Instructor’s Manual
for
PERSON-CENTERED EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY
with
NATALIE ROGERS, PHD
from the series
PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS
with hosts
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Manual by
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psychotherapy.net
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Instructor’s Manual for Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy with Natalie Rogers, PhD

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Instructor’s Manual for

PERSON-CENTERED EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPY WITH NATALIE ROGERS, PHD

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Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

1. **USE THE TRANSCRIPTS**

Make notes in the video Transcript for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during the video and post-viewing.

2. **FACILITATE DISCUSSION**

Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers’ observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The Discussion Questions provide ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

3. **LET IT FLOW**

Allow the session to play out some so viewers can appreciate the work over time instead of stopping the video too often. It is best to watch the video in its entirety since issues untouched in earlier parts often play out later. Encourage viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What do viewers think works and does not work in the session? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes and it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

4. **SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL**

Assign readings from Suggestions for Further Readings and Websites prior to viewing. You can also time the video to coincide with other course or training materials on related topics.

5. **REFLECT ON REFLECTIONS**

Hand out copies of Rogers’ Reflections on the Session, giving participants an inside view of Rogers’ experience of her work with this client. Rogers’ reflections humanize the process and provide viewers a context into which they can place the person of the therapist. In this way, Rogers becomes not just an expert therapist but also a real person.
6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER
See suggestions in Reaction Paper section.

7. CONDUCT ROLE-PLAYS
After watching the video, organize participants into pairs. Assign each pair to role-play a therapy session using Rogers’ Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy approach. The “client” may resemble the client in the video, a current or previous real-life client, someone they know personally or even themselves. Participants should switch roles if time permits. As a basic instruction, suggest to therapists that they focus on deeply listening to the client. Have some basic art supplies available, and encourage the therapists to introduce expressive arts into the session, keeping their attention on the creative process rather than on diagnosis or interpretation. See Rogers’ Approach to Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy in this manual for a brief review of how she works. After the role-plays, have the groups come together to discuss the exercise. First have the clients share their experiences, then have the therapists talk about what the session was like for them. What did participants find challenging about this way of working? What was it like to introduce expressive arts into the session? Did anything surprise them about this? Finally, open up a general discussion on what participants learned about Rogers’ approach to person-centered therapy.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one client; the entire group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. Before the end of the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the observation team, and bring it back into the session with the client. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion that explores what participants found exciting and/or challenging about this way of working.

8. WATCH THE EXPERTS SERIES
This video is one in a series portraying leading theories of psychotherapy and their application. Each video in the series presents a master therapist working with a real client who has real problems.
By showing several of the videos in this Psychotherapy with the Experts series (See the More Videos section for a complete list of the videos in the series), you can expose viewers to a variety of styles and approaches, allowing them an opportunity to see what fits best for them.

**More Videos with this Client:** Dr. Rogers conducts this session with a client named Robin who, in fact, participated in five videos with different therapists in the Experts series. These sessions were filmed over a 20-month period, in the following order:

- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with John Krumboltz, PhD;
- Solution-Focused Therapy with Insoo Kim Berg, MSSW
- Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy with Natalie Rogers, PhD
- Mind Body Therapy with Ernest Rossi, PhD; and
- Integrative Therapy with Allen E. Ivey, EdD;

It can be particularly enlightening for viewers to watch some or all of these five therapists work with the same client to see how their styles, personalities and theoretical orientations play out differently. By watching these sessions in chronological order, viewers can also observe changes in the client over time. If you have viewers write a Reaction Paper – see the guidelines in this manual – you can ask them to address what differences they notice in how Krumboltz, Berg, Rogers, Rossi, and Ivey work with Robin, and how these differences affect the outcomes of the sessions.

Other videos in the series use different therapeutic models. We can reflect upon the differences among these models by exploring the following questions:

- How does the model explain the therapeutic process?
- What assumptions does the model imply about the purpose of therapy?
- How is theory translated into practice in real-life situations?
- What is the role of the therapist?
- What outcomes are associated with successful therapy?
PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists may feel on the spot to put on a good demonstration, and clients can be self-conscious in front of a camera. Therapists often move more quickly than they would in everyday practice to demonstrate a particular technique. Despite these factors, therapists and clients on video can engage in a realistic session that conveys a wealth of information not contained in books or therapy transcripts: body language, tone of voice, facial expression, rhythm of the interaction, quality of the alliance – all aspects of the therapeutic relationship that are unique to an interpersonal encounter.

Psychotherapy is an intensely private matter. Unlike the training in other professions, students and practitioners rarely have an opportunity to see their mentors at work. But watching therapy on video is the next best thing.

One more note: The personal style of therapists is often as important as their techniques and theories. Therapists are usually drawn to approaches that mesh well with their own personality. Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, students and trainees must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research that fits their own personal style and the needs of their clients.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Because this video contains an actual therapy session, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the client who has courageously shared her personal life with us.
Natalie Rogers’ Approach to Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy

Natalie Rogers’ approach to person-centered expressive arts therapy developed out of the client-centered therapy work of her father, the late Carl Rogers, combined with the influences of her mother, who was an artist herself. The person-centered approach is more than just a theory of psychotherapy—it is a belief system and way of life. This philosophy holds that every one of us carries tremendous inner resources, and we each have the capacity to become more fully ourselves. The main task of the person-centered therapist is to create the facilitative environment with the proper conditions for the client’s full self to come into bloom.

The core conditions of empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard form the cornerstone of the person-centered approach to psychotherapy. These are rooted in the belief that the most powerful experience for the client is to be deeply heard and to have someone else see and understand the world as he does. When the therapist brings these basic conditions to the therapeutic relationship, she creates a safe, nurturing environment in which the client can come into his full self.

Building on the foundation of Carl Rogers’ person-centered therapy approach, Natalie uses expressive arts in her therapy sessions to engage clients’ creativity. She has developed what she calls the Creative Connection® process. This process uses a sequence of self-expression through movement, sound art, and journal writing to delve deeply into the well of creativity and to integrate body, mind, emotions and spirit. These different art forms allow clients to expand their language for self-expression and often give them more direct access to feelings. Natalie finds that combining different forms of artistic expression can help clients reach an even deeper level of self-exploration. She may, for example, invite clients to move their body, then to use color to express feelings that come up in the movement, and to follow up with writing that flows freely out of this creative process.
Although the use of expressive arts can often help clients get to their feelings very quickly, Rogers does not see person-centered therapy as a quick fix. Rather than diagnosing and treating people, this approach is about being fully present with clients and helping them come to their full personhood. Rogers sees herself as a companion to her clients, walking with them on their inner journey. The choices about how and where to go on the journey belong to the client, and Rogers follows along as closely and for as long as the client needs her companionship.
Rogers’ Reflections on the Session

The phone rings and I am asked to go to Chicago to be videotaped with a client. The producer says, “We would like you to come and demonstrate the methods of your father, Carl Rogers and client-centered therapy.” I have been eager to get a teaching video of my work so this excites me. However, I reply, “I build on my father’s philosophy and methods by using the expressive arts. I call it person-centered expressive arts therapy. I would like to send you my book, The Creative Connection®: Expressive Arts as Healing so that you know what I would be doing.” The producer listens to me, but I wonder, am I really being heard? After further discussion when we end the conversation I believe he still thinks I will come to demonstrate client-centered therapy a la Carl Rogers. The day before I get on the plane I call him and say, “I want you to realize that I am bringing art materials for these client sessions.” Again he listens, but did he really hear? Indeed, the jacket of the original tape bears the title, Person-Centered Therapy.

Now, more than 10 years after this session was taped, it is with real pleasure that I write this accompanying piece to the accurately titled DVD so that my own creative voice will be heard. My biggest wish is that Robin could see this video, too, so we could learn what she thinks of this session in retrospect. The client is the one who really knows what is helpful or not helpful. It is very easy for us as therapists to think we have been useful, but only the client really knows.

As you view the DVD, you’ll notice body language and tone of voice that indicate that this is a heartfelt counseling session. The rapport between the two of us grows as I demonstrate patience and attempt to view the world as Robin experiences it. When a person is heard at this deep level it is healing in and of itself. Here an underlying trust in the process is revealed.

I honor Robin as she agrees to open some of her inner life in front of a camera. We had never met until she sat down in front of me with bright lights on us. I appreciate her willingness to unhesitatingly pick up the colored chalk to let her unconscious speak. She had never heard
the words expressive art therapy. It is evidence that you don’t have to understand the theory of the process to engage in it and find meaning in an image.

