CONGRUENCE REVISITED

Elizabeth Freire
MISUNDERSTANDINGS
OF THE CORE CONDITIONS

• Empathy = shallow reflection of content

• UPR = only respect and warmth (overlooking the ‘unconditional’ aspect)

• Congruence: most controversial and misunderstood concept?
Rogers used 3 different definitions of congruence in his writings:

1. **Matching** between organismic experience and self-concept

2. **Genuineness**

3. **Transparency**

He used the same word to name 3 different things...
1. Matching between organismic experience and self-concept:

Definition of congruence in Rogers’ theory of personality
THEORY OF PERSONALITY

ORGANISMIC
SENSORY AND
VISCERAL
EXPERIENCES

CONGRUENCE

BLUE AREA: "FALSE SELF"

YELLOW AREA: DISTORTED AND DENIED EXPERIENCES
CONGRUENCE
CONGRUENCE

- Being integrated: Organismic experiences fully symbolised in awareness
- No defenses
- Openness to experience
- Fully functioning
CONGRUENT PERSON

FULLY FUNCTIONING PERSON
THE CONGRUENT PERSON

- Openness to Experience
- Existential Living
- Trust in the Organism
CONGRUENCE

• Inner condition of the therapist

• “Therapist state of readiness that enables the therapist to better experience the client with empathic understanding of the client’s internal frame of reference and experience unconditional positive regard towards the client” (Bozarth, 1998, p. 47)
"Congruence is the preparation of the therapist to experience the other two core conditions" (Bozarth, 1998, p. 75)

- Pre-condition of the therapist
GENUINENESS

- Being real
- Not a façade, not a pretense
- UPR and empathy are real attitudes, not mere ‘techniques’
TRANSPARENCY

- Being candid, honest
- Therapist’s self-disclosure
- Therapist’s frame of reference responses
THERAPIST’S FRAME RESPONSES
(T-responses)

CLIENT’S FRAME RESPONSES
(Empathic responses)
T: “I feel so sad to hear that ...”

T-response

T: “I feel how sad you are with this...”

Empathic response

(or “You feel really sad with this...”)
Personal reactions, often involve (even if subtle):

- Judgments
- Conditional appraisals of client’s experience
- Guidance or direction
CONVEY JUDGEMENTS

THERAPIST’S FRAME OF REFERENCE
T-RESPONSE

BEING TRANSPARENT

CONVEY UPR

CLIENT’S FRAME OF REFERENCE
EMPATHY

BRACKETING
Transparency ≠ Genuineness
• Therapist can be genuine...

... that is, therapist communicates **real** empathy and UPR

• at the same time that she is **bracketing** her personal reactions...

... that is, not being **transparent**
Transparency ≠ Congruence
CONGRUENCE

- Being integrated: Organismic experiences fully symbolised in awareness
- No defenses, fully functioning

GENUINENESS

- Being real
- Not a façade

TRANSPARENCY

- Being candid
- T-response
• Therapist can respond **defensively**, but with **candour** and honesty

• Therapist can be **transparent**...  
  ... but **incongruent**
Also, a therapist can be:

• Congruent and genuine...
  ... but not transparent

• Congruent, genuine, and
  ... bracketing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSPARENCY vs. BRACKETING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONGRUENCE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being integrated: Organismic experiences fully symbolised in awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No defenses, inner openness, fully functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENUINENESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not a façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• UPR and empathy are real attitudes, not mere <code>techniques</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRACKETING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instead of being TRANSPARENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ROGERS’ SIX CONDITIONS

1. That two persons are in *contact*

2. That the first person, whom we shall term the client, is in a state of *incongruence*, being vulnerable, or anxious

3. That the second person, whom we shall term the therapist is *congruent* in the relationship

4. That the therapist is experiencing *unconditional positive regard* toward the client

5. That the therapist is experiencing an *empathic understanding* of the client’s internal frame of reference

6. That the client perceives, at least to a minimal degree, conditions 4 and 5, the *unconditional positive regard* of the therapist for him, and the *empathic understanding* of the therapist
6. That the client perceives, at least to a minimal degree, conditions 4 and 5, the *unconditional positive regard* of the therapist for him, and the *empathic understanding* of the therapist.
Congruence is not ‘something’ to be ‘communicated’ to the client

- It is not correct to say:
  “I communicated my congruence to the client and said ....”

Also, congruence is not ‘something’ that can be ‘used’...

- It is not correct to say:
  “I used my congruence and said to the client...”
• “Congruence should be distinguished from communication of the contents of experience (Brodley, 1998, p. 101)

• It is the “therapist state of readiness” that enables the therapist to better experience the client with empathic understanding of the client’s internal frame of reference and experience unconditional positive regard towards the client” (Bozarth, 1998, p. 47)
References

