

IT IS NOTORIOUSLY INADEQUATE TO TAKE AN ADOPTED CHILD INTO ONE'S HOME AND LOVE HIM

DONALD WINNICOTT (1896–1971)



IN CONTEXT

APPROACH Psychoanalysis

BEFORE

1900s Sigmund Freud suggests that neurotic conflicts (and the superego) arise in the Oedipal period—between ages three and six.

1930s Melanie Klein claims that a primitive form of the superego develops during the first year of life, and that love and hate are inherently linked.

AFTER

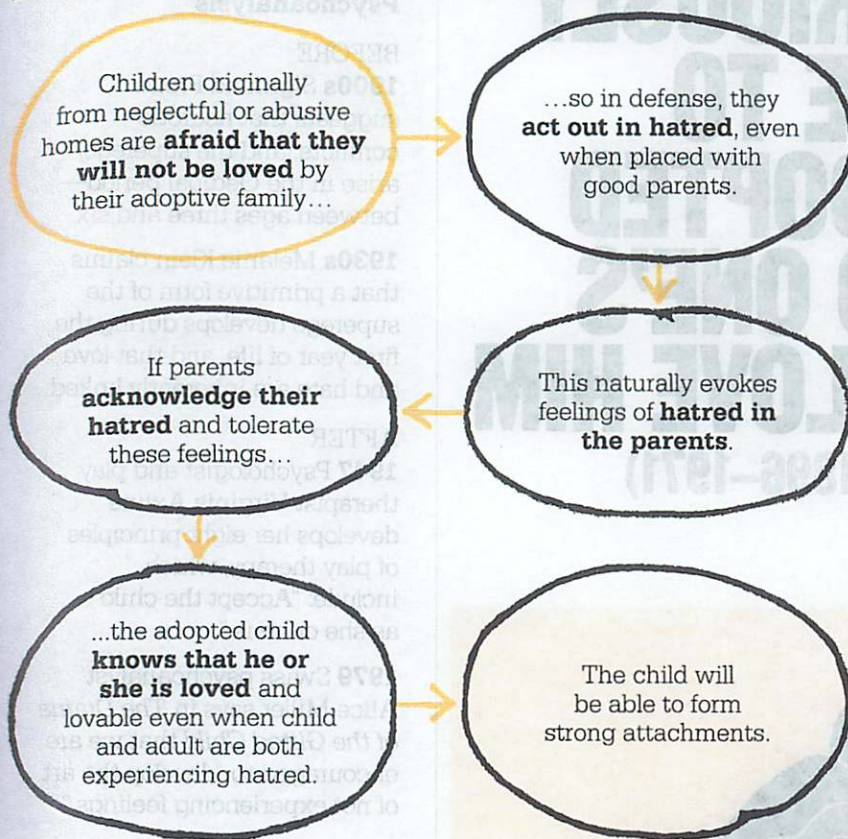
1947 Psychologist and play therapist Virginia Axline develops her eight principles of play therapy, which include: "Accept the child as she or he is."

1979 Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller says in *The Drama of the Gifted Child* that we are encouraged to "develop the art of not experiencing feelings."

Many people believe that if a child has suffered an upbringing that was lacking in love and support, he or she will be able to settle and flourish with a new family that provides what is needed. However, while stability and acceptance help to give a foundation in which a child can grow and find a healthy state of being, these qualities make up only one part of what is required.

As the first pediatrician in England to train as a psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott had a unique insight into the mother-infant relationship and the developmental process of children. He was

See also: Sigmund Freud 92–99 ■ Melanie Klein 108–09 ■ Virginia Satir 146–47 ■ John Bowlby 274–77



strongly influenced by Sigmund Freud but also by the writings of Melanie Klein, particularly regarding the unconscious feelings of the mother or carer for the infant. Winnicott began his career by working with children displaced by World War II and he examined the difficulties faced by children who are trying to adapt to a new home.

As Winnicott notes in his paper, *Hate in the Countertransference*: "It is notoriously inadequate to take an adopted child into one's home and love him." In fact, the parents must be able to take the adopted child into their home and be able to tolerate hating him. Winnicott states that a child can

believe he or she is loved only after being hated; he stresses that the role that "tolerance of hate" plays in healing cannot be underestimated.

Winnicott explains that when a child has been deprived of proper parental nurturing, and is then granted a chance of this in a healthy family environment, such as with an adoptive or foster family, the child begins to develop unconscious hope. But fear is associated with this hope. When a child has been so devastatingly disappointed in the past, with even basic emotional or physical needs unsatisfied, defenses arise. These are unconscious forces that protect »



Donald Winnicott

The English pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott was the youngest child and only son born to a prominent, prosperous family living in Plymouth, England. His father, Sir John Frederick Winnicott, was an encouraging influence, although his mother suffered from depression. Winnicott first trained as a physician and pediatrician, completing psychoanalytic training later, in the 1930s.

Winnicott married twice, meeting his second wife Clare Britton, a psychiatric social worker, while working with disturbed children who had been evacuated during World War II. He continued to work as a pediatrician for more than 40 years and this gave his ideas a unique perspective. He twice served as president of the British Psychoanalytical Society, and sought to widen public knowledge through his many lectures and broadcasts.

Key works

- 1947 *Hate in the Countertransference*
- 1951 *Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena*
- 1960 *The Theory of the Parent–Infant Relationship*

“
It seems that an
adopted child can
believe in being loved only
after reaching being hated.”

Donald Winnicott

the child against the hope that may lead to disappointment. The defenses, maintains Winnicott, explain the presence of hatred. The child will “act out” in an outburst of anger against the new parental figure, expressing hatred and, in turn, invoking hatred from the carer. He termed the behavior an “antisocial tendency.”

According to Winnicott, for a child who has suffered, the need to hate and be hated is deeper even than the need for rebellion, and the importance of the carer tolerating the hate is an essential factor in the healing of the child. Winnicott says that the child must be allowed to express the hatred, and the parent must be able to tolerate both the child's and their own hatred as well.

The idea may be shocking, and people may struggle with the notion that they feel hatred rising within them. They may feel guilty, because the child has been through such difficulties already. Yet the child is actively behaving hatefully

The “antisocial tendency” in children is a way they express anxieties about their world, testing out their caregivers who must continue to provide a supportive and caring home.

toward the parent, projecting past experiences of being neglected and ignored onto present-day reality.

The child of a broken home or without parents, Winnicott says, “spends his time unconsciously looking for his parents” and so feelings from past relationships are displaced onto another adult. The child has internalized the hate, and sees it even when it is no longer present. In his new situation, the child needs to see what happens when hatred is in the air. Winnicott explains: “What happens is that after a while a child so adopted gains hope, and then he starts to test out the environment he has found, and to seek proof of his guardian's ability to hate objectively.”

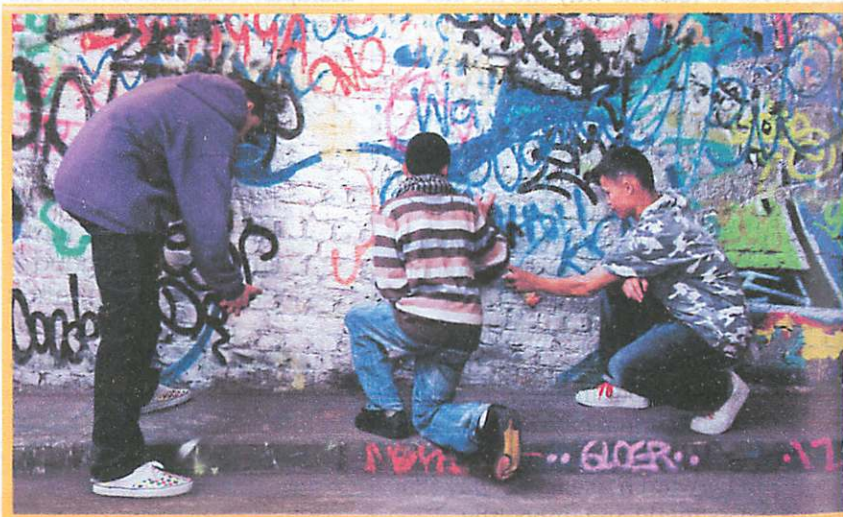
There are many ways for a child to express hatred and prove that he or she is indeed not worthy of being loved. This worthlessness is the message that was imparted by earlier, negative parental experiences. From the child's point of view, he is attempting to protect himself from the risk of ever having to feel love or to be loved because of the potential disappointment that accompanies that state of being.

Dealing with the hatred

The emotions that the child's hatred invokes in the parents, as well as in the child's teachers and other authority figures, are very real. Winnicott believes that it is essential that adults acknowledge these feelings, rather than deny them, which might seem easier. They also need to understand that the child's hatred is not personal; the child is expressing anxiety about his previous unhappy situation with the person who is now at hand.

What the authority figure does with their own hatred, of course, is of critical importance. The child's belief that he or she is “bad” and unworthy of being loved must not be reinforced by the response from the adult; the adult must simply tolerate the feelings of hatred and realize that these feelings are part of the relationship. This is the only way the child will feel secure and be able to form an attachment.

No matter how loving a new environment may be, it does not erase the past for the child; there will still be residual feelings as a result of their past experience. Winnicott sees no short cuts to a



Despite feeling the unconscious and natural negative feelings provoked by the child, a parent must provide an environment that "holds" the child, making him or her feel secure.

resolution. The child is expecting that the adult's feelings of hatred will lead to rejection, because that is what has happened before; when the hatred does not lead to rejection and is tolerated instead, it can begin to dissipate.