The arts are a metaphoric language that helps clients access their unconscious to gain meaningful insights. The creative process is healing in and of itself. In this session with Robin, she has the opportunity to explore the meaning of the images she draws. Also, the images offer her a way of communicating her inner thoughts and feelings to me without using many words. I do not analyze or interpret Robin’s art. Instead, I create the space for her to discover meaning.
Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

Video: Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy with Natalie Rogers, PhD

• **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.

• **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards, or use the questions as a way to approach the discussion. Respond to each question below.

• **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

**What to Write:** Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about person-centered therapy and expressive arts therapy? What stands out in how Rogers works?

2. **What I found most helpful:** What was most beneficial to you as a therapist about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?

3. **What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/strategies did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working? Explore these questions.

4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently than Rogers in the therapy session in the video? Be specific in what different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have applied.

5. **Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy in the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?
Related Websites, Videos, and Further Readings Web Resources

“The Path to Wholeness: Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy,” by Natalie Rogers, PhD, an online article at Psychotherapy.net

www.psychotherapy.net

Natalie Rogers’s website

www.nrogers.com

Association for Humanistic Psychology

www.ahpweb.org

International Expressive Arts Therapy Association

www.ieata.org

The National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations

www.nccata.org

World Association for Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counseling

www.pce-world.org

RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET

Person-Centered Child Therapy

Exploring Narradrama

Integrative Therapy with Allen E. Ivey, EdD*

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy with John Krumboltz, PhD*

Mind-Body Therapy with Ernest Rossi, PhD*

Solution-Focused Therapy with Insoo Kim Berg, MSSW*

*additional videos that feature the same client.
BOOKS


Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use a few or all of these discussion questions keyed to certain elements of the video or those issues most relevant to the viewers. On-screen minute markers are noted with some question to highlight related points in the video/transcript.

ROGERS’ APPROACH

1. **Unconditional Positive Regard:** (1-18) What is your reaction to hearing Rogers talk about developing positive regard for abusive and violent clients? Can you imagine relating empathically with such clients? Do you see a place for unconditional positive regard with all clients, or are there situations in which you would not apply this approach?

2. **Way of Life:** (1-20) What do you think about Rogers’ description of her approach as a philosophy, a belief system or a way of life? Do you think this applies to other therapeutic approaches? Why or why not?

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

3. **Getting Present:** (2-2) What do you think about the way Rogers opens the session with Robin by having them sit together quietly with their eyes closed? In what ways is this approach helpful or not helpful for Robin? Would you be comfortable sitting with clients in this way?

4. **Vulnerability:** (2-6) What do you think about how Rogers interacts with Robin in trying to understand what Robin wants from the therapy and how vulnerable she wants to make herself? Are you comfortable with the slow pace and open endedness of the process? If you were the therapist with Robin, how might you have talked with Robin about her vulnerability in therapy and in the world?
5. **Who Am I?:** (2-11) What stands out for you in Rogers’ exploration with Robin of, “Who am I?” Does it seem like Rogers is on the right track with what Robin needs and wants here? Staying within the person-centered approach, are there other ways you might have worked with Robin regarding this question?

6. **Art:** (2-17:2-45) What are your thoughts about Rogers’ expressive arts interventions? What do you notice about Robin during this portion of the therapy? Are there aspects of Rogers’ expressive arts work that you would like to incorporate into your practice? How do you feel about moving beyond traditional talk therapy? What doesn’t sit as well with you about her use of art in the session?

7. **I Am a Person:** (2-45) What reactions do you notice in yourself when Robin comments that she needs to remember she is a person regardless of what her husband wants? Would it have been difficult for you to listen without inserting your opinion if you had been the therapist here? In what ways is Rogers’ approach effective with Robin?

8. **Core Conditions:** Rogers states that her goals are to: hear what’s troubling clients, be fully present, help them explore their inner world and find their inner essence (1-24). How well do you think Rogers meets her goals in this session with Robin? What are some key moments where you see Rogers creating the core conditions of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard? Is this a way of working that comes naturally to you, or is it a stretch? What are some ways you would like to develop as a therapist with regard to creating these core conditions with clients?

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**GROUP DISCUSSION**

9. **Therapeutic Relationship:** How would you characterize the therapeutic relationship in this video? Do you think Rogers developed a working alliance with Robin? What key indicators lead you to your impression of the alliance? In what ways is the therapeutic relationship significant in this particular course of therapy?
10. **Brief Therapy:** (3-23) What do you think about the question of Rogers’ approach being well-suited to a brief therapy model? What do you see as pros and cons of using her person-centered expressive arts approach in brief treatment?

11. **Personal Reaction:** How would you feel about being Rogers’ client? Do you think she could create an alliance with you and that the therapy would be effective? How so?
Complete Transcript of Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy with Natalie Rogers, PhD

Note to facilitators: Throughout the transcript below, we indicate on-screen minute markers that correspond with those that appear in the bottom right corner of the DVD on screen. You will find chapter markers on the DVD at five-minute intervals so that you may easily skip to desired points in the video.

As a special feature of this manual, we have inserted Dr. Roger’s commentaries throughout the therapy session transcript to highlight certain aspects of her approach and technique.

ROGERS’S APPROACH

Dr. Jon Carlson: Diane, what’s your sense of person-centered therapy? Just what is it?

Dr. Diane Kjos: Well, it’s a humanistic theory. It was developed by Carl Rogers. I suppose of any of the theories, I would say that it’s had the most influence on counseling of any theory.

Carlson: It’s my understanding that Dr. Rogers believed that each person had this creative capacity to grow and to move toward self-actualization and that the therapist’s job was to create these core conditions of empathy, respect, and this deep understanding and caring and if this occurred, it provided that, the environment or the climate for one to find their way towards actualization. How does this compare to some of the other approaches?

Kjos: I think it grew out of, out of the existential theories and existential thought of that time.

So it’s probably closest to existential in that sense. But the other piece
that’s interesting is that it’s permeated most of the other theories in some way or another: the core conditions that you mentioned, the idea of unconditional positive regard. I’m fascinated by watching the beginning of a behavior therapy session where the therapist is really using all of those, too, to build the relationship.

Carlson: So it sounds like this, these ideas would maybe go across all of the theories.

Kjos: I think it does in many ways.

Carlson: Well, why don’t we invite in our guest, Dr. Natalie Rogers, the daughter of the late Carl Rogers, and learn more about this theory. Natalie, glad you’re here.

Dr. Natalie Rogers: Nice to see you, Jon.

Hi, Diane.

Kjos: Welcome, Natalie.

Rogers: Thanks.

Carlson: Diane and I have been having a discussion about person-centered therapy or, I think it once was called client-centered therapy or non-directive therapy.

Rogers: That’s, all that’s true.

Carlson: All of those things. Can you tell us just what this theory or therapy is?

Rogers: Well, I think, in the first place, what I heard you just say was really very accurate. I’d like to actually begin by saying how passionate I am about the, this philosophy because I see the person-centered approach as a philosophy, as a value system, and as a belief system, which is democratically based or it supports democracy, and as a, as political creatures, I think it’s really important—at least, it’s important to me—that as a psychotherapist that I am supporting a whole theory and system which is, says, “Yes, we believe in the capacity of each individual to be his or her full self.” So that’s really…I’ll get to the, what the process of psychotherapy is, but the foundations to me is so
important that, that there’s a strong belief—

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and of course, not everybody agrees with this—that within each person, within each of us, anybody there is this tremendous inner resource for becoming a constructive human being and that, as you said, what we need to do is create the facilitative environment or the proper conditions for that to really, to blossom, to grow. I, sometimes I call it the fertile field theory. It’s like if we have the right soil to grow in and if we, as facilitators or therapists, we’re nourishing the soil, we’re allowing this human being to become the seed or the full potential of that plant. I like that.

Carlson: Just like when you plant a plant, you don’t put it in the ground and keep pulling it up and looking at it and keep trying to tug and make…

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You kind of create the conditions and then just let it come forward.

Rogers: Let it grow. And Carl did, my dad, did a lot of research, actually, on what those conditions were, so that’s… Well, we can talk about that.

Carlson: So these are not just hypotheses that he had? There’s actually a research base for this approach?

Rogers: Yeah. There’s a very strong research base. Carl—I’ll call him “Carl” or “my dad” depending on, just spontaneously—but he was really the first person to do tape recordings of counseling interviews and then reveal them to the public and to actually analyze what was going on between the client and the therapist. And as a young college student, I was actually involved in some of that research, doing, after he had them transcribed, I was around the University of Chicago as a young person, and was involved in that.

Carlson: How did you become a person-centered therapist?

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Or it’s almost how did you not become a person-centered therapist?

