

# Person-Centered Therapy: Empowering Growth Through Empathy

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June 17, 2026

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2026). *Person-Centered Therapy: Empowering Growth Through Empathy*.  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=38541>

Person-centered therapy (PCT) is also known as person-centered psychotherapy, person-centered counselling, client-centered therapy and Rogerian psychotherapy. PCT is a form of talk-psychotherapy developed by psychologist Carl Rogers in the 1940s and 1950s. It is one of the most widely used models in mental health and psychotherapy. In this technique, therapists create a comfortable, non-judgmental environment by demonstrating congruence (genuineness), empathy, and unconditional positive regard toward their patients while using a non-directive approach. This aids patients in finding their own solutions to their problems.

PCT is predominantly used by psychologists and counselors in psychotherapy. The therapist's role is that of a facilitator and to provide a therapeutic relationship. The therapist does not treat any illness.

Although this technique has been criticized by behaviorists for lacking structure and by psychoanalysts for actually providing a conditional relationship it has proven to be a vastly effective and popular treatment.

### **History and influences**

Person-centred therapy, now considered a founding work in the humanistic school of psychotherapies, began formally with Carl Rogers. "Rogerian" psychotherapy is identified as one of the major school groups, along with psychodynamic, psychoanalytic (most famously Sigmund Freud), Adlerian, Cognitive-behavioral therapy, and Existential therapy (such as that pioneered by Rollo May).

Others acknowledge Rogers' broad influence on approach, while naming a humanistic or humanistic-existentialist school group; there is large debate over what constitute major schools and cross-influences with more tangential candidates such as feminist, Gestalt, British school, self psychology, interpersonal, family systems, integrative, systemic and communicative, with several historical influences seeding them such as object-relations.

Rogers affirmed individual personal experience as the basis and standard for living and therapeutic effect. Rogers identified 6 conditions which are needed to produce personality changes in clients: relationship, vulnerability to anxiety (on the part of the client), genuineness (the therapist is truly himself or herself and incorporates some self-disclosure), the client's perception of the therapist's genuineness, the therapist's unconditional positive regard for the client, and accurate empathy. This emphasis contrasts with the dispassionate position which may be intended in other therapies, particularly the more extreme behavioral therapies. Living in the present rather than the past or future, with organismic trust, naturalistic faith in your own thoughts and the accuracy in your feelings, and a responsible acknowledgment of your freedom, with a view toward participating fully in our world, contributing to other peoples' lives, are hallmarks of Roger's Person-centred therapy.

## Core concepts

Rogers (1957; 1959) stated that there are six necessary and sufficient conditions required for therapeutic change:

**Therapist-Client Psychological Contact:** a relationship between client and therapist must exist, and it must be a relationship in which each person's perception of the other is important.

**Client incongruence, or Vulnerability:** that incongruence exists between the client's experience and awareness. Furthermore, the client is vulnerable to anxiety which motivates them to stay in the relationship.

**Therapist Congruence, or Genuineness:** the therapist is congruent within the therapeutic relationship. The therapist is deeply involved him or herself - they are not "acting" - and they can draw on their own experiences (self-disclosure) to facilitate the relationship.

**Therapist Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR):** the therapist accepts the client unconditionally, without judgment, disapproval or approval. This facilitates increased self-regard in the client, as they can begin to become aware of experiences in which their view of self-worth was distorted by others.

**Therapist Empathic understanding:** the therapist experiences an empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference. Accurate empathy on the part of the therapist helps the client believe the therapist's unconditional love for them.

**Client Perception:** that the client perceives, to at least a minimal degree, the therapist's UPR and empathic understanding.