Healthy hatred

Even in psychologically healthy families with children who have not been displaced, Winnicott believes unconscious hatred is a natural, essential part of the parenting experience and speaks of "hating appropriately." Melanie Klein had suggested that a baby feels hatred for its mother, but Winnicott proposes that this is preceded by the mother hating the baby—and that even before this, there is an extraordinary primitive or "ruthless" love. The baby's existence places huge demands on the mother psychologically and physically and these evoke feelings of hatred in the mother. Winnicott's list of 18 reasons why the mother hates the baby include: that the pregnancy and birth have endangered her life; that the baby is an interference with her private life; that the baby hurts her when nursing, even biting her; and that the baby "treats her as scum, an unpaid servant, a slave." Despite all of this she also loves him, "excretions and all," says Winnicott, with a hugely powerful, primitive love, and has to learn how to tolerate hating her baby without in any way acting on it. If she cannot hate appropriately, he claims, she turns the feelings of hatred toward herself, in a way that is masochistic and unhealthy.



Therapeutic relationship

Winnicott also used the relationship between the parent and child as an analogy for the therapeutic relationship between therapist and client. The feelings that arise in a therapist during analysis are part of a phenomenon known as "countertransference." Feelings that are aroused in the client during therapy—usually feelings about parents or siblings—are transferred onto the therapist. In his paper, Winnicott described how as part of the analysis, the therapist feels hate toward the client, though this hate was

generated by the patient as a necessary part of testing that the therapist can bear it. The patient needs to know that the therapist is strong and reliable enough to withstand this onslaught.

A realistic approach

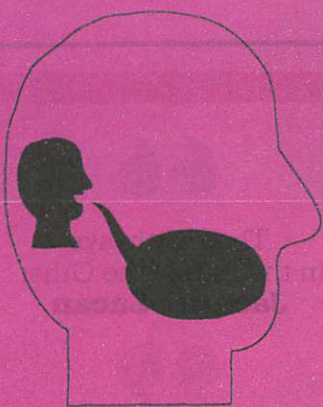
While some of Winnicott's ideas may appear shocking, he believes we should be realistic about bringing up children, avoiding sentimentality in favor of honesty. This enables us as children, and later as adults, to acknowledge and deal with natural, unavoidable negative feelings. Winnicott is a realist and pragmatist; he refuses to believe in the mythical idea of "the perfect family" or in a world where a few kind words wipe away all of the horrors that may have preceded it. He prefers to see the real environment and mental states of our experience, and asks us to do likewise, with courageous honesty. His ideas did not fit neatly into one school of thought, though they were hugely influential, and continue to impact on social work, education, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis around the world. ■

“

Sentimentality in a mother is no good at all from the infant's point of view.

Donald Winnicott

”



THE UNCONSCIOUS IS THE DISCOURSE OF THE OTHER

JACQUES LACAN (1901–1981)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH Psychoanalysis

BEFORE

1807 German philosopher Georg Hegel states that consciousness of self depends on the presence of the Other.

1818 German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer claims that there can be no object without a subject to observe it, and that perception of the object is limited by personal vision and experience.

1890 William James in *The Principles of Psychology* distinguishes between the self as the knower, or "I," and the self as the known, or "me."

AFTER

1943 French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre states that our perception of the world around us, or the Other, alters when another person appears; we absorb his or her concept of the Other into our own.

The **Other** is everything that lies beyond the boundaries of ourselves.

We **define and redefine ourselves** through the existence of the Other.

We understand the world through the **language** (discourse) of the Other.

We also use that language for our innermost **thoughts**.

The unconscious is the discourse of the Other.

Psychoanalysts explain the unconscious as the place where all the memories that we wish to push aside are stored, and cannot be retrieved consciously. The unconscious sometimes speaks to the conscious self in limited ways: Carl Jung believed that the unconscious presents itself to the waking self through dreams, symbols, and in the language of archetypes, while Freud saw it as expressing itself through motivational behavior and accidental "slips of the tongue." The one thing that the various psychoanalytical schools do agree on is that the unconscious holds a bigger picture than that retained by the conscious self. For French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan, however, the language of the unconscious is not that of the self, but of the "Other."

A sense of self

We easily take for granted the notion of the self—that each of us exists as a separate, individual being, who views the world through our own eyes, is familiar with the boundaries that separate us from others and from the world around us, and assumes a separateness

See also: William James 38–45 ■ Sigmund Freud 92–99 ■ Carl Jung 102–07 ■ Donald Hebb 163



Our sense of self is shaped by our awareness of the "Other," or the world outside ourselves. However, Lacan stated, it is the language of the Other that forms our deepest thoughts.

in thinking and in the way we interact with our environment. But what if there was nothing out there that we could recognize as being separate from ourselves? We would then be unable to conceptualize our sense of self, because there would be no delineated being to think about. The only way we have

of determining that as individuals we are distinct from the world all around us is our ability to recognize the separateness of ourselves from our environment, or from the Other, which allows us to become the subject "I." Lacan therefore concluded that each of us is a "self" only because we have a concept of the Other.

For Lacan, the Other is the absolute otherness that lies beyond the self; it is the environment into which we are born, and which we have to "translate" or make sense of, in order to survive and thrive. An infant must learn to assemble sensations into concepts and categories in order to function in the world, and he or she does this through gradually acquiring an awareness and understanding of a series of signifiers—signs or codes. But these signifiers can only come to us from the external world that lies beyond the self, therefore they must have been formed from the language—or what Lacan prefers to call the "discourse"—of the Other.

“
The I is always
in the field of the Other.
Jacques Lacan
”

We are only able to think or to express our ideas and emotions through language, and the only language we have, according to Lacan, is that of the Other. The sensations and images that translate into the thoughts of our unconscious must therefore be constructed from this language of the Other, or, as Lacan stated, "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other." This idea has had a wide influence on the practice of psychoanalysis, leading to a more objective and open interpretation of the unconscious. ■

Jacques Lacan



Jacques Marie Émile Lacan was born in Paris, where he was educated at the Collège Stanislas. He went on to study medicine, specializing in psychiatry. Lacan remained in occupied Paris during World War II, working at the Val-de-Grâce military hospital.

After the war, psychoanalysis became the key tool in Lacan's work. However, he was expelled by the International Psychoanalytical Association in 1953, after an argument over his "deviant" use of shorter length therapy sessions. Lacan then set up La Société Française de Psychanalyse.

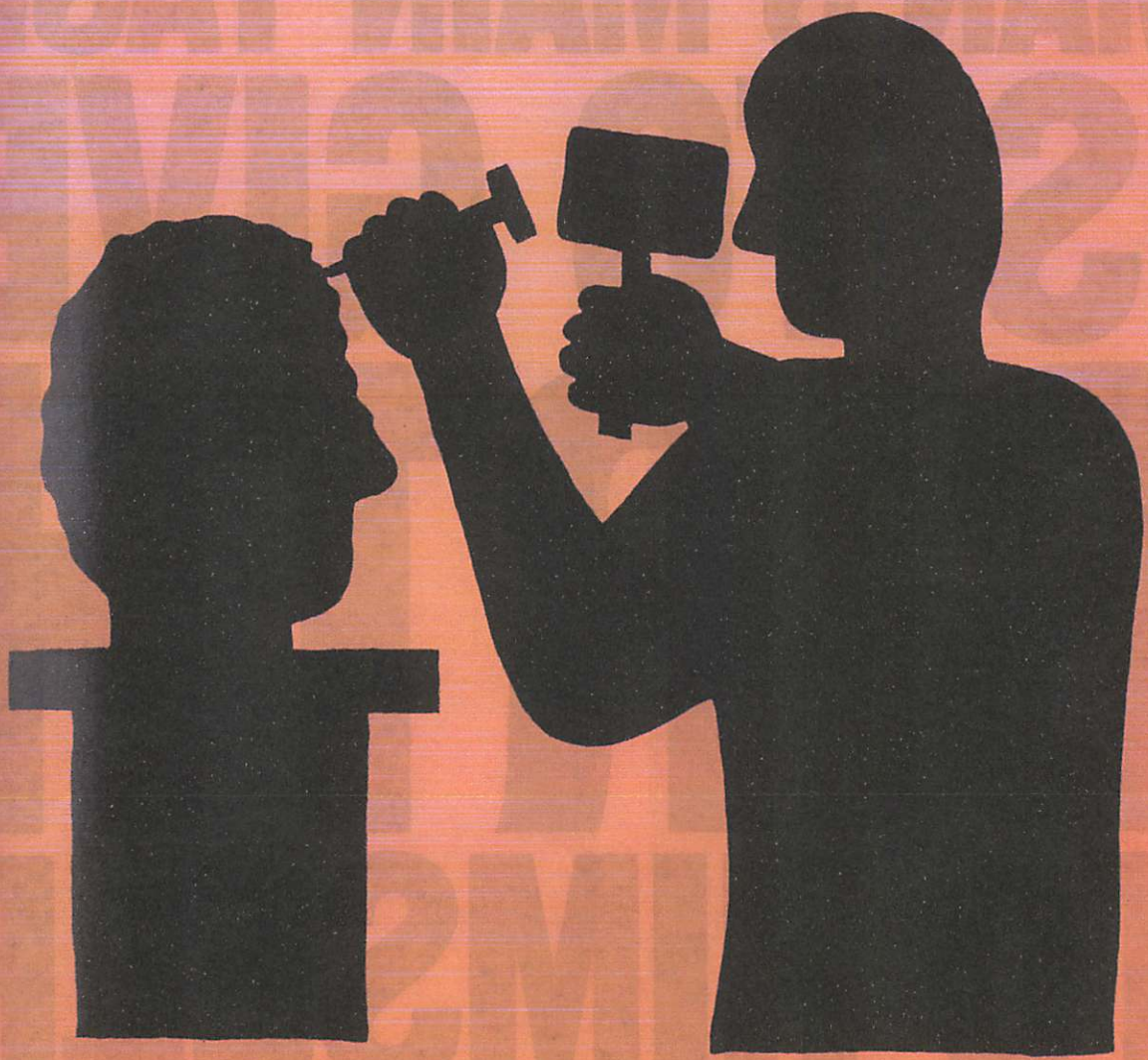
Lacan's writings extend into philosophy, art, literature, and linguistics, and he gave weekly seminars that were attended by eminent thinkers such as Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss. A keen Freudian, Lacan formed the École Freudienne de Paris in 1963, and the École de la Cause Freudienne in 1981.