Rogers: Well, it was kind of by osmosis. I didn’t have any, as a college
student, I did take psychology and found out that my father was well known. I didn’t really know that until I went to college. But my mother was an artist and I’ve really combined both the art and—from my mother—and the psychotherapy from my dad. But I took courses with Carl as a young person, and then I got married and went off and had my family, did my own thing, went to graduate school at Brandeis with, actually, Abe Maslow invited me to come back as a faculty wife, which I was.

Carlson: The man who coined the self-actualization term. Sure.

Kjos: When you were talking about that, I was thinking about working with different cultures and people from different races and different countries and so forth.

But also wondering about that and also helping people deal with the prejudice or external limits around themselves, how would you see this theory?

Rogers: Well, personally, I’ve worked in almost every European country, Japan. I’ve worked in Argentina, Brazil, and Russia four times, and so it’s like, you’re tapping into one of my favorite topics, which is using both the person-centered approach and my extension of that into the expressive arts. Because I call myself a person-centered expressive arts therapist as a cross-cultural way of communicating.

Carlson: If you create these conditions around the world, the same results occur?

Rogers: Yes. Yes.

Carlson: I see.

Rogers: I think the—and I’d like to go, I’d like us to remember to go back to those three conditions—but the one that is, I think, underestimated by almost every therapist and it’s proven in my own clinical and group experience, the most powerful thing from the client’s point of view is to be deeply heard.

And that is such a rare experience, to actually have somebody
understand the world as you understand it, for, if you’re my client, to really, for you to experience empathy will indeed convince you that that is a powerful experience which allows you to unfold into your next, to the next aspect of you. And that’s, as you said earlier, it’s…

A lot of Carl’s work has been taken on by other psychotherapy systems and probably the one that’s most important is to really be a good listener and that doesn’t mean just parroting back what somebody says. It means really getting the essence of that human being.

**Kjos:** And I heard you tell a group of students that you found it somewhat difficult to teach that.

**Rogers:** Well, yes, because I have always been a good listener. That’s been part of the way I grew up. I was listened to. I had a lot of empathy both from my mother and my father, so it was quite a shock to me to learn that people don’t know how to do that. I thought everybody knew how to be a good listener until I started teaching and then I realized that, “Well, you didn’t get it. Well, what did that person really say? And well, can you tell them what they said so that they can say, ‘Yes, you’ve got it’?” Because…

Again, the other thing that I really respect from Carl’s work and use always is that our clients or our students are our best teachers. So what he was doing, always, was to check back in with the client to see—and that’s what I do—I’ll speak for myself more than Carl because I’ve been a practicing therapist for 30 years, so. But for me to really check in with a client and say, “Have I, do I understand you? Is this right? Is this, am I, am I getting the essence of what you mean?”

And usually what I try to do is to be, to listen to what I call the music of the client as well as the words because there’s body language. There’s tone of voice. There’s…

**Carlson:** Are there some people that just respond better to this approach than others? Ones who maybe want to make music or want to…
**Rogers:** Well, I have worked with people in inpatient units, with so-called schizophrenics. I’ve worked with, I mean, with children. It’s wonderful. It’s part of play therapy. With adolescents. I’ve worked with couples. I haven’t worked with families much, so that I’m not as, but this is very powerful work with all of those populations.

I would say the one population I’ve worked with only briefly are people in recovery, addiction recovery. And my experience with people in addiction recovery is that, yes, the behavioral modification kind of confrontation, group pressure and so forth is very important, and yet, there is something that is missing, and that’s what the, both the client-centered approach and the expressive arts can offer, and that’s the ability to move beyond the problems, to have hope.

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To see something that is more than just behavior change; it’s almost a spiritual kind of awakening, which I feel is key to... And actually, the client yesterday that I worked with, that was, who said right away he was an AA person, a recovering alcoholic, I noticed in the artwork that he did, there was this sun of hope, and I thought, “Isn’t that interesting?” He’s talking hopelessness, and he’s putting in the artwork this vision of his, his armor, his shield and the hope.

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And I thought, “Oh, here we go again,” you know, moving beyond.  

**Carlson:** You’ve worked with a variety of people, and your father worked with school systems and he worked with governments, so he really had a, you know, a broad base to his work.  

**Rogers:** A very broad base.  

**Carlson:** And it’s interesting that you would talk about the AA groups is one that provides structure because that’s—  

**Rogers:** It’s very structured, yes.  

**Carlson:** —one of the things that person-centered therapy has been criticized for is that it doesn’t work with people who need that structure that needs to be provided on them. Yet, your experience sounds like it’s different.
Rogers: Well, I would say you need both. I think that’s a, there’s a complementary thing there. I, I would agree that I don’t think client-centered therapy is enough for addictive personalities, that the behavior structure is, the structured approach is necessary, and as I said, I think that’s very complementary to come in with really being deeply heard, deeply listened to, to be respected as the individual who has the capacity to change.

Kjos: What about—I know I’ve heard the term encounter groups—what about groups then? Are you…

Rogers: Well, I’ve worked a lot with groups and we’ve learned a lot since the encounter group days. I find that the person-centered approach is something that builds community in a very important way.

So, and actually, it would be good to go back to the three principles that Carl talked about, which was empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard, because those three elements in group work are very important for the facilitator.

Carlson: Let’s see. Empathy provides this understanding…

Rogers: This understanding, yes.

Carlson: And then congruence…

Rogers: Congruence is when the therapist or facilitator—and this applies to your groups, Diane, particularly—is open and honest and is aware of his or her own feelings. So as a facilitator, I need to know, “okay, I’m anxious now or I’m feeling joyful or I’m feeling frustrated,” so that you can, so as a facilitator I can, if necessary, if appropriate at that time, to say how I’m feeling as well as listening to the others, and that’s where you also can get into some confrontation or some, more on the encounter group style, but… So the congruence, it’s also true as an, as a psychotherapist, and this is often misunderstood, I think, in the person-centered approach, that if I’m, if you’re my client and I’m being congruent, it does not mean that I tell you my troubles or tell you my, you know, my what’s happening.
It’s not a “me, too” kind of a story. “Well, that happened to me…” No. That’s not what we’re talking about. I’m, to be a congruent psychotherapist means that I’m aware that if there’s something that’s very persistent going on between you and me that is interrupting our flow, that something in me is interrupting our flow, then it’s necessary for me to be open about it. Like if I’m having, if my child is very sick and that’s really distracting me from being present, I would say to you, my client, “You know, I really am trying very hard to be present with you today. I want you to know that I have a very sick child at home and that every once in a while I get distracted. I want you to know that it’s not your, the way you’re presenting yourself. “It’s something going on in me,” and that’s, that can be a tremendous relief to the client.

Carlson: So that’s an appropriate self-disclosure, being an authentic person, that you, too, have issues.

So that’s empathy and then there’s congruence and the third?

Rogers: Is unconditional positive regard.

Carlson: And how does that work?

Rogers: That’s a real caring, a real prizing of the other person. There’s this deep respect. Again, it comes back to knowing that each person, knowing and believing in your experience and your guts that this person has the capacity for self-direction. And it’s also, I would call it love.

Carlson: How can you do that? That’s often a point that people talk about.

What about if you’re working with someone who’s a murderer? How can you have this…

Rogers: This real caring.

Carlson: Unconditional caring.

Rogers: Right. Well, it doesn’t happen for, all the time, for every, every
client. It’s something that you, that I aspire to. So, and it does happen when people really begin to unfold, the person who is deeply troubled or violent. Take abusive men, which would, you know, be a problem for me to work with, and, as a feminist or as somebody who cares a lot about women’s growth, and yet I know that as I really listen to that person, I will find that that man some place has been hurt deeply himself, and I can relate to that. So that’s when the real caring and the ability to, to respect that person ….

1 19

I know at some level that if that man is listened to and cared about, he will find his compassion. He’ll find his ability to love and to care and to have a conscience.

**Carlson:** So that’s creating that garden, that environment for growth.

**Kjos:** When, one of the, what would you say to a student or someone who was interested in pursuing this field? I’m thinking particularly in terms of the brief therapy and the need to see people just a few times because of insurance and those kinds of things. Is this…

**Rogers:** I would tell people, “Please join the person-centered…” If this is, if the, the philosophy appeals to you, it’s a much-needed force in our country. I am really concerned about the quick fix that America is getting in on because of the insurance pressures and so forth.

1 20

So I, I have real problems with the quick fix. And I would like the, those people who feel that being fully present with somebody and helping them come to their full personhood is more important than giving answers or the medical, old medical model of diagnosing and treating people, that, that’s important. So I would say join us, and it takes some time to really be trained in this, and it’s a value, of value as a, I think, as a, as a citizen as well as a therapist.

**Carlson:** And that’s what I was hearing. It’s like a way of life.

**Rogers:** Yes, it is.

**Carlson:** And it’s very tempting to just want to react to every newfangled procedure that comes along or an approach. And yet you
have your principles and beliefs that you follow irregardless of the times that we live in?

