along a continuum from greater rigidity toward greater openness and fluidity.
Movement is uneven. A person might be very open in one area of life but much more defended in another.

The stages are not fixed personality types. They describe how a person is processing experience at a particular time.

Later-stage processing is more immediate. The client increasingly experiences feelings in the present rather than only talking about them afterwards.

The self becomes less rigid. Clients become more able to revise old beliefs about themselves when their actual experience does not fit those beliefs.

Extra Notes:

Feelings become more owned. Instead of “people make me feel…” there is more capacity for “I notice I feel…”
Internal contradiction becomes more tolerable. Clients become better able to hold conflicting feelings without needing to deny one side.

The locus of evaluation shifts inward. The person becomes less dependent on external approval and more able to trust their own experiencing.
The therapeutic relationship helps facilitate movement. Rogers linked movement in process to the presence of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard.

Stage 6 moments can be particularly significant. Rogers described these as moments when previously blocked experience is fully felt in the here-and-now, often accompanied by a noticeable shift in the person’s self-structure.

Extra Notes:

In Margaret Warner's person-centred framework, fragile process is one of several forms of difficult process. The main others she described are dissociated process and psychotic process.

- Fragile process - experience is difficult to hold at a manageable level. It may become overwhelming, disappear, or be easily disrupted by another person's response.

- Dissociated process - aspects of experience become split off from ordinary awareness. The person may experience gaps, discontinuity, feeling unreal, or a sense that parts of experience are not fully "mine."

- Psychotic process - the person may struggle to organise experience in a way that is shared with others, and may develop unusual meanings, perceptions, or beliefs in trying to make sense of what they are experiencing.

Warner's emphasis was that these are process descriptions, not fixed types of people. A client can show different kinds of process at different times, and may process one area of life quite normally while becoming fragile, dissociated, or psychotic around another area.