Key works

1966 *Écrits*
1968 *The Language of the Self*
1954–80 *The Seminars*
(27 volumes)

**MAN'S MAIN TASK
IS TO GIVE
BIRTH
TO HIMSELF**

ERICH FROMM (1900–1980)



IN CONTEXT

APPROACH

Humanistic psychoanalysis

BEFORE

1258–61 The Sufi mystic Rumi says that the longing of the human soul comes from separation from its source.

1950s Rollo May says that the “true religion” consists of facing life’s challenges with purpose and meaning, through accepting responsibility and making choices.

AFTER

1950 Karen Horney says that the neurotic self is split between an idealized and a real self.

1960s Abraham Maslow defines creativity and thinking of others as characteristics of self-actualized people.

1970s Fritz Perls says that we must find ourselves in order to achieve self-actualization.

The ability to find meaning in our lives is the defining characteristic of humankind.

According to the German-American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, it also determines whether we follow a path of joy and fulfillment or tread a road of dissatisfaction and strife. Fromm believed that although life is inherently painful, we can make it bearable by giving it meaning, through pursuing and constructing an authentic self. The ultimate aim of a human life is to develop what Fromm described as “the most precious quality man is endowed with—the love of life.”

Life is inherently fraught with emotional frustration, according to Fromm, because man lives in a state of struggle. He is constantly trying to balance his individual nature—his existence as a separate being—with his need for connection. There is a part of man’s inherent self that only knows how to exist in a united state with others; it lives at one with nature and at one with other people. Yet we see ourselves as separated from nature, and isolated from one another. Worse still, we have the unique capacity to ponder the fact

of this separation and think about our isolation. Man, gifted with reason, is life being aware of itself.

Fromm suggests that our separation from nature originated with the growth of intellect, which has made us aware of our separateness. It is our ability to reason and relate that lets us transcend nature. It provides the capabilities for productive living and affords us intellectual superiority, but it also makes us realize that we exist alone in this world. Reason makes us aware of our own mortality and the mortality of our

“

It seems that nothing is more difficult for the average man to bear than the feeling of not being identified with a larger group.

Erich Fromm

”

Life is fraught with anxiety and powerlessness because of our **separation from nature** and from one another.

These feelings can be overcome through...

...searching out and devoting ourselves to the **discovery of our own ideas and abilities.**

...embracing our **personal uniqueness.**

...developing our **capacity to love.**

See also: Alfred Adler 100-01 ■ Karen Horney 110 ■ Fritz Perls 112-17 ■ Carl Rogers 130-37 ■ Abraham Maslow 138-39 ■ Rollo May 141

The creativity of artists encourages them to interpret the world around them in new ways. The world's most highly acclaimed artists have always essentially been nonconformist.

loved ones. This understanding creates a chronic source of tension and an unbearable loneliness that we are always seeking to overcome; man's inherent state of being is one of anxiety and hopelessness. But there is hope, Fromm insists, because man can overcome his sense of isolation and alienation through finding his purpose.

However, as we strive to become free, unique individuals, we still feel the need for unity with others, and in trying to balance these needs we may seek out the comfort of conforming to a group or an authority. This is a misguided approach, says Fromm; it is imperative to discover one's own independent sense of self, and one's own personal views and value systems, rather than adhering to conventional or authoritarian norms. If we try to hand responsibility for our choices to other people or institutions we become alienated from ourselves, when the very purpose of our lives is to define ourselves through embracing our personal uniqueness, discovering our own ideas and abilities, and embracing that which differentiates each of us from other people. Man's main task is to give birth to himself. In doing so, he frees himself from confusion, loneliness, and apathy.

Creativity and love

Paradoxically, Fromm believes that the only way we can find the sense of wholeness we seek is through the discovery of our individuality.



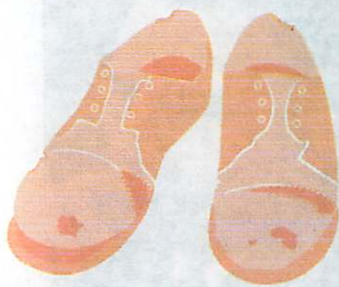
We can achieve this by following our own ideas and passions, and through creative purpose, because "creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties."

One of the critical ways in which man delivers himself from isolation is through his capacity to love. Fromm's concept of love is vastly different from popular understandings of the word. To Fromm, love is not an emotion, nor is it dependent on finding an object to love. It is an interpersonal creative capacity that one must actively develop as part of one's personality. He says "it is an attitude, an ordination of character which determines the relatedness of the person to the whole world."

In terms of personal love for another, Fromm says that the main tenets are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge—an objective knowledge of what other people truly want and need. Love

is only possible through respecting the separateness and uniqueness of ourselves and of another; paradoxically, this is how we develop the ability to create connectedness. Love demands a great amount of respect for the other person as an individual, and it is based on autonomy, not a blending of personalities. In our overwhelming desire to connect and unify, we try to love but our relationships often result in an unloving imbalance. We think we are loving, but in reality we may be seeking another form of conformity. We say "I love you" when really we mean "I see me in you," "I will become you," or "I will possess you." In loving, we try to lose our uniqueness, or steal it from the other person. Our yearning to exist "as one" makes us want to see ourselves reflected in other people, which in turn leads us to artificially impose our own traits onto someone else. »

The Four Nonproductive Personality Types



Receptive types have no choice but to accept their roles, and never fight for change or betterment.



Exploitative types are aggressive and self-centered, and typically engage in acts of coercion and plagiarism.



Hoarding types fight to retain what they have, and are always seeking to acquire more.



Marketing types "sell" everything, especially their own image.

The only way to love, says Fromm, is to love freely, granting the other person their full individuality; to respect the other person's differing opinions, preferences, and belief systems. Love is not found by fitting one person into another's mold, and it is not a question of finding the perfect "match." It is, he says, "union with somebody, or something, outside oneself, under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of one's own self."

Many people spend vast amounts of time and money attempting to cultivate the self that they feel is

most worthy of acceptance, and most likely to result in being loved or desired. This is futile, because only a person who has a strong sense of self, and can stand firmly within their own understanding of the world, is able to give freely to others and love in an authentic way. Those who tend to orient themselves toward receiving love instead of being loving will fail; they will also seek to establish a receiving relationship in other ways, always wanting to be given things—material or immaterial—rather than to give. These people believe the source of all good things lies outside themselves, and they constantly feel the need to acquire, though this brings no relief.

Personality types

Fromm identified several personality types that he called "nonproductive," because they enable people to avoid assuming true responsibility for their actions and prevent productive, personal growth. Each of the four main nonproductive types—receptive, exploitative, hoarding, and marketing—have both positive and negative sides. A fifth type, necrophilous, is

unremittingly negative, and a sixth type—the productive personality—is Fromm's ideal. In reality, our personalities are generally drawn from a mix of the four main types.

A person with a "receptive" orientation is said to live passively in the status quo, accepting the lot handed to them. These people follow rather than lead; they have things done to them. In extremes, this is the stance of the victim, but on the positive side, it is rich in devotion and acceptance. Fromm compares this type to the peasants and migrant workers of history.

The "exploitative" orientation thrives on taking from others; exploitative people take what they need instead of earning or creating. However, they show extreme self-confidence and strong initiative. This type is typified by historical aristocracies who took power and wealth from indigenous populations to line their own pockets.

"Hoarders" are always seeking friends in high places and rank even loved ones in terms of their value, seeing them as something owned. Power-hungry and ungenerous, at best they are pragmatic and economical. Historically, these are

"Know thyself" is one of the fundamental commands that aim at human strength and happiness.

Erich Fromm

the middle classes, or bourgeoisie, that rise in great numbers during economic depressions.

The last of the main types is the "marketing" orientation. These people are obsessed with image and with how to successfully advertise and sell themselves. Every choice is evaluated in terms of reflected status, from the clothes, cars, and vacations they buy to marriage into the "right" family. At worst, they are opportunistic, tactless, and shallow; at best, they are highly motivated, purposeful, and energetic. This type is most representative of modern society, in its ever-growing acquisitiveness and self-consciousness.

The most negative personality type—necrophilous—seeks only to destroy. Deeply afraid of the disorderly and uncontrollable nature of life, necrophilous types love to talk about sickness and death, and are obsessed with the need to impose "law and order." They prefer mechanical objects to other people. In moderation, these people are pessimistic nay-sayers whose glasses are perpetually half empty, never half full.



Hitler's fascination with death and destruction marks him out as an example of Fromm's necrophilous personality type, which is obsessed with control and the imposition of order.

“

Life has an inner dynamism of its own; it tends to grow, to be expressed, to be lived.
Erich Fromm

”

Fromm's last personality type, the productive orientation, genuinely seeks and finds a legitimate solution to life through flexibility, learning, and sociability. Aiming to "become one" with the world and so escape the loneliness of separation, productive people respond to the world with rationality and an open mind, willing to change their beliefs in the light of new evidence. A productive person can truly love another for who they are, not as a trophy or safeguard against the world. Fromm calls this brave person "the man without a mask."