Rogers: That’s right. I do, and it’s been a very, it’s been a very, it’s had a, it gives me a foundation, and I think that’s… Like when I started to use the arts in, my counseling, I wondered… well, at that time, there was no such word as “expressive artist.” And I thought, “Well, how can I bring my knowledge of creativity and arts to the counseling session?” But I knew that I had the basic foundations of good psychotherapy, that if I listened to the other person, if I did not interpret, if I only allowed—the client or helped the client to explore his or her own artwork or her own movement or her own sound or her own guided imagery, that if I was always counting on the client to lead the way, then I wasn’t going to damage the person, and that’s where I would be concerned.

I didn’t want to stifle their creativity or tell them who they were, so it’s a, it’s a very basic… When you have those basic principles, I feel that you can… and you have the intention to understand, I don’t think you can go too far wrong in sending people the wrong way.

Kjos: One of the things I’m curious about is, is when you talk about the expressive arts, is how do you know when to introduce that? Or to…

Rogers: I like that question because the expressive arts is another language. So it’s not, it’s not difficult once you become comfortable with using the arts yourself.

So in the training, people—that I offer—people become comfortable in their own use of, using color and form and so forth, but… to go on their own inner journey.

So when I am with a client, when there’s some feeling that is strong, I say, “Well, how would you like to express that feeling in another language? In the use of color or the use of line? Or… It doesn’t have to be a pretty picture. It doesn’t have to be a, something that we’re going
to put on the wall, but it’s another language, and it helps between you and me.”

**Carlson:** In a few minutes, we’re going to watch you do person-centered expressive arts therapy. Can you help set that up a little bit, and maybe tell us what your, your goals were as you entered into that interview?

**Rogers:** Well, my goals are just as I would express as a person-centered therapist.

My goals are to hear what’s troubling the client, to, to be present, fully present, to listen, to help them explore their inner world in order to get to know themselves. I think the basic premise here is that as people come to know and accept all aspects of themselves, their dark and their light, they will actualize themselves, become the person they’re supposed to be.

So, in using the arts, it’s, it’s just an expansion of the language. And…

**Carlson:** So you hear and you listen and you are fully present, and then you help or hope or… that that’s going to allow them to explore this inner, hidden self.

**Rogers:** Exactly. And…

**Carlson:** And that’s your role in this? Is to…

**Rogers:** Is… Yes, it is. It’s to help them find their inner, inner essence.

**Carlson:** And there’s modeling that takes place on your part.

**Rogers:** Yes, except I don’t usually model the art work. I mean, I just, I offer them the materials. So I’m modeling listening. I’m modeling being as full a person as I can be, and offering…

I didn’t get to use movement really in the counseling session that we’re going to show, partly because of the limitations, partly because it was a first session. But I also get people to do movement to their art.

**Carlson:** The same person? You might mix the media with them?
Rogers: Oh, definitely. My book is called The Creative Connection: Expressive Arts as Healing, and the creative connection that I’ve found personally was... I’d already been in private practice as a psychotherapist, and then I went to get some movement training and found that when I did movement, my art changed.

I took my art journal with me to the movement class and at lunchtime, I would start doodling or working with art as my, one of my mentors Janie Rhyne had taught us how to do art. And as I looked at my own art, I saw, my goodness, over the year my art just totally changed, and I realized that I had totally changed, that... So the connection came that one art form actually stimulates and nurtures another art form, so the movement changed my art, changes my inner being, changes the sound, changes my writing--poetry began to come. So it’s, it’s kind of like unpeeling or opening the lotus blossom or unpeeling the layers of the onion. It’s coming into your own inner essence.

Carlson: Well, let’s go now and watch your creative connection with Robin.

Rogers: Okay, great.

PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSION

Rogers Commentary: As Robin and I walk to the small stage I realize I am so passionate about using expressive arts in psychotherapy I have a hope that we can demonstrate its effectiveness. The moment I have this thought I realize that having expectations for the outcome can have a negative effect on the quality of our relationship. As I notice this thought, I do my best to let go of it. My opening statements reveal my emphasis on being fully present for her, yet letting her know of the possibility of using art during our session.

Rogers: Well, Robin, it’s nice to have you here, and I’m hoping to spend some time with you, really getting to know you and anything you want to talk about. And as I mentioned just briefly earlier, I am an expressive
arts therapist, so I will perhaps offer you the opportunity to use art as a way of communicating, but that will be very much up to you.

**Robin:** Okay.

**Rogers:** You can feel free to say “yes” or “no.” I really mean that.

But the way that I like to start with clients, if this is okay with you, is to spend just a minute quietly together with our eyes closed, just to really try to get present, to really get here, be present at the moment. Would that be all right with you?

**Robin:** Okay. Sure. That’s fine.

**Rogers:** Let’s just put our feet on the floor and close your eyes for a minute. Take a big breath. Tell your body to relax.

**Rogers Commentary:** I usually start my client sessions with a meditation. I need this for myself, as well as finding it useful for the client who rushes to an appointment with many thoughts and feelings. In my own meditation I imagine a safe, empathic “bubble” around both of us. Also, I ask myself to let go of any recent events or thoughts in order to be present and empathic for this human soul that is in front of me. I invoke my highest self to be available to her.

And as we take this minute in silence, if you can pay attention to any thoughts or feelings or sensations that are going on within you, that would be good.

**Rogers Commentary:** I often ask clients to focus on their thoughts, feelings, images or bodily sensations to help them discover what it is they really would like to explore during the session. This can eliminate the chit-chat and intellectual wanderings that begin a session.

And when you’re ready, you can open your eyes. So. I’d like to start wherever you want to begin.

**Robin:** That was good.

**Rogers:** Was that good?

**Robin:** Yes.

**Rogers:** What went on?
Robin: Basically clearing my mind. Sometimes it takes…

Rogers: Takes awhile.

Robin: Take 10 seconds just to get away and get a break and clear my mind and it releases tension and stress, things like that. So.

2 3

Rogers: So even just that little bit helped you be, be here or just empty?

Rogers Commentary: Here is my first attempt to understand the world as she is experiencing it, which is, of course, the client-centered approach. I am reflecting back what she said in a question form to help me clarify what is happening for her.

Robin: Empty.

Rogers: Empty. Okay.

Rogers Commentary: I must confess, that with this answer my quick thought was, “Oh my gosh, now what are we going to do? I’ve helped her empty her mind and feelings, so what will she/we work on under these bright lights? In reviewing this situation, now, I have to laugh at myself.

Robin: It’s sort of like I sometimes, you know, have tons of things going in. If I close my eyes and just relax for a few minutes, it just clears it all away, you know. And I don’t worry about things. Feels good.

Rogers: Good. So it’s nice to have a minute not to worry about things.

Rogers Commentary: We are just beginning to build some mutual trust.

There is a short silence here. Silence leaves the responsibility up to her to guide the session. Pauses and silence are key to following the path of the client. It is very easy for therapists to fill in this silence and direct the content of the session.

Robin: Right. Right. It cleared everything out. I mean, just so that there’s no stress. There’s no worrying about things going on and things like that, so.

Rogers: So there are things that you worry about, but at the moment, that kind of cleared it away.

Rogers Commentary: This seems like an accurate re-phrasing. I am
aware that she is trying to push aside her worries.

2 4

Robin: I think I worry about what everybody else worries about, you know. Where am I going to be five years down the road, you know? Is what I’m doing now the right thing? Just, just normal everyday life. Sometimes, I guess my biggest thing that I think about sometimes is how does everybody else cope with the things that go on that are everyday life to other people? How do they cope as compared to me? Am I in that midstream? Do I cope the way everybody else does or…

Rogers: So you have these things that are going on that you’re concerned about: the future, somewhat. How do you, how do you really compare yourself to others? How do others, how do others do it?

Robin: I don’t know.

Rogers Commentary: I realize that she took my rephrasing as a direct question to her. So I try to say it again in another way, below.

Rogers: I mean, that’s what you’re asking yourself. How do others do it?

Robin: Yes. That’s the thing. How do, how do others do it?

Rogers: How do others do it?

Robin: Because, well, some people can come across looking like they have it all together and they have all the answers and I’m the first one to admit I don’t have all the answers.

2 5

I’m going to make mistakes, but I sure don’t like to look so unsure of myself when other people are so confident in themselves. But they’re, they go through practically the same things I do, but they just have that attitude about them that says, you know, they have it all together.

Rogers: So some people have this façade.

Rogers Commentary: This is a succinct summary of one part what she said. This kind of basic understanding builds rapport.

Robin: Yeah.

