

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Person-Centered Therapy: A Revolutionary Paradigm*

Jerold Bozarth

Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, United Kingdom: PCCS Books (1998)

204 pages, ISBN 1-898059-22-5.

This book provides support and validation for the veteran therapist devoted to the often-criticized person-centered theory. However, it also provides valuable details for the growing number of fledgling counselors who are not able to avail themselves of Carl Rogers' individual and dynamic personal presentation of his theory.

In a clearly understood organization the author explains why person-centered therapy continues to be revolutionary. It cannot be understood from the framework of other theories that are based on techniques and intervention. It envisions an environment created by the therapist that enables or empowers the ability of the individual to self-actualize.

In the first section of the book, Theory and Philosophy, Bozarth weaves his own experiences in the field with Rogers to explain how the theory is built on the actualizing tendency. He provides research and time-lines that explain the theory and philosophy. Rogers' necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic personality change are addressed, as are the important elements of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard. The details he provides enable the reader to understand more fully the need for faith in the actualizing tendency and the part that it plays in therapeutic growth.

In his section addressing Myths, Misunderstandings and Distortions, the author addresses five specific assertions that have created many myths about the person-centered approach, including beliefs that the approach takes too much time, only works with neurotic middle class individuals, is primarily important only early in the counseling relationship, and is grounded in U.S. American culture and philosophy. The author attributes the origins of these myths to other theoretical frames of reference.

Bozarth believes that some therapists that practice have created distortions to the core of the person-centered approach-- the enabling of the natural process of the client. These assertions are, 1) The therapist has a systematic intention to help the client change in a certain way, 2) The therapist has objectives to help the client diminish or eradicate problems or particular issues, 3) The therapist is an expert at promoting a particular 'process' in the client, 4) The term 'person-centered' is different from client-centered, and 5) The conditions cited by Rogers are necessary but are not sufficient. By placing these myths and distortions early in the book he frees the reader of preconceived ideas or questions and increases understanding of the person-centered approach.

Having provided a solid background of theory and history, Bozarth, with the same detail and insight, addresses the basics of practice and assessment as well as how to apply the theory to couples therapy, and group therapies. He also includes chapters on research and the

implications that can be drawn from the still viable message of Carl Rogers' growth hypotheses.

Of particular interest is the chapter on functional dimensions. Here is an intelligent look at specific concerns therapists have in applying client-centered principles. Bozarth enlarges on the "essence" of the therapeutic approach and the ways that it moves beyond reflecting and clarifying into the development of a relationship that encourages the experience of the "self." It is in this section that the author challenges the therapist to examine his or her beliefs about locus of control, self-discipline and self-disclosure.

Regarding techniques, the author first explains Rogers' view that the cause of psychological dysfunction is the thwarting of the individual's growth because significant others imposed conditions of worth on the individual. He reiterates the importance of the relationship, and defines the contexts and guidelines for the inclusion of techniques according to a variety of reports by person-centered therapists. Concluding, he reminds the reader that Rogers himself remarked that while he would use a technique if he thought that he knew it was best for his client, he also felt that the client would be better off if he had never had the thought.

Throughout the book we are reminded that while many therapists believe in the therapeutic value and success of the person-centered approach they continue to look for other avenues to quantify and control and to feel that they are doing something. However, Bozarth admonishes readers that the "essence" of the approach is to provide an atmosphere with unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence where the individual can grow and prosper-- a challenge that continues to be revolutionary in the process of developing therapy.

From a student's perspective, this book is easy to read and understand. It is also a valuable resource to fine-tune the understanding of this compassionate theory of counseling. The author brings together research and personal experiences that not only reinforce the value of this theory but also provide an understanding of its background and future. For a student of the person-centered approach this book is both enlightening and encouraging.

*Reviewed by;*  
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## **Policy Statement**

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