

Remarks at *Barbara T. Brodley's* Memorial Service Barry Grant

I am a former client, consultee, and friend of Barbara and a student of her work. I learned from her how to do therapy. My publications on therapy are in many ways extensions of her work. As a therapist, Barbara was a wonder. She was the only person I knew who I felt loved me and didn't want anything from me. For me, she utterly lived what she taught and wrote about for years.

Barbara and Nat Raskin, in my opinion, were the greatest champions of nondirective, client-centered therapy. Barbara was greater than even Rogers, who I think did not fully understand or appreciate the profundity and implications of what he had created. I am not at all sure Barbara would agree. She was a student not just of Rogers' writings but also of his therapy work. She wrote several papers analyzing transcripts of his work, and I think she saw her work as wholly consistent with what Rogers believed and practiced.

To those not in the field, nondirectivity may appear to be mere jargon, a marketing phrase. But its significance to Barbara and those influenced by her is profoundly ethical. Nondirective, client-centered therapy is a way, perhaps the only way, of working with people that fully respects their autonomy. Barbara, like Rogers, did not believe she knew how one should live and did not have ideas about mental illness and mental health. She didn't direct or manipulate or influence clients to ends she thought good for them. She believed that by sincerely responding to clients with empathy and unconditional positive regard, clients would find their own way.

This is Rogers. But Barbara saw deeper than he did the implications of fully respecting clients' autonomy. She saw that answering questions, addressing requests for accommodations and changes in therapy, and being a resource are expressions of the nondirective attitude. Her work created possibilities for therapy relationships far beyond what Rogers imagined. If a client asks a

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therapist to see her play or art show, for example, this is not an attack on a therapy boundary or another client communication to be understood, but simply a request that the therapist accommodate or not, as inclined. There is something marvelous in being able to get answers to questions about your life or the world from someone who loves you and doesn't care that you believe or accept what she says.

What Barbara saw in the idea of nondirectivity is revolutionary. She further removed client-centered therapy from any taint of being a treatment, rather than a kind of relationship between two free persons. I said earlier that Barbara was champion of nondirective, client-centered therapy. Her championing of this practice was, I think, a part of a deep commitment to individual freedom and self-determination and her belief, with Rogers, that people left to direct themselves will create the best possible society.

Barbara's writings, on my take, focused on empathic understanding. She was the first to propose that the target of empathy is not the client's immediate experience, as Rogers argued, but rather "what the client has been expressing or attempting to express." She identified what she called the empathic understanding response process, EURP, characterized by a predominance of empathic responses. She called her way of working with clients a plain style: "It is *plain* because the therapist genuinely aims only to understand what the client immediately intends to communicate." This kind of empathy was a vehicle for the therapist's genuine unconditional acceptance of the client.

Again, to those not in the field, the difference between understanding what someone is communicating and what someone is experiencing may seem a quibble. But defending and respecting individual autonomy often rests on details. The difference is huge.

Barbara was one of the only, maybe the only, person in the field to write about how to *do* nondirective, client-centered therapy. For those of us who taught client-centered therapy, her writings are indispensable. Clearly and concretely, she offered guidelines on how to live the attitudes of empathy and unconditional positive regard.

Barbara was fierce defender of nondirectivity, attacking misrepresentations and misunderstandings in papers, presentations and meetings. She wanted to ensure that the form of therapy she loved and

lived would continue to exist in a world of directive, paternalistic, and authoritarian therapies.

Barbara's was a decidedly minority voice. Defenders of liberty are always minority voices. That, I think, was what at bottom Barbara was—a defender of human liberty. She took Rogers' work and tuned it to being a way for free people to do therapy with free people. That was what I was looking for and found in her work, and that is, I think, her most important legacy.