Rogers: But you’re willing to admit that you don’t have it all together.
Rogers Commentary: This responds to the other part of what she said.

Robin: No.

Rogers: Make mistakes sometimes.

Robin: But sometimes I think it’s more real if you admit that you have mistakes.

Rogers: It is more real.

Robin: And then you can accept other people when they’re going through things because they let themselves… But I think it has a lot to do with people don’t want to show themselves vulnerable to other people.

Rogers Commentary: Here she is talking in the third person, i.e., “you can accept other people when…” rather than “I can accept….” I am aware that people often use the “you” language when talking about themselves. I try to shift this in my own responses as is seen below. I believe it is important for people to own their own thoughts and feelings. Using “I” statements helps that.

Rogers: But it sounds like it’s okay for you to show some of your vulnerability to the world.

Robin: It doesn’t always, you know, when you’re with peers, it doesn’t always feel good or nice, but yeah, for the most part, I think it is important to, so.

Rogers: So, I, Robin, I’m able to be fairly open with my friends, colleagues.

Rogers Commentary: Here I am clear about the shift in language and she picks it up by using the “I” language but it leaves her blank at the moment.

Robin: Yeah, I am. But… I don’t know. Just… It’s like my mind’s drawing a blank.

Rogers Commentary: Again a silence. I want to let her know the content of this session is up to her yet have some contact with her, so I make the statement below.

Rogers: Well, I just, I want to be here with you in anything. This
is really your time, and I can be with you in any way, in your vulnerability or not.

**Rogers Commentary:** *There is warmth in my voice as I reassure her with a heart-felt statement and she starts to unfold.*

2 7

**Robin:** Well, I… It’s… We… I’m involved in an organization called MOPs, Mothers of Preschoolers, and we just had a speaker come in and talk about marriage and things to do with marriage. And we talked a little bit about how men have a tendency not to want to be intimate with their wives because if they, at the point they open themselves up to be intimate, they show their vulnerability and then women, like, freak out because all of the sudden their husbands are saying, you know, you know, “I think I’m going to lose my job,” or “I don’t know if we’re going to be able to do this” and women rely on that security. I looked at that, and I was like, you know, I don’t know that I necessarily… I agree with that with some people, but I also think that I’m a pretty secure person to want that intimacy with my husband.

2 8

I think he could open up and give me his deepest, darkest secret, I think it wouldn’t bother me security-wise, but…

**Rogers:** So I’m not quite clear whether this is something you’re longing for or whether, or whether it’s just…

**Rogers Commentary:** *I could have done better by saying something like, “If he trusted you with his secrets you think you would be okay with that.”*

**Robin:** You know, it’s not that, it’s not that I’m longing for. I guess my question is, do you, is… is that normal for a woman to always want that security? I mean, can’t roles sometimes be reversed or…

**Rogers:** Yeah, roles sometimes can be reversed. And I’m wondering how, how this really relates to you personally in your own marriage.

**Rogers Commentary:** *I believe it is important to answer a simple direct question with a simple direct answer. Some client-centered therapists reflect the question back to the client. Here I ask her to clarify why she is asking it.*
Robin: Well…

Rogers: Where are you on this, yeah?

Robin: Well, it’s like if… My husband’s in the process of possibly being transferred, and we have to weigh the consequences of, do we want to transfer? Do we want to find another job in the area and stay where we currently are, you know? And that’s, considering the number of years he’s been with the company.

So we’re talking about that and that’s something very crucial, and that’s a security issue but I take the attitude that things are just going to happen, you know. Whatever happens, happens. It’ll be the right thing because we’ll make the decision together, and I don’t necessarily feel insecure because he’s discussing it with me, you know.

Rogers: So his being open to you doesn’t make you feel insecure?

Rogers Commentary: As is often the case, I have an opportunity to respond in a meaningful way to the point I missed earlier.

Robin: No, it actually makes, it makes me feel good. Trying to think of another word, but it makes me feel good that he feels able to open up like that.

Rogers: He trusts you.

Robin: He trusts me to be able to share something like that.

Rogers: Yeah, so that makes you feel good.

Robin: Because, you know, if somebody were to tell me he would be talking to me like that, you know, five years ago, I wouldn’t believe them, but you know.

Rogers: So this is new in your marriage, to have him open to some of his own vulnerabilities.

Robin: Yeah, well, yeah. It’s been a gradual thing, but this was, you know, something that I knew was more important, that had to be handled and discussed.
But yeah, I do, I do like it. And it’s, he’s opened up a lot more.

**Rogers:** So you’re telling me some of the things that are really positive about what’s going on in your relationship.

**Rogers Commentary:** Her statements above and my responses seem right on target. I have heard her at a deep level around the good things that have developed in her relationship. She is starting to trust me and I am getting acquainted with her.

**Robin:** Actually, there have been a lot of positive things go on here, lately. Of course, there’s always the bad, too, but…

**Rogers:** Well, I’m open to hearing both.

**Robin:** Well, let’s see, bad things. Well…

**Rogers:** Well, things that are troubling you. If there are things that are bothering you…

**Rogers Commentary:** Intuitively I responded with words that are not as judgmental as “bad things” by shifting the language (but not the meaning) to “the things that are troubling you.”

**Robin:** The one thing that I guess I have that troubles me currently right now is finding what my role is. I’ve talked about it several times, but I still haven’t gotten an answer. That, okay, I’m a, I am a wife. I am a mother, but yet, I am still as an individual and I don’t know what I want to be as an individual, but I’m not sure yet that it’s time to explore other avenues of what I want to be at this time. You know, maybe just set it aside and, you know.

Sort of like, I’m not the type of person… Well, I am the type of person, I’d like to plan 10 years down the road, but I’m also rational enough to know right now I cannot plan 10 years down the road because I really don’t know, so therefore I have to be open-minded and…

**Rogers:** So you have to stay flexible about thinking about the future and…

**Robin:** And I’m not real flexible.
Rogers: Oh, okay. And I hear you saying like there’s part of you saying, “Who am I? I know I’m a mom. I know I’m a wife. But who else am I right now?” Is that... have I got that?

Rogers Commentary: I am trying to catch the essence of her self-questioning. Checking it out with her is the best way to find out. Her following statements tell me that I am understanding it.

Robin: Yeah. Yeah. Because I mean...

Rogers: Who else am I? Who else am I besides being a mother and a wife?

Robin: Right. I never took time to really explore those.

Rogers: We could take some time now. No, really. Yeah. When you ask yourself, “Who am I?”

Robin: Well, I think of, you know, I’m my parents’ daughter, that, that plays a big importance.

Rogers: So, I’m a mom and a wife and a daughter.

Robin: Other than that, I’m, I’m an individual that’s very opinionated, very strong willed. Very legalistic in some, some respects. You know, that there’s order.


Robin: Strong, Oh, yeah, that’s right. Stubborn.

Rogers: Stubborn, okay. So that’s some sense of...

Rogers Commentary: There is a little humor as she begins to open up about her less desirable qualities.

Robin: Have a tendency to be, not violent but like outraged at times.

Unable to express frustration, you know, at times.

Rogers: Unable. Outraged but unable to express...

Rogers Commentary: I like to make sure that I reflect back feelings of anger and frustration. I have noticed that some student therapists ignore words like “outraged” of “violent” when expressed. This happens when therapists are not comfortable with their own anger so they don’t even hear the anger in the client. I call such words “red flag” words, that is,
words that need to be noticed and reflected back so the client actually hears what she is saying. When it is accepted in this way, rather than judged, it helps her face her anger openly.

Robin: Unable to express it in a mature way, might be, that might be a good way of putting it. You know, that the outrage comes out just like a child almost, you know. And…

Rogers: So you have feelings of like you really need to let it out.

Robin: I need to vent.

Rogers: Vent.

Rogers Commentary: Her statements above and my responses seem to show that I am really “with” her. In other words, I understand her and she is now perceiving that I understand her. This helps her to dig deeper. I am not judging her or analyzing her or telling her who she is, but helping her to explore who she is.

Robin: Yeah. I do that better if I get out of the house, because if I stayed in the house, then I act like…

Rogers: So some things make you really angry.

Robin: Yeah. And I guess one of the things that I have examined to when I get that way sometimes is they’re real trivial…

Rogers: So maybe it’s just a little trigger.

Robin: It’s sort of like things have built up and then the trivial thing will be what happens to set it all off.

2 13

Rogers: So you’ve got this kind of volcano building up and then, boom, the plug comes…

Rogers Commentary: As I accept and reflect her angry feelings, she opens up quickly to further feelings.

Robin: Yeah. And then, boom, and… Yeah, my husband’s real good at helping build that up.

