

## Carl Rogers (1902–1987) and the Humanists' Take on Personality

✓ Carl Rogers is one of many individuals who were part of an intellectual movement toward the end of the last century focused on promoting a more optimistic view of humankind in response to what was judged to be the dehumanizing views of *psychoanalysis* and *behaviorism*, both of which were seen as too pessimistic and deterministic. Their movement, since it was the third of the “big three” models of human nature and behavior at that time, came to be known as *The Third Force*. Its adherents included both psychologists--who would refer to themselves as *humanists* or *humanistic psychologists*--and philosophers--who were most often called *phenomenologists*.



✓ Rogers was also one of the founders of the *human potential movement* that emphasized *self-realization* through *sensitivity training*, *encounter groups*, and other exercises intended to foster personal growth. His views, like those of Freud, grew out of his *person-centered theory* and *client-centered therapy*, also known as *non-directive therapy*.

✓ Rogers viewed personality structure in terms of one all important structure, the *self*, which today is more widely known as the *self-concept*. A *self-concept* is a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities, and typical behavior. Your *self-concept* is a collection of *self-perceptions*, or *mental pictures*, that you have about who you are. These may be expressed verbally in statements such as: “I’m smart,” “I’m easy going and make friends without difficulty,” or “I am athletic and attractive to others.”

“I have little sympathy with the rather prevalent concept that man is basically irrational, and that his impulses, if not controlled, will lead to destruction of others and self. Man's behavior is exquisitely rational, moving with subtle and ordered complexity toward the goals his organism is endeavoring to achieve.”  
Carl Rogers

✓ *Self-concepts* that are consistent with reality, e.g., believing you are athletic and finding yourself excelling in sports, are said to exhibit *congruence*. When one's *self-concept* is not consistent with reality, a state called *incongruence* occurs. Everyone experiences some *incongruence* in their lives but Rogers believed that too much *incongruence* threatens one's psychological well-being.

✓ Rogers also believed that all of us have a need affection, love, and acceptance from others. We want those reactions to us to come without any strings attached, i.e., we want affection, love, and acceptance to be *unconditional*. Persons whose experience with love, affection, and acceptance from others has come at a price, are receiving those emotions *conditionally*. In childhood *conditional* parental affection, love, and acceptance promotes *incongruence* in children whereas *unconditional* affection, love, and acceptance fosters psychological *congruence*.

✓ Persons who grow up believing that affection always comes with a price--always has *conditions* associated with it--will go on to distort more and more of their behavior and experiences in order to feel worthy of acceptance from others. This latter happenstance may lead to adjustment problems that could be explored with a *person-centered therapist*.