Fromm's work has a unique perspective, drawing on psychology, sociology, and political thinking, especially the writings of Karl Marx. His writing, aimed at a mainstream audience, influenced the general public more than academia—mainly because of his insistence on the freedom of ideas. He is nonetheless recognized as a leading contributor to humanistic psychology. ■



Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm was the only child of his orthodox Jewish parents, and grew up in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. A thoughtful young man, he was initially influenced by his Talmudic studies, but later turned toward Karl Marx and socialist theory, together with Freud's psychoanalysis. Driven by the need to understand the hostility he witnessed during World War I, he studied jurisprudence, then sociology (to PhD level), before training in psychoanalysis. After the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, Fromm moved to Switzerland and then New York, where he established a psychoanalytic practice and taught at Columbia University.

Fromm married three times and had a well-documented affair with Karen Horney during the 1930s. In 1951, he left the US to teach in Mexico, returning 11 years later to become professor of psychiatry at New York University. He died in Switzerland at the age of 79.

Key works

1941 *The Fear of Freedom*
1947 *Man for Himself*
1956 *The Art of Loving*

IN CONTEXT**APPROACH****Person-centered therapy****BEFORE**

1920s Austrian psychoanalyst Otto Rank proposes that separation from outdated thoughts, emotions, and behaviors is essential for psychological growth and development.

1950s Abraham Maslow says that people must not be viewed as a collection of symptoms but first and foremost as people.

AFTER

1960s Fritz Perls popularizes the concept of externalizing other people's expectations to find one's truest self.

2004 American humanistic psychologist Clark Moustakas explores the uniquely human components of life: hope, love, self, creativity, individuality, and becoming.

During the 19th and into the early 20th century, much of the approach to psychological treatment was based on the idea that mental illness was a fixed pathological malady that needed to be cured. Popular psychoanalytic theory, for example, defined people struggling with their mental health as "neurotic." Mental illness was seen in a negative light and most psychological practices and theories of the time offered strict definitions with structured explanations of the underlying causes of the mental illness, and fixed methods to cure it.

American psychologist Carl Rogers took a much more esoteric route to mental health, and in so doing expanded the approach of psychotherapy forever. He felt that the philosophies of the time were too structured and rigid to account for something as dynamic as the human experience, and that humanity is much too diverse to be fitted into delineated categories.

Achieving mental health

Rogers takes the view that it is absurd to view mental well-being as a specific fixed state; good

mental health is not something that is suddenly achieved at the end of a series of steps. Nor is it attained because an individual's previously neurotic state of tension has been reduced by the satisfaction of biological drives and impulses, as the psychoanalysts insisted. Neither is it cultivated by following a specific program designed to develop and preserve a state of inner impermeable homeostasis, or balance, reducing the effect of the world's external chaos on the self, as the behaviorists recommended.

Rogers does not believe that anyone exists in a defective state that needs to be fixed in order to provide them with a better state, preferring to view human experience, and our minds and environment, as alive and growing. He talks about the "ongoing process of organismic experience"—seeing life as instantaneous and ongoing; life exists in the experience of every moment.

For Rogers, a healthy self-concept is not a fixed identity but a fluid and changing entity, open to possibilities. Rogers embraces an authentic,

The good life is a process, not a state of being.

In order to enjoy the good life, we need to...

...be fully
**open to
experience.**

...live in the
**present
moment.**

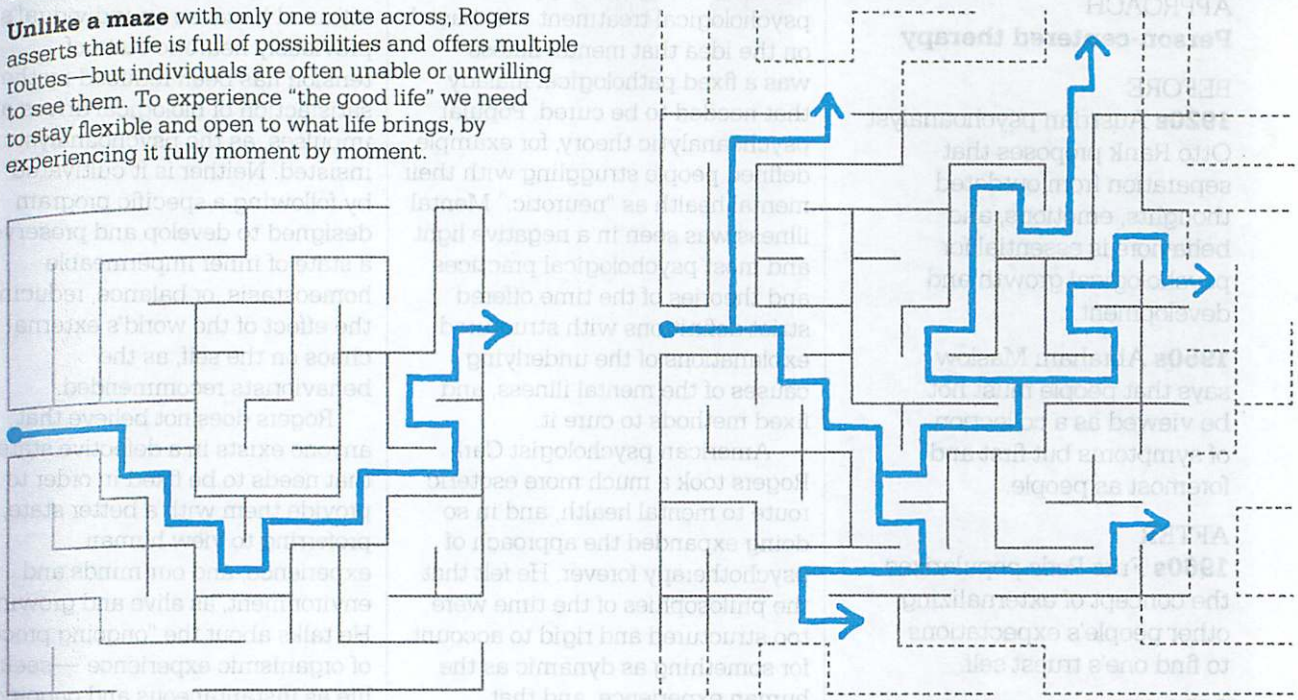
...**trust**
ourselves.

...take
responsibility
for our
choices.

...treat ourselves
and others with
**unconditional
positive regard.**

See also: Fritz Perls 112-17 ■ Erich Fromm 124-29 ■ Abraham Maslow 138-39 ■ Rollo May 141 ■ Dorothy Rowe 154 ■ Martin Seligman 200-01

Unlike a maze with only one route across, Rogers asserts that life is full of possibilities and offers multiple routes—but individuals are often unable or unwilling to see them. To experience “the good life” we need to stay flexible and open to what life brings, by experiencing it fully moment by moment.



unprescribed, free-flowing definition of healthy human experience, with limitless possibilities. Humans are not traveling a road where the destination is to become “adjusted” or “actualized,” as fellow humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow had suggested. Indeed, the purpose of existence is not about reaching any kind of destination, Rogers claims, because existence is less a journey toward an endpoint and more an ongoing process of growth and discovery that does not stop until we die.

Living “the good life”

Rogers uses the phrase living “the good life,” to refer to the range of characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors displayed by people who have embraced the foundations of his approach—people who are “fully in the stream of life.” One

essential ingredient is the ability to stay wholly present in the moment. Since self and personality emerge out of experience, it is of the utmost importance to stay fully open to the possibilities offered by each moment, and to let experience shape the self. The individual lives in an environment of constant change, yet frequently and all too easily, people deny this fluidity and instead create constructs of how they think things should be. They then try to mold themselves and their idea of reality to fit the constructs they have made. This way of being is the very opposite of the fluid, flowing, and changing organization of self that Rogers believes the nature of our existence requires.

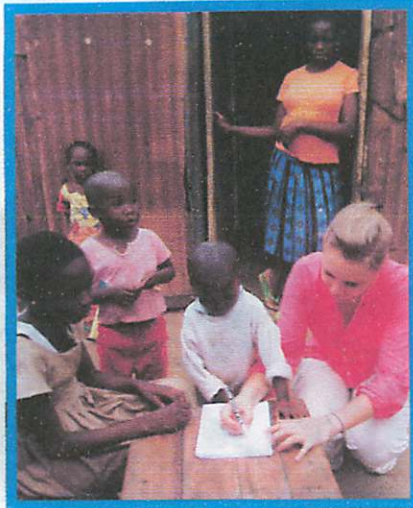
Our preconceptions about how the world is, or should be, and our own role within it, define

the limits of our world and reduce our ability to stay present and open to experience. In living the good life and remaining open to experience, Rogers believes we adopt a way of being that prevents us feeling trapped and stuck. The aim, as Rogers sees it, is for »

“
What I will be in the next moment, and what I will do, grows out of the moment, and cannot be predicted.

Carl Rogers

”



Spending time working in a developing country can be a rewarding way to open up to new experiences, challenge fixed ideas about the world, and find out more about ourselves.

is for experience to be the starting point for the construction of our personalities, rather than trying to fit our experiences into a preconceived notion of our sense of self. If we hold on to our ideas of how things should be, rather than accepting how they really are, we are likely to perceive our needs as "incongruent" or mismatched to what is available.