Rogers: So there’s stuff that is accumulated and it’s around the relationship.
Rogers Commentary: Again, the above dialogue is a good example of deep, empathic listening. My using summary statements help her go to yet another layer of feelings and thoughts. She is starting to let herself be vulnerable about her anger in the relationship.

Robin: Yeah, yeah. Well, it’s because he has expectations for me just as I have expectations for him, and when either one of us don’t meet those expectations, we’re disappointed. He gets upset with me; I get upset with him. And sometimes there’ll be a lack of communication. When that communication breaks down, that, that’s all it takes. That’ll do it. Yeah, so.

Rogers: Do you want to say a little more about some of that lack of communication or frustration?

Robin: Well, it’s like…

What would be a topic to pick on… My husband expects for me, he likes for me to stay at home during the day when he’s, when he’s at work.

Rogers: I heard you say you were an at-home mom.

Robin: Oh, yeah.

Rogers: That’s quite a quote. So your husband expects you to stay home.

Robin: Yes, my husband expects me to stay home during the week while he’s at work, and then, he’ll come home sometimes, be extremely tired. He does work longer hours, and he’ll want to lay down for a nap. Now, of course, I immediately think he’s lazy because that’s what he does. And then he’ll get up and he’ll want dinner or whatever, and our work, his work week is a lot like that. But then, come weekends, you know, he’ll make up for it. You know, we’ll go do things and, but part of me says if he was more structured like I am, he would go to bed at a decent hour, and he would get up early and go to work, and he would set himself on a better schedule, where he’s just, whatever happens, happens.

He never is late for work or anything, but during the evening time, there’s no set pattern.
Rogers: So he’s not as routine as you are and that kind of bugs you, it sounds like.

Robin: Oh, yes. I like to, I like to have things organized out, you know. I keep a calendar, you know, so I know what’s happening, you know, during the month and what’s to look forward to and… Well, it’s sort of like I take a very structured role and he’s very passive and laid back and, oh well, if he’s there, fine. If he’s not, that’s fine, too. And one of the things that I’ve learned is I need to somehow work to be more like him because otherwise I’ll just kill myself trying to make him be like me.

Rogers: That’s true.

Rogers Commentary: I could have reflected back “You seem to think you have to change yourself because you can’t change him.” Since I have a strong feeling that it doesn’t help to become “more like him,” I just agreed with her. This all happens too quickly for me to think this through at the moment. Here is a moment where my values as a feminist unconsciously blocked an accurate reflection of her inner process. However, I know that if we had future sessions and this continued to be her way of looking at her relationship, I could reflect that back to her so she could evaluate it herself.

Robin: But that’s easier said than done. Old habits are hard to break, you know, but…

2 16

Rogers: So what is it you’d like for yourself in this?

Robin: I’d like to be able to get rid of some of the frustration. And to me, the only way that I know to get rid of some of that frustration is to work toward being more like him, just, just letting go of some of the schedules and, you know, whatever happens, happens, and if that’s what we decide to do that day, that’s okay. Even though I might have made plans to do something else.

Rogers: Sort of drop, drop your expectations and do it his way.

Rogers Commentary: Here I actually do have the opportunity to reflect back what she is thinking without my bias showing through. What happens next shows she knows it doesn’t work to “be more like him.” Rather than me telling her, she discovers this for herself. Voila!
Robin: Right. Right. Because if I drop my expectations, I have no expectations. But see then, that’s where I come back and I say, “Well, if I don’t have any expectations, I’m losing my individuality,” you know. So there’s got to be a catch-22.

Rogers: Let me, let me hear that again: If I’m…

Robin: If I let go of my expectations, I’m losing myself.

Rogers Commentary: This comes as an insight to her, loud and clear. Simply stated, as well.

Rogers: That’s right.

Rogers Commentary: It would have been better if I actually repeated what she said, because she needs to hear what it is like to make such a statement: “If I let go of my expectations, I am losing myself.”

Robin: You know. But there has to be a happy medium somewhere in there.

Rogers: Well, it’s… Yeah, I really hear that. If you lose your expectations, then who am I? The question again, who am I?

Rogers Commentary: As often happens, I get another opportunity to reflect back her statement.

Robin: And then that’s, that’s, I guess, the frustration that I’ve come to at this particular point is, at what point do you give in to, to help the relationship? And this doesn’t necessarily have to even be with just a husband and wife. It can be with anybody. When you have a friendship, it’s a give and take. At what point do you say, “Enough is enough. I’m not giving anymore than I currently am.” You know, without letting go of who you are.

But then, see, if you do keep giving and giving, you change yourself to be something else. And I guess my thing is I don’t know if I want to be somebody else.

Rogers Commentary: I am aware that the clock is ticking and if we are going to use expressive arts in this session, this would be a good time to
start it. Admittedly, I feel pushed by the fact that this is being filmed and I would like to be able to have a demonstration of how art can help a client tap into her unconscious and possibly gain some insight.

Rogers: How do you feel… The question of “who am I” keeps, has come up a couple of times, and I was wondering if you would be interested in just using color just to express… Not a, it doesn’t have to be a picture. It could be just lines or, to express, “Who am I?” The various aspects of you. And I would suggest you use your non-dominant hand so that you don’t have a lot of control over it.

You don’t have to. You don’t have to do, you don’t have to do the colors and you don’t have to use your non-dominant hand; it’s really your choice. But if you wanted to try something new, that would be...

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Rogers Commentary: I seldom offer a theme for the art. When an emotional issue arises I often say, “You seem to have a lot of feelings about this. Would you like to express those in color? However, here I used a theme she had mentioned several times to give her some structure.

Like just letting it happen. Who am I? And we can, you can turn and make yourself comfortable here. There’s no right or wrong to this. And I don’t interpret art.

Robin: It’s a good thing.

Rogers: Yeah. It’s like, just who am I?

Robin: Let’s see…

\[2\ 19\]

I wonder if that, that’s probably pretty easy.

Rogers Commentary: Frankly I am amazed at how easily she uses color to quickly show what is going on internally. Here is an example of how art can dramatically communicate what the client is feeling in a way that helps the therapist understand. As we explore it, it also adds to her self-insight.

I sit quietly as a witness to her drawing. I am not judging it or wondering “what does it mean?” I am patiently holding the space for
her to feel safe to explore. Metaphorically I am again holding the two of us in a safe bubble.

When she finishes, I hold the picture up to her so she can view it more completely. This is one of my guidelines for expressive art therapists. Since it was drawn on a table or sitting on a floor, it really helps to hold it up for the client. If there had been time and enough physical room I might have suggested she move to her drawing to embody it. However we were in a tight space with microphones attached. Also I am aware that she has a large body and might feel self-conscious using movement as a form of expression.

**Rogers:** Well, it’s, this is for you to understand, and let me… So just tell me first what it felt like just to do the process.

**Robin:** Well, the red, the big things is just like expressing yourself to just, you know, well, the red especially is the frustration.

**Rogers:** Okay.

2 20

So how did it feel to do that?

**Robin:** Good.

**Rogers:** Good. Okay. So the red is frustration.

**Robin:** Because it’s, the, I, it’s a release, you know, that you don’t necessarily… you know, the wide strokes…

**Rogers:** It felt releasing to do that. Okay.

**Rogers Commentary:** Most people who express themselves through color and form say that the process is a release. She experiences this immediately and is able to articulate it.

**Robin:** This is where, the black line, I guess, distinguishes the torn. The blue here is like what I’d like to be, you know, letting out the frustration in me, to be calmer, to be more relaxed, to be more… peaceful with myself and with others around me.

2 21

Where the like, the chalk line smears it all together..
Rogers: I noticed you put the, I didn’t notice, what color is this?

Rogers Commentary: It would have been better if I had said, “The blue half is what you would like to be, without the frustration.” This would help her focus on the meaning the picture has for her.

Robin: The light blue.

Rogers: The light blue.

Robin: Almost like lavender. The chalk to give it the softer…

Rogers: Was soft. You wanted some softness.

Robin: Well I think there’s got to be a happy medium, but right now, the black line, I’m broke right between the two. You know, I’m either this or I’m this, and there’s got to be, you know, somewhere in between, so.

Rogers Commentary: I could have mirrored the above statement back to her. But rather than discuss it in the abstract, I offer her the gestalt art process which helps clients identify their feelings.

Rogers: Okay, well, just for a minute, try describing this in the first person using like the… You started to do that “I am” here. Try describing each aspect in the, in the first person to see how, just to try it on and see how that feels. Like “I am…”

This is a gestalt art process that I have incorporated in my work. It helps people own their art and the process of describing the colors and lines in the first person brings further self-insight.