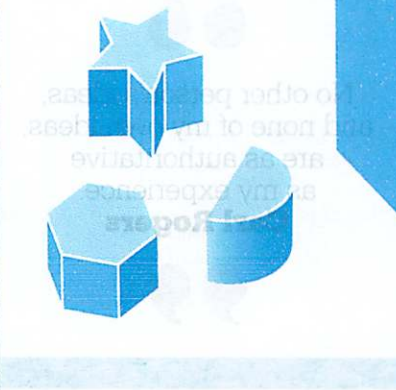
When the world does not "do what we want," and we feel unable to change our ideas, conflict arises in the form of defensiveness. Rogers explains defensiveness as the tendency to unconsciously apply strategies to prevent a troubling stimulus from entering consciousness. We either deny (block out) or distort (reinterpret) what is really happening, essentially refusing to accept reality in order to stick with our preconceived ideas. In so doing, we deny ourselves the full range of potential reactions, feelings, and ideas, and we dismiss a wide

range of options as wrong or inappropriate. The defensive feelings and thoughts that rise up in us when reality conflicts with our preconceptions create a limited, artificial interpretation of experience. In order to really participate in what Rogers calls the "ongoing process of organismic experience," we need to be fully open to new experience, and be completely without defensiveness.

A full range of emotions

By tuning in to our full range of emotions, Rogers argues, we allow ourselves a deeper, richer experience in every part of our lives. We may think we can selectively block emotion, and dampen down disturbing or uncomfortable feelings, but when we repress some of our emotions, we inevitably turn down the volume of all our emotions, denying ourselves access to the whole of our nature. If on the other hand, we allow ourselves to be

A fixed view of the world often leads to unhappiness; we can feel like "a square peg in a round hole," constantly frustrated that our life is not how we expected it to be. Rogers urges us to abandon our preconceived ideas and see the world as it really is.

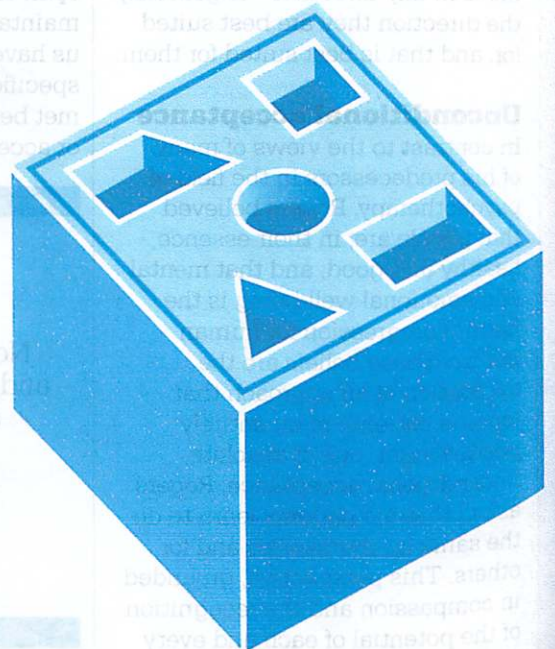


Self and personality emerge from experience, rather than experience being translated... to fit preconceived self-structure.

Carl Rogers

more comfortable with our emotions, including those we have deemed to be negative, the flow of positive feelings emerges more strongly; it is as if by permitting ourselves to feel pain, we allow for a more intense experience of joy.

By always remaining open to everything that occurs, Rogers says that we allow our fullest



abilities to function, and in turn we can get the greatest satisfaction from our experiences. We have not raised our defenses to shut off any part of the self, so we are able to experience everything fully. Once we escape from the rut of the preconceptions of the mind, we can allow ourselves to soar. Rather than organizing our experience to suit our idea of the world, we "discover structure *in* experience."

This openness is not for the faint-hearted, Rogers states; it requires a level of bravery on the part of the individual. We don't need to fear any type of feeling, he says—we need only to allow the full flow of cognition and experience. With true access to a fuller range of processing experience, each of us is more able to find the path that truly suits our authentic self—this is the fully functioning individual that Rogers urges us to become. We are always growing, and Rogers emphasizes that the direction in which people move—when there is freedom to move in any direction—is generally the direction they are best suited for, and that is best suited for them.

Unconditional acceptance

In contrast to the views of many of his predecessors in the field of psychotherapy, Rogers believed that people are, in their essence, healthy and good; and that mental and emotional well-being is the natural progression for human nature. These beliefs are the foundation of an approach that regards patients in an entirely positive light, one of absolute, unconditional acceptance. Rogers asked that his patients learn to do the same for themselves and for others. This perspective, grounded in compassion and the recognition of the potential of each and every



individual, is famously termed "unconditional positive regard." Rogers believed that all people, not just his patients, needed to be able to view themselves in this way, as well as those around them and their environment.

Unconditional self-acceptance and unconditional acceptance of others are vital, and when these are lacking, people fail to remain open to experience. Rogers maintained that many of us have very strong, strident, specific conditions that must be met before we will grant approval or acceptance. We also base

Love that is conditional on an action or situation—for example, on achieving A grades at school or eating the right foods—can leave children feeling unworthy and unaccepted.

self-worth and regard for others on achievements or appearance, rather than accepting people as they are.

Parents may inadvertently teach children that they are worthy of affection only if certain requirements are met, offering them rewards and praise when they eat their vegetables or get an A grade in physics, but fail to love them openly just for themselves. Rogers calls these requirements "conditions of worth," believing that the tendency of humankind to demand that people and things match our arbitrary expectations does all of us a great disservice.

Achievements are to be respected, he says, but they are both separate and secondary to acceptance, which is a basic human need, and does not have to be "earned" through deeds or action. Rogers says that the value of an individual is »

“No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience.”

Carl Rogers

“The subjective human being has an important value... that no matter how he may be labeled and evaluated he is a human person first of all.”

Carl Rogers

inherently granted merely by the miracle of existence. Acceptance must never be thought of as conditional; unconditional positive regard is key to how we might all live “the good life.”

As people become more accepting of themselves, they also become more patient with themselves. Acceptance alleviates the pressure to do, see, and acquire, which builds when we live with the mistaken idea that these activities define our worth. We can begin to

realize that each of us is a continual work-in-progress; that we are in a process of change, as Rogers says in his seminal work, *On Becoming A Person*—we are all in a constant “state of becoming.” The irony is that with greater self-acceptance, and with less unhealthy pressure and constant criticism, we can actually become much more productive.

Trusting oneself

To live “the good life,” as Rogers sees it, is to learn to trust ourselves. As an individual moves toward openness, he finds that he simultaneously makes progress in his ability to trust himself and his instincts, and begins to rely more comfortably on his decision-making capabilities. With no need to repress any part of himself, he has a greater ability to tune in to all the parts of himself. This gives him access to a variety of perspectives and feelings, and in turn he is better able to evaluate choices that will truly realize his potential. He is able to see more clearly what direction his authentic self wishes to take, and can make choices that are truly in congruence with his

needs. No longer at the mercy of what he thinks he should be doing, nor of what society or parents may have conditioned him to think he wants, he can much more easily simply exist in the moment and be truly aware of what he actually wants. And now he can trust himself, “not because he is infallible, but because he can be fully open to the consequences of each of his actions and correct them if they prove to be less than satisfying,” Rogers explains.

In living “the good life” we also have a sense of owning our lives and taking responsibility for ourselves—this is another tenet of Rogers’ philosophy and comes from an existential viewpoint. What we choose to think or do is down to us; there can be no residual resentments when we have truly identified for ourselves what we want and need, and taken the steps to create it. At the same time, there is greater accountability and an increased tendency to truly invest in our lives. It is not uncommon to hear about a doctor who hates medicine but practices because his parents said that being a doctor was the way to earn respect and

Carl Rogers



Carl Rogers was born in Oak Park, Illinois, to a strictly Protestant family, and apparently had few friends outside the family before going to college. Initially, Rogers majored in agriculture, but after marrying his childhood sweetheart, Helen Elliott, in 1924, he enrolled at a theological seminary, before withdrawing to pursue a course in psychology. Rogers worked at the universities of Ohio, Chicago, and Wisconsin, developing his client-centered therapy based on humanistic psychology. He also spent time with the United Service

Organizations (USO), offering therapy to returning army personnel during World War II. In 1964, he was awarded “Humanist of the Year” by the American Humanist Association, and devoted the last ten years of his life to working for world peace. He was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.

Key works

1942 *Counseling and Psychotherapy*

1951 *Client-centered Therapy*

1961 *On Becoming a Person*



approval—both from them and from society. In direct contrast, the rates of students who drop out or fail university courses are strikingly low among those who have received little support but worked to pay for their own tuition.

The ways in which people can influence our desires and how we define ourselves can be intensely complex. Resentment can be buried deep within us when we act in accordance with someone else's wishes rather than our own. If our actions are free of external influences, we feel more authentic, more solidly in control of creating our own destiny, and more satisfied with the results.

Person-centered approach

Rogers' philosophy became the cornerstone of a new approach called humanistic psychology, which he founded in the 1950s with Abraham Maslow and Rollo May. It was based on a positive view of humanity as basically

healthy and capable of growing and realizing its potential. This approach was in contrast to the other main psychological therapies of the time—psychoanalysis and behaviorism—both of which focus on the pathology of the individual and how to fix it.

Rogers initially called his approach "client-centered," and then changed it to "person-centered," and it has since been hugely influential in education, parenting, business, and other areas as well as in clinical work. In person-centered therapy, which Rogers described as "non-directive therapy," the therapist takes the role of a facilitator who helps the client find his or her own answers, based on the belief that the client knows himself best. In person-centered therapy, the client identifies his problems and what direction the therapy should take. For example, the client may not wish to focus on his childhood but rather deal with issues he is facing at work and the therapist may help

Teaching a child to ride a bicycle requires encouragement and support but ultimately the child must be brave and trust himself. Rogers likened his person-centered therapy to this process.