Robin: Well, here, I’m frustrated. Just, just overwhelmed. I, I, you know, I don’t know where I stand. I don’t know what I’m supposed to do, how I’m supposed to do it, what role I’m supposed to do it in.

Rogers: That’s really frustrating.

Robin: Yeah, it’s really, really frustrating. And it’s like there’s no, there’s no happy medium. That it’s always a constant frustration.

Down here, it’s like, you know, I’m: “Oh, well. Whatever happens, happens.” Sometimes I think down here is where I’m letting go completely of myself and not letting myself be a person at all. And…
Rogers: So this has some peace to it, but you’re losing what you called your individuality there.

Robin: Right. Right.

Rogers Commentary: She seems to really appreciate that I understand the two aspects of her self.

Rogers: And that’s…

Robin: That I don’t like.

Rogers: I don’t like that one.

Rogers Commentary: Often, as a therapist, I use the first person, “I don’t like …” to mirror back to the client, rather than say, “you don’t like…” This is an unconscious and intuitive action on my part. Carl often did this as well. Somehow it says that I am in her frame of reference.

Robin: That’s why the light, because it brings in the blue but it touches also on the red where, you know, frustration is normal. Everybody has frustration, you know. And it, it’s a happy medium for me and I can, I could, I could learn to have the peace without giving up all of the, all of me but yet, I split it right down the middle because that’s where I’m torn at, is knowing…

Rogers: That’s quite dramatic, isn’t it, to know, to see, really …

Robin: Oh, yeah.

Rogers: …how split that feels to you. And that what you’d like is some sort of mixing of these. Is that what I hear?

Robin: Yeah, because I mean, you can’t, people just can’t have it either/or. I mean, you have to be somewhat flexible. I mean…

Rogers: Maybe if you put that in the first person. Try that. I…

Robin: Yeah. I, I can’t be either/or. I have to be flexible. In other words, I can’t have my cake and eat it, too.

Rogers Commentary: Robin comes to a rather dramatic insight. Next I offer another process to see if she would want to further explore the issue of “Who do I want to be.” If I knew I was going to have other sessions with
her I don’t think I would have offered this next process. I would have stayed with her on the “either/or” issue. I would have listened to more of her sense of being split, of having inner polarities that are disturbing to her. Because we have just this one session I push a bit to see what she might imagine herself to be as a whole (integrating the polarities) individual.

Rogers: You know, it occurs to me that you might want to just try…

2 24
There’s no easy solution to what you’re talking about, trying to be to, to have some peace without losing your individuality and being able… really be able to acknowledge your frustration and the various roles, which makes sense to me. But you might try just doing a picture, imagine you were just the way you wanted to be. What might that look like? In terms of just color. And again, just let your non-dominant hand. There’s no, again, there’s no right or wrong to it. Just play with that, the sense of what it would be if you…

2 25
2 26
Robin: Doing it with the dominant hand is not so easy, is it?

Rogers: I didn’t hear that one.

Robin: I said, doing it, doing it with the non-dominant hand isn’t quite so easy.

Rogers: Well, you can use your other hand if you really want to. I just, it was a…

Robin: Well, it’s just the…

Rogers: It’s a different concept.

Robin: It picked it up.

2 27
Didn’t necessarily want it to do that, but…

Rogers: You can, you can break it that helps, break the chalk.

Rogers Commentary: I am giving her permission to be messy or break the new chalks.
Robin: Want it to be more... see if we can do this. Make it lighter. That looks about pretty good.

Rogers Commentary: *She is very involved in expressing herself in this drawing, just as she was in the first drawing. The creative process engages her.*

Rogers: So who is this person?

Robin: I decided to start it with a butterfly but I said, “Skip that.”

Rogers: Skip that. Okay.

Robin: You know, thinking like a, that the, the antennas, you know, that I would use those to interpret.

Rogers: So this is something like a butterfly that has got some... antennae out to do what?

Robin: In other words, that’s how I receive my signals, you know, that I get my thing... But I decided, you know, you can’t do a butterfly because butterflies are always free, so I, you know, put the blue in, you know, keep my feet on the ground, you know.

Rogers Commentary: *In reviewing this it is so interesting how important it is to her—and to most clients—that the image and the color exactly depict the feeling and thought. As she draws, she recognizes that although she would like to be a butterfly she can’t be that free.*

Robin: They’re colorful. They go from a process of caterpillar to butterfly. In other words, I’m probably somewhere in a cocoon, you know, somewhere to, going to break free soon. But there’s a process...

Rogers: So there’s some element of you, Robin, that is like in
something of a cocoon stage but has the potential to really become this butterfly. Does that ring true to you?

**Robin:** Yeah, probably. Because, but you know, I almost think it does to everybody because it’s sort of like if…

**Rogers:** We’re just talking about you now.

**Rogers Commentary:** She tends to generalize but seems to have no objection when I bring her back to talking about herself.

**Robin:** Well, if I had to look, I guess, you know, I guess, the more I learn, the more I realize I have much, much more to learn.

And it’s like I don’t think I’ll ever have all the answers and know everything, but I have the potential to be anything that I choose to be, you know. So it’s like the butterfly just seems to represent, you know, the possibility of being something beautiful, you know. But caterpillars do an awful lot of hard work, you know.

**Rogers:** So it’s got all the elements that really are Robin. “I can do hard work.” And would you put some of this in the “I” language? Like, “I…” As though you’d actually managed to…

**Robin:** Well, like the wings, I did as purple, purple being a royalty color.

Made, I made them big. In other words, that’s what gives me my freedom. That’s what’s going to let me soar to different places. And if I go with the attitude that, you know, I am somebody regardless of what anybody else thinks… That gives me my individuality. That’s what allows me to be who I am, you know.

**Rogers Commentary:** The comments about the butterfly as a metaphor emphasizes how important it is that we use our intuitive, non-linear, right brain to find insight and answers. She seems really excited about what she is discovering.

**Rogers:** So there is an aspect of you that has a royalty, almost like a big purple wings that will give you some freedom.

**Robin:** It’s, in other words, yeah. It’s like the royalty because I’m
important even if nobody else thinks I’m important, and I need to recognize that.

**Rogers:** I… You need to recognize that.

2 31

Do you recognize that?

**Robin:** Sometimes. Not all the time. And that has to do with, I think, stereotypes of stay-at-home moms. I mean, it’s, it’s, it wasn’t common. It was common in the ‘50s, and then it broke away, and now it’s getting to be that, yeah, it’s important again. But, and it’s, it’s one of those things that it’s hard for me to recognize on a given day that what I’m doing is important, but when my child’s 18 years of age and he says, “Mom, I’m so glad you stayed with me when I was younger,” then you get your rewards later, you know. Instead, you get…

**Rogers:** But you have that kind of perspective.

**Robin:** Yeah.

**Rogers:** You can see yourself from the future, almost.

**Robin:** Well, if I look at myself on a daily basis, it’s bad. But if I look at it in the long-term, it’s, you know, it’s longer and it’s nicer. But, but the blue is making sure that, you know, the ground’s beneath me, you know.

2 32

**Rogers:** So if you put that in the “I” language, “I …” what?

**Robin:** I need to keep my feet on the ground. Green is just more of a, more, to make it more individual, that I’m, that I’m showing more of myself. It’s more of a, not even a neutral color. Like a, almost like a peaceful color, almost like the blue.

**Rogers:** I am… Well, put that in the “I” language.

**Robin:** Well, I’m, I’m peaceful. It gives me, it makes me more distinct from other people, that…

**Rogers:** We drew this almost as though it were the future. As you’re talking about it, I hear that you’re acknowledging that some of this is right now. Is that, am I right? Or is that, is this…
Robin: Some of it’s, might, the antennas probably definitely right now.

Rogers: I have my antennae out.

Robin: I’m always interested in listening, learning. The more knowledge I get in, the more I take in.

And that’s why I sort of smeared it in as if, you know, I’m, it’s all being retained. It may not all be being used at this particular point, but it’s, it’s like I don’t forget things that I hear, that they’ll come to mind later, you know, as I’m studying and stuff, but.

Rogers: So you’ve got your antennae out. You’re learning. You’re absorbing.

Robin: Still don’t know why I did the pink. The pink is more of, you know, toning down.

I didn’t pick red, but that could be my, part of my frustration.

Rogers: So you haven’t lost that.

Robin: I haven’t lost that, but it’s not my biggest area. It’s still part of me, but, and then, you have the blue keeping your feet, where I stay calm and combining the two and you get the purple, which is probably what I’d like to be, more of a...

Rogers: So purple is what you’d like to be more of. And say what that would be again?

Robin: Purple would be more where I’m more sure of myself. In other words, I have a, you know, purple standing for royalty, that I have, I’m more sure of myself, I’m more independent, and I know I am somebody.