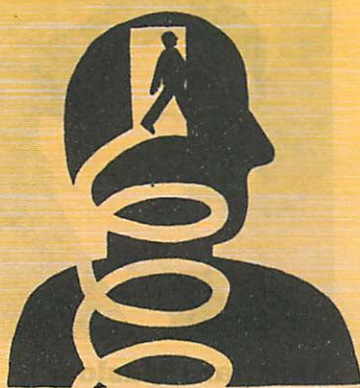
him find what sort of role he would really like to take. Rogers describes the process as "supportive, not reconstructive;" the client must not come to rely on the therapist for support, but instead needs to learn how to become sufficiently self-aware and self-trusting to be independent and able to live "the good life."

Rogers' legacy

Rogers was one of the most influential psychotherapists of the 20th century, and his new client-centered, non-directive therapy marked a turning point in the development of psychotherapy. He was instrumental in the encounter-group philosophy of the 1960s, which encouraged open communication between individuals. He was responsible for the spread of professional counseling into areas such as education and social work, and was a pioneer in attempting to resolve international conflict through more effective communication. ■

The process of the good life... means launching oneself fully into the stream of life.

Carl Rogers



WHAT A MAN CAN BE, HE MUST BE

ABRAHAM MASLOW (1908–1970)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH

Humanist psychology

BEFORE

1920s Alfred Adler claims there is only one motivating force behind all our behavior and experience: the striving for perfection.

1935 Henry Murray develops the Thematic Apperception Test, which measures personality and motivation.

AFTER

1950s Kurt Goldstein defines self-actualization as the tendency to actualize, as much as possible, the organism's individual capacities, and proclaims that the drive to self-actualize is the only drive that determines the life of an individual.

1974 Fritz Perls says that every living thing "has only one inborn goal—to actualize itself as it is."

Throughout recorded history, questions have been posed about why we are here, and what the purpose is of our lives. Underlying these questions is a need to identify what will make us truly satisfied, and a confusion about how to find it. Psychoanalysts would claim that the fulfillment of innate biological drives leads toward satisfaction, and behaviorists would describe the importance of meeting physiological needs with food, sleep, and sex, but the new wave of psychotherapeutic thought in the early to mid-20th century believed that the path to inner fulfillment was much more complex.

One of the main proponents of this new approach to the problem was Abraham Maslow, a psychotherapist who is considered one of the founders of the humanist movement in psychology. He examined human experience by looking at the things that are most important to us: love, hope, faith, spirituality, individuality, and existence. One of the most crucial aspects of his theories was that in order to reach the most highly developed state of consciousness and realize the greatest potential,

an individual must discover his true purpose in life and pursue it. Maslow refers to this ultimate state of being as self-actualization.

Toward self-actualization

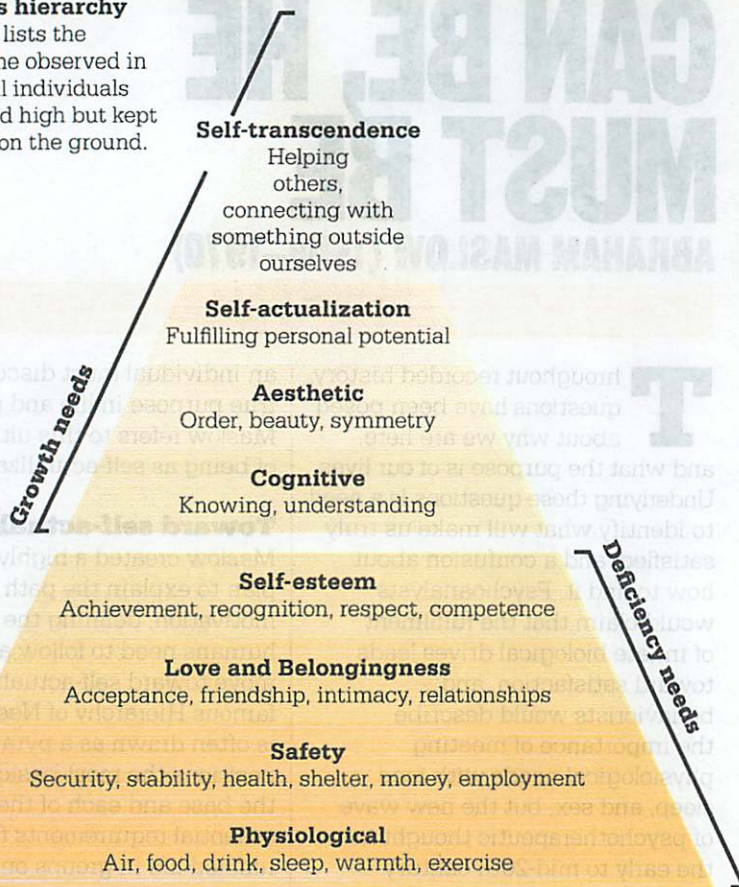
Maslow created a highly structured plan to explain the path of human motivation, defining the steps that humans need to follow as they move toward self-actualization. His famous Hierarchy of Needs, which is often drawn as a pyramid, positions the most basic needs at the base and each of the other essential requirements for a fulfilled life in groups on top.

Maslow's hierarchy is split into two distinct sections: at the beginning are the four stages that make up the "deficiency needs" and all of these must be met before a person is able to reach for greater intellectual satisfaction through the "growth needs." The deficiency needs are simple and basic; they include physiological necessities (such as food, water, and sleep), the need for safety (to be safe and out of danger), love and belongingness needs (our need to be close to and accepted by others), and self-esteem requirements (our need to achieve in our lives and be recognized).

See also: Alfred Adler 100-01 ■ Erich Fromm 124-29 ■ Carl Rogers 130-37 ■ Rollo May 141 ■ Martin Seligman 200-01

The Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs lists the qualities he observed in successful individuals who aimed high but kept their feet on the ground.



At the higher level, the growth needs are cognitive (a need to know and understand), aesthetic (a desire for order and beauty), and lastly, two requirements that define the purpose of life, and lead to intense spiritual and psychological fulfillment: self-actualization and self-transcendence. Self-actualization is the desire for self-fulfillment, and self-transcendence is the need to move beyond the self, and connect to something higher than ourselves—such as God—or to help others realize their potential.

Maslow also proposes that each one of us has an individual purpose to which we are uniquely suited, and part of the path to fulfillment is to identify and pursue that purpose. If someone is not doing what they are best suited to do in life, it will not matter if all their other needs are fulfilled, he or she will be perpetually restless and unsatisfied. Each of us must discover our potential, and seek out experiences that will allow us to fulfil it—"What a man can be, he must be," proclaims Maslow. ■



Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow was born the eldest of seven children in Brooklyn, New York. His parents were Jewish immigrants who had left Russia for the US to escape the tumultuous political situation there. They had high expectations of Maslow, and forced him to study law—a parental dominance that continued until 1928 when Maslow decided to take control of his life and pursue psychology instead. In the same year he disobeyed his parents by marrying his cousin, Bertha Goodman, with whom he had two children.

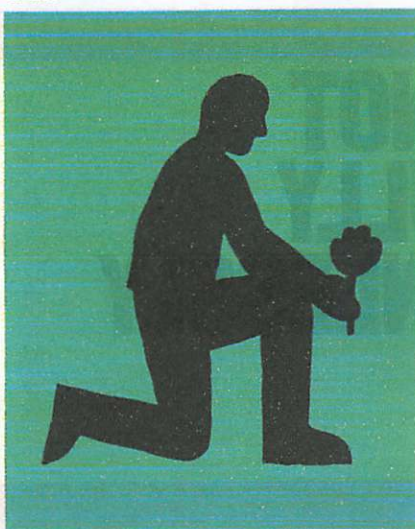
Maslow moved to the University of Wisconsin and worked under Harry Harlow, the behavioral psychologist famous for his work with primates. Later, at Columbia University, Maslow found a mentor in psychoanalyst and former colleague of Freud's, Alfred Adler.

Key works

1943 *A Theory of Human Motivation*

1954 *Motivation and Personality*

1962 *Toward a Psychology of Being*



SUFFERING CEASES TO BE SUFFERING AT THE MOMENT IT FINDS A MEANING

VIKTOR FRANKL (1905–1997)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH Logotherapy

BEFORE
600–500 BCE In India, Gautama Buddha teaches that suffering is caused by desire, and can be alleviated by releasing desire.

458 BCE Ancient Greek dramatist Aeschylus explores the idea that “wisdom comes alone through suffering.”

AFTER
1950s French existentialist philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, say our lives do not have a God-given purpose; we must find it for ourselves.

2003 Martin Seligman says a “full life” encompasses pleasure, engagement (flow), and meaning.

2007 US psychologist Dan Gilbert explains that people are unhappy because of the way they think about happiness.

Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl had already begun to specialize in suicide prevention and the treatment of depression when, in 1942, he and his wife, brother, and parents were taken to a concentration camp. He spent three years there and endured many horrors and losses before emerging as the only survivor of the group. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946), written after these experiences, Frankl explains that humans have two psychological strengths that allow us to bear

painful and possibly devastating situations and to move forward; these are the capacity for decision, and freedom of attitude. Frankl stresses that we are not at the mercy of our environment or events, because we dictate how we allow them to shape us. Even suffering can be seen differently, depending on our interpretation of events.

Frankl cites the case of one of his patients who suffered because he missed his dead wife. Frankl asked how it would have been if the patient had died first, and he replied that his wife would have found it very difficult. Frankl pointed out that the patient has spared her this grief, but must now suffer the grief himself. In giving meaning to the suffering it becomes endurable; “suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning.”

Meaning is something we “discover rather than invent,” according to Frankl, and we must find it for ourselves. We find it through living, and specifically through love, creating things, and the way we choose to see things. ■

“A man who has nothing else in this world may still know bliss.”

Viktor Frankl

See also: Rollo May 141 ■ Boris Cyrulnik 152–53 ■ Martin Seligman 200–01



ONE DOES NOT BECOME FULLY HUMAN PAINLESSLY

ROLLO MAY (1909–1994)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH

Existential psychotherapy

BEFORE

1841 Søren Kierkegaard claims that people misinterpret Christian ideology and misuse science to falsely defend against the anxiety inherent in existence.

1942 Swiss physician Ludwig Binswanger combines existential philosophy with psychotherapy in his *Basic Forms and the Realization of Human "Being-in-the-World."*

1942 Carl Rogers, a pioneer of humanistic psychology, publishes *Counseling and Psychotherapy*.

AFTER

1980 Irvin Yalom discusses in *Existential Psychotherapy* the four ultimate concerns of life: death, freedom, existential isolation, and meaninglessness.

In the mid-19th century, philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Frederick Nietzsche, and Søren Kierkegaard challenged social dogma and demanded that people expand their ways of thinking to incorporate a fuller understanding of human experience, in a movement now known as existentialism. The notions of free will, personal responsibility, and how we interpret our experience were all of interest to the existentialists, who wanted to ask what it means, fundamentally, for a human to exist.

Psychologist Rollo May's *The Meaning of Anxiety* (1950) brought this human-centered philosophical approach into psychology for the first time, and May is often referred to as the father of existential psychology.

An existential approach

May viewed life as a spectrum of human experience, including suffering as a normal part of life, not as a sign of pathology. It is self-evident that as human beings, we tend to seek experiences that allow us to be comfortable. We

enjoy our familiar environments, and favor experiences that keep the mental and physical senses in a state of balance and ease. This tendency, however, leads us to judge and label experiences as "good" or "bad," depending only on the levels of pleasure or discomfort they may bring. May says that in doing so, we do ourselves a disservice, since we are fighting against processes that lead to immense growth and development if we can accept them as a natural part of life.

May proposes an approach to life that echoes Buddhist thought, where we accept all forms of experience equally, rather than shunning or denying those we judge to be uncomfortable or unpleasant. We also need to accept our "negative" feelings, rather than avoid or repress them. Suffering and sadness are not pathological issues to be "fixed," he says; they are natural and essential parts of living a human life, and are also important because they lead to psychological growth. ■

See also: Søren Kierkegaard 26–27 ■ Alfred Adler 100–01 ■ Carl Rogers 130–37 ■ Abraham Maslow 138–39 ■ Viktor Frankl 140 ■ Boris Cyrulnik 140

RATIONAL BELIEFS CREATE HEALTHY EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

ALBERT ELLIS (1913–2007)



IN CONTEXT

APPROACH

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

BEFORE

1927 Alfred Adler says that a person's behavior springs from his or her ideas.

1940s The role of perception in creating reality is popularized by the Gestalt Therapy movement.

1950 Karen Horney suggests we escape from the "tyranny of the shoulds."

AFTER

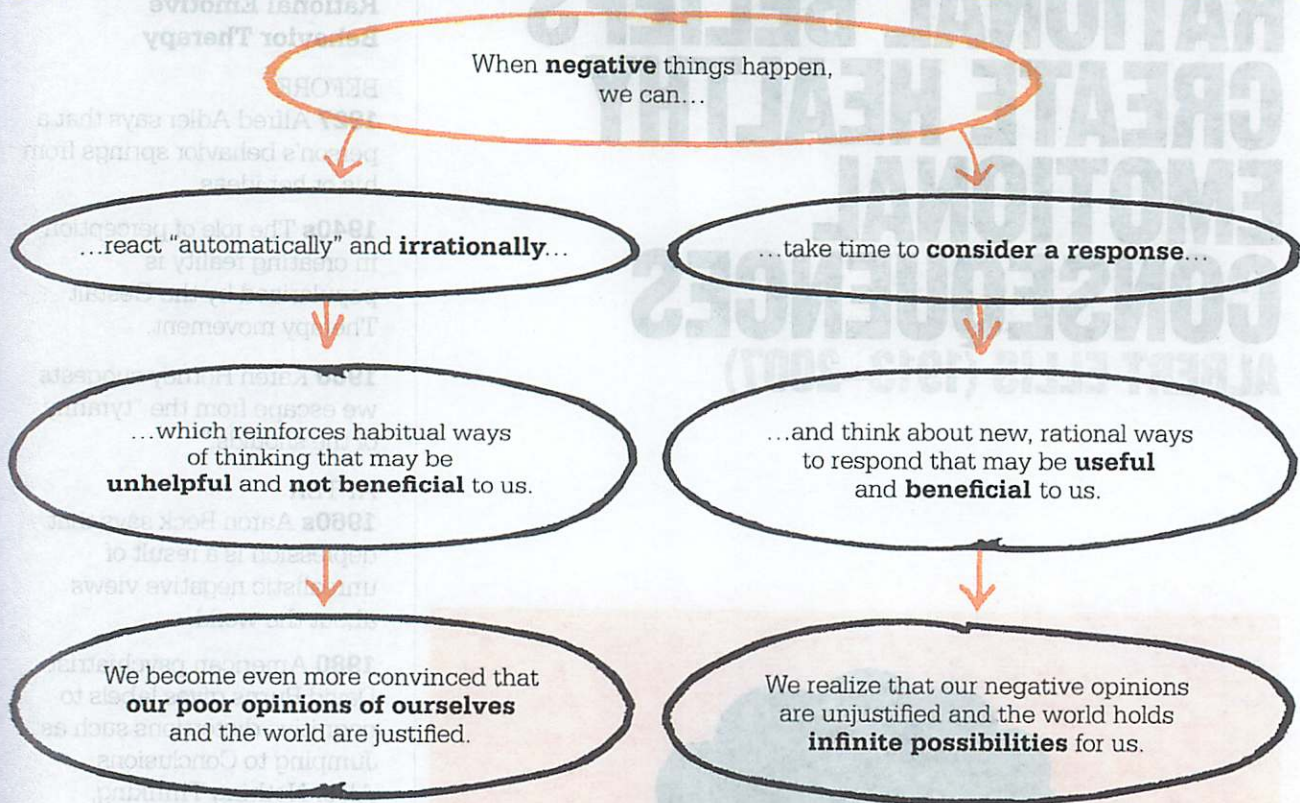
1960s Aaron Beck says that depression is a result of unrealistic negative views about the world.

1980 American psychiatrist David Burns gives labels to cognitive distortions such as: Jumping to Conclusions, All or Nothing Thinking, Always Being Right, Over Generalizing, and Catastrophizing.

Epictetus, an ancient Greek philosopher, proclaimed in 80 CE, that "men are disturbed not by events, but by the views which they take of them." This principle is the foundation of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), devised by Dr. Albert Ellis in 1955, which asserts that experiences do not cause any specific emotional reaction; instead it is the individual's belief system that produces the reaction.

Practicing as a psychoanalyst in the 1940s and 50s, Ellis began to realize that while many of his patients gained an insight into

See also: Alfred Adler 100–101 ■ Karen Horney 110 ■ Erich Fromm 124–29 ■ Carl Rogers 130–137 ■ Aaron Beck 174–177 ■ Martin Seligman 200–201



themselves and their childhood, their symptoms unfortunately remained. It seemed that when one problem was resolved, the patient would put another in its place. The issue, Ellis decided, lay in the way the person was thinking (their cognition), and it required more than insight to change it.

Irrational thinking

Ellis began to describe his way of working as Rational Therapy because he believed that the majority of long-standing emotional problems are almost always due to irrational thinking. One of the most common ways in which irrationality occurs, he says, is the tendency to draw extreme conclusions,

especially negative ones, about events. For example, if a man who is an irrational thinker loses his job, to him it is not merely unfortunate, but *awful*. He believes that he is worthless because he was fired, and that he will never find another job. Ellis describes irrational beliefs as illogical, extreme, damaging, and self-sabotaging because they cause unhealthy emotional consequences.

Rational thinking creates the opposite effect. Ellis defines rational thinking as helpful to the self. It is based on tolerance and the ability to bear distress without assuming catastrophic negative conclusions, and is rooted in a belief in positive human potential.

This is not to say one turns a blind eye to negative factors in favor of naïve, positive beliefs—rational thinking does acknowledge reasonable feelings of sorrow, guilt, and frustration. The rational thinker may lose her job; it may have even been her fault that she lost the job, but she knows she is not worthless. She may be upset with herself, but she knows that rationally there is the possibility of another job. Rational thinking is balanced and always allows room for optimism and possibilities; it creates healthy emotional consequences.

Ellis's notion of irrational thinking is influenced by Karen Horney's idea of the “tyranny of the shoulds”—a preoccupation »

“

People and things do not upset us. Rather, we upset ourselves by believing that they can upset us.

Albert Ellis

”

with the idea that something should (magically) be different from how it is. The struggle to reconcile these thoughts with reality is a painful and unending one. Rational thinking, on the other hand, focuses on acceptance; it maintains the balanced sense that sometimes things happen that we would prefer not to, but they are a part of life.

Conditioned response

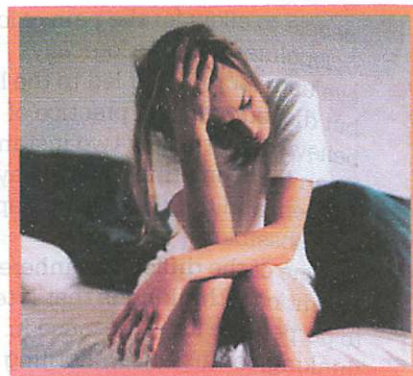
We become so used to our responses to people and events that they appear to be almost automatic; our

reaction becomes inextricably linked to the event itself. However, Ellis aimed to teach people to recognize how an event may contribute to a feeling, but it does not directly cause that feeling. Our emotional response depends on the meaning we put on what took place, which in turn is governed by rational or irrational thinking.