Rogers: And I know I am somebody. How does that feel when you say that? That I know I am somebody?

Robin: It feels pretty good.

But not at all times. It depends on when I’m saying it, you know. A lot of times, I’ll say it sometimes out of frustration, and I have to remind
myself sometimes, you know.

Rogers: So it’s almost like just reminding yourself as well as really believing it.

Rogers Commentary: I continue to follow her lead. Here I feel I am a real companion on her inner journey.

Robin: Yeah.

Rogers: Well, I thought… Well, do you have anything else that you want to say about that?

I thought what I would do would be—this may make some noise—but I thought I would just take this off so that you can see both of them at once.

And just if you, just to, just to see if you had any thoughts as you looked at both of them here.

Robin: This one’s more subdued.

I guess it’s more circular.

Rogers: Okay, see if you can continue to put that in the “I” language. I know it’s hard. I don’t expect you to be able to. You know, like I have to remind everybody, so. But it’s a, it’s a way to own parts of yourself. So as, you can say, “Like, as I look at this…”

Robin: This, this makes me more complete.

Rogers: Okay. Here, I’m more complete.

Robin: Here, it’s a definite, I’m broken. It’s a definite… where this blends it together. I… You know, if this was more of a circle without the black line, that would be okay. But this just shows a definite break in me and shows the line of frustration.

Rogers Commentary: It fascinates me how she uses the art to explore a possible re-configuration of the image as well as her way of being.

Rogers: Yeah. But both are… Both, as you speak about them, both seem really authentic to you.
And I don’t know if you see any way of moving from one to the other.

Robin: That’s a good….

The only way to move, to me, to see, to move from here to here is through the antennas.

Rogers: Interesting. Say a little more of what that would be.

Robin: In other words, taking the information I receive and processing it, and, and helping to erase the line there, which when—I didn’t even notice that—that would give that color there, would turn into this and this turns into this and then if you take these two together, you get the purple. That’s a good way to look at it.

Rogers Commentary: She is very engaged in using the image as a way to learn about herself. Notice that I am not analyzing or interpreting her art. I am creating a safe, non-judgmental space to her find her own meaning.

Rogers: That’s a good way to look at it. So as a metaphor, what, what would this mean to you in life?

Robin: That I have to use my own abilities, my own insight and things that I take in and be able to process the information and put things in perspective, you know. And know that there is, there is the possibility of being happy in between here.

Rogers Commentary: She is doing a lot of hard thinking about the issues and feelings that have emerged from the drawings.

Rogers: Does that seem like a possibility?

Robin: It’s one of those things… Yes, it does seem like a possibility if I keep looking ahead instead of looking on a daily basis.

Rogers: There’s something about the sort of tediousness of being an at-home mom that is difficult to really, for you to gain the kind of perspective you want, I gather.

Robin: Well, it’s not only even staying at home. It’s like…
Say, on a given weekend, if my husband says something that, you know, throws me completely off and gets me frustrated, if I concentrated, “Well, that’s what he thinks of me and that’s what he wants of me, and, you know, we’re not seeing eye to eye,” then I’m not looking at the big picture. I’m just looking at an isolated incident, and I have a tendency to look too much at those isolated incidents. So that’s why we, you know, just in our marriage alone, I, I will sleep on something. If I feel the same way the next day, then it’s something we talk about. Well, most of the time, it was something trivial and I just forget it and we go on. That’s where this comes in.

**Rogers Commentary:** *Her statements bring us back to the real difficulties she is having with the relationship. If we were to have further sessions it seems very likely she would focus on her frustration in the relationship and how she can deal with the anger that gets triggered. Knowing we are near the end of our time, we stay with the present moment.*

**Rogers:** That’s where the information and some of the perspective comes in. And where does the…

You also mentioned earlier the accumulated, that sometimes those frustrated feelings get really accumulated.

**Robin:** And that would have to be this, filtering it down.

**Rogers:** So that’s kind of a filter system as well as antennae.

**Robin:** Yeah. It filters it down. You know, what’s important goes in and what isn’t just gets… spread out. And it’s hard to always know what’s, what’s important for me to… I heard a statement one time, you know, pick your battles wisely. You know, in other words, you know, things that, if it’s something that you really feel strongly about, then yeah, get in there and fight for it. But if it’s not something that, you know, is like a major thing that is really going to cause some consequences, you know, why get into the battle if it’s not worth it?

**Rogers:** Does that work for you?
Robin: Yeah. Yeah.

Rogers: So that’s another kind of perspective.

Robin: But it’s just that these are more subdued colors.

Rogers: So there’s something that… Does that appeal to you? Is that what you’re saying?

Robin: Yeah, that definitely appeals to me. Personally, I like bright colors, but also, you know, red just, you know, stands right out.

Rogers: This seems a bit troublesome to you.

Robin: Yes. Yes.

Rogers: To be like this.

Robin: I mean, because I don’t like this by itself. And I don’t, and I definitely do not like this by itself, but there has to be a happy medium.

Rogers: And some of that really did emerge over here.

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So. It’s not a, it doesn’t sound like it’s giving up any aspect of yourself, but somehow integrating these aspects of yourself and softening them and making yourself more, more, with your antennae, filtering more of the information.

Robin: Well, I think what’s important, too, you know, going back, you know, thinking, thinking that I’m a butterfly or something is that caterpillars have to go through an awful lot of work before they become a butterfly.

Rogers Commentary: She keeps referring back to the images to help her understand herself in relationship to her husband. Metaphors have deep meaning.

Rogers: There’s a big metamorphosis. There’s a big, lot of change that happens in a caterpillar.

Robin: Probably just as so, so goes an individual, especially, you know, things, things that have happened in my life, you know, getting married, having a child, giving up a career. And so I’ve made
changes and adjustments, and I have to continue to make changes and adjustments, but eventually, you know, it’s going to make me a better person for it.

Rogers: So a caterpillar image is really quite an appropriate one for you in terms of the hard work,

Robin: … the stages.

Rogers: the stages of transition that it goes through and the beautiful potential that it has to fly, to be free. I heard you use the word “freedom.”

Robin: Well, it does, there is a certain amount of freedom that they have, but it’s sort of like, well, if you put it in perspective: they put in their time as a caterpillar.

Rogers: Okay, that is a good image for you, isn’t it? Can you put that in the first person? “I put in my…”

Robin: Yeah. In other words, I’m putting in my time now investing in my child, investing in my husband.

There has to be some time for me to still have a little bit of myself.

Rogers: Your own individuality.

Rogers Commentary: She continually comes back to the concern she has about saving a little time for her own personal development and life. This is a constant theme for mothers and I imagine she would continue to explore this if we had another session.

Robin: But one day, I will have a lot of time for myself. I just need to know what it is that I want to do then so that I can begin a little bit now, keeping a little bit of that for me.

Rogers: So you’re not sure what it is you want to do, but you know that it’s really important that you have your own individuality.

Robin: Well, yeah, I do think it’s important, but I also have a lot of other people telling me it’s important, too. So, yeah.
Rogers: What do you think of it? Of that?

Robin: The only time I think it’s important is when my husband, you know, and he… It’s sort of like, if you, if you pinpointed him at a given time, he would say yes, he wants me to stay at home and yes, he wants me to do this, but then there are times when bills come in and things come in and he’d be like, “Boy, if you were working. Boy, we’d just… you know, we’d have this, we’d have that.”

Rogers: Two incomes.

Robin: “If we had that two income we could take a nice vacation,” you know. And that’s where I have to remind myself that what we’re doing was a decision we made together, an important decision. But yet, even though we made that decision, I’m still a person and I still have other, other things to think about, you know, besides what he wants. So.

Rogers: You always hang onto that, “I’m a person. No matter what he wants, I have to keep my own personhood.”

Rogers Commentary: Again, the fear of losing oneself.

Robin: Well, I really think if I don’t hang onto that, then I become this person and then I lose myself. So.

Rogers: Sounds wise. Our time is about up, so it’s been really a pleasure to spend this time with you.

Rogers Commentary: When I say, “sounds wise” I am supporting the notion that “I am still a person and have my own needs.”

And I appreciate you’re being open and being willing to experiment with colors, and maybe… I mean, you’ll take these pictures home because I really would… Well, you know, you’ve said a lot here through these pictures. I don’t know if you, they can remind you of some of the things that you’ve said. And you might even try with your kid, try doing some stuff that is just not, doesn’t have to be, you know, profound artwork but just a way to just express what you’re feeling, the frustration or the sense of integration.
Robin: That’s a good idea.

Rogers: Yeah, it can be really a worthwhile venture.

Robin: Well, thank you.

Rogers: Thank you.
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