As the name implies, Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy examines both the emotional response (a cognitive process) and the behavior. The links between these two flow in both directions: it is possible to change your thinking through changing your behavior, and to change your behavior through changing your thinking. Ellis suggests that the way to change one's thinking involves being able to recognize and then dispute irrational beliefs, challenging them with rational thoughts.

Challenging beliefs

During REBT, an individual is asked to consider whether they have several overriding beliefs about themselves and their position in life as these contribute



If someone has been unlucky in love they may feel sad and rejected. However, there is a difference between feeling these emotions and allowing them to become a belief system.

to irrational responses. This process is known as “disputing.” For instance, some people hold the belief that “I am the only really dependable person I know” or “I am destined to be always alone in this world.” In therapy, the individual is encouraged to search their personal history to find rationalizations for these belief systems. Someone who has been through the break-up of several relationships may have the delusion that it is their “destiny to be alone” or that they are somehow “unlovable.” REBT encourages

Albert Ellis



Albert Ellis was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His father was often away on business and his mother suffered from bipolar disease; Ellis frequently took care of his three younger siblings. Ellis began a career in business and then became an author, before his writing on sexuality led him to start studying clinical psychology at Columbia University in 1942. Initially, Ellis practiced psychoanalysis and was influenced by Sigmund Freud, Albert Adler, and Erich Fromm. However, his Rational Therapy broke away from psychoanalytic theory and is

considered to have led the shift toward cognitive behavioral therapy. He is recognized as one of the most influential psychologists in the US. He wrote more than 70 books, continuing to write and teach until his death at the age of 93.

Key works

- 1957 *How to Live with a Neurotic*
- 1961 *A Guide to Rational Living*
- 1962 *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy*
- 1998 *Optimal Aging*

people to allow for the pain of loss or loneliness, and to logically evaluate factors that led to the loss; but discourages the practice of believing that one or two instances mean that something will always happen, and therefore being happy is impossible.

One of the difficulties inherent in irrational thinking is that it tends to perpetuate itself, because in thinking, for instance, "nothing good ever happens to me," there is little or no motivation to seek opportunities where good things might happen. The irrational thinker sees the possibilities of having a good experience as so unlikely that he gives up searching for them. It also makes him blind to the good things that do happen. Many people express the self-perpetuating belief: "Yes, I have tried, and I know that good things never happen," which rationalizes and reinforces their belief system.

Irrational thinking is "black and white;" it stops an individual from recognizing the full spectrum of possible experiences. If a faulty belief system leads us to always interpret situations negatively, then it prevents the possibility of alternate positive experiences. Though it often appears that "seeing is believing," the reality is that what we believe is what we see.

Constructivist theory

REBT is a constructivist theory, suggesting that although our preferences are influenced by our upbringing and culture, we construct our own beliefs and reality. As a therapy, it attempts to reveal people's inflexible and absolutist thoughts, feelings, and actions; and helps them see how they are choosing to "disturb themselves," as Ellis puts it. It suggests how to think of and

choose healthier pathways; and how to internalize and habituate new, more beneficial beliefs. In so doing, the therapist becomes obsolete—once the client grasps the idea of becoming self-aware in decision-making, and choosing deliberately (and often differently), the therapist is no longer needed.

An active therapy

Albert Ellis's theories challenged the slow-moving methodology of psychoanalysis and created the first form of cognitive behavioral therapy, an approach that is popular today. He was an active and directive therapist and in place of long-term, passive psychoanalysis, he put the work and power squarely in the hands of the client—an approach that prefigured Carl Rogers. He also emphasized that theorizing was not enough—"you have to back it up with action,

The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own... You realize that you control your own destiny.
Albert Ellis

action, action," he said. REBT became one of the most popular therapies of the 1970s and 80s, and was highly influential on the work of Aaron Beck, who described Ellis as an "explorer, revolutionary, therapist, theorist, and teacher." ■

REBT identifies the patterns of irrational thinking that lead to unhealthy and entrenched beliefs, and describes how to challenge them.

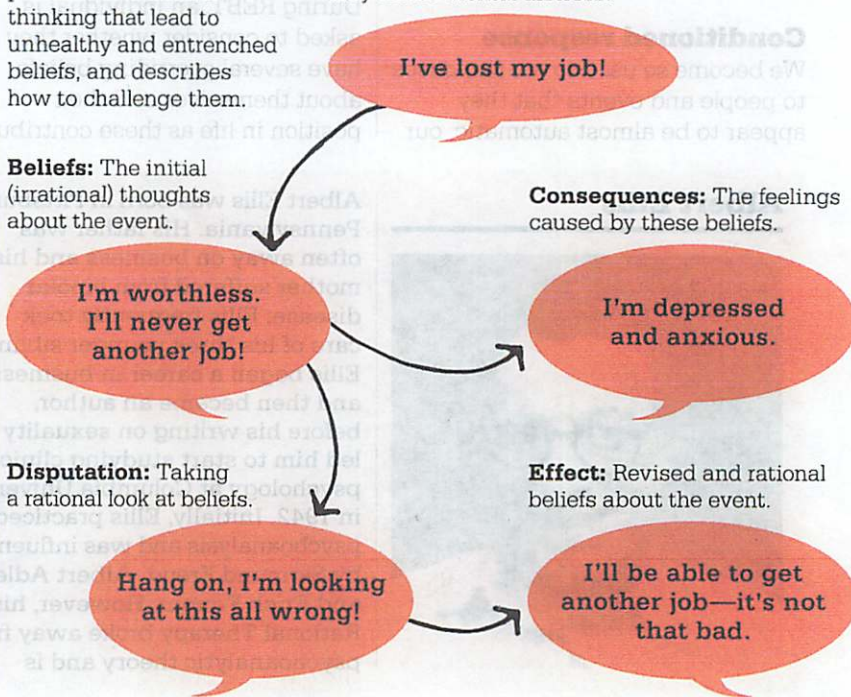
Adversity: An event that may cause mental distress.

Beliefs: The initial (irrational) thoughts about the event.

Consequences: The feelings caused by these beliefs.

Disputation: Taking a rational look at beliefs.

Effect: Revised and rational beliefs about the event.





THE FAMILY IS THE "FACTORY" WHERE PEOPLE ARE MADE

VIRGINIA SATIR (1916–1988)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH Family therapy

BEFORE

1942 Carl Rogers publishes *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, emphasizing the role of respect and a nonjudgmental approach in mental health treatment.

AFTER

1953 US psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan publishes *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*, which states that people are products of their environment.

1965 Argentinian-born psychiatrist Salvador Minuchin brings family therapy to prominence at the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic.

1980 Italian psychiatrist Mara Selvini Palazzoli and her colleagues publish articles about their "Milan systems" approach to family therapy.

We learn to react in certain ways to the members of our family.

These reactions **shape a role** that we adopt, especially when under stress.

This role may **overwhelm our authentic self** and be taken with us into adulthood.

The family is the "factory" where people are made.

The role that a person assumes in their "family of origin" (the family they grew up in) tends to be the seed from which the adult will grow. American psychologist Virginia Satir recognized the importance that the original family plays in shaping personality, and looked at differences between a healthy, functioning family and one that was dysfunctional. She was especially interested in the roles that people tend to adopt in order to compensate when healthy dynamics are lacking between family members.

A healthy family life involves open and reciprocated displays of affection, and expressions of positive regard and love for one another. More than any previous therapist, Satir emphasized the power that compassionate, nurturing relationships have in developing well-adjusted psyches.

Role playing

When family members lack the ability to openly express emotion and affection, Satir suggested that personality "roles" tend to emerge in place of authentic identities. She noted five commonly played roles

See also: Carl Rogers 130–37 ■ Lev Vygotsky 270 ■ Bruno Bettelheim 271

The Five Family Roles



Distractor

Computer

Leveler

Blamer

Placator

Five distinct personality roles, according to Satir, are commonly played out by individual family members in order to cover up difficult emotional issues.

that individual family members are likely to adopt, especially in times of stress. These are: the family member who constantly finds fault and criticizes ("the blamer"); the non-affectionate intellectual ("the computer"); the person who stirs things up in order to shift the focus away from emotional issues ("the distractor"); the apologetic people-pleaser ("the placator"); and the open, honest, and direct communicator ("the leveler").

Only levelers maintain a healthy, congruent position, with their inner feelings matching their communications with the rest of the family. Others adopt their various roles because low self-esteem makes them afraid to show or share their true feelings. Placators are afraid of disapproval; blamers attack others to hide feelings of unworthiness; computers rely on their intellect to stop them acknowledging their feelings; and distractors—often the youngest in the family—believe they will only be loved if they are seen as cute and harmless.

These adopted roles may allow the family to function, but they can overwhelm each individual's ability to be his or her authentic self. Satir

believed that in order to cast aside these false identities, whether as children or as adults, we must accept self-worth as a birthright. Only then will it be possible to start moving toward a truly fulfilling existence. This begins with a commitment to straightforward, open, and honest communication.

The need for basic, positive, emotional connections lies at the root of Satir's pioneering work. She believed that love and acceptance are the most potent healing forces for any dysfunctional family. By fostering close, compassionate relationships with her patients, she mimicked the dynamic she was encouraging them to adopt. ■

By knowing how to heal
the family, I know how to
heal the world.

Virginia Satir

Virginia Satir

Virginia Satir was born on a farm in Wisconsin and is said to have decided she wanted to be a "detective of people's parents" at the age of six. Losing her hearing for two years due to an illness helped to make her acutely observant of nonverbal communication, and gave her a sensitive insight into human behavior. Her father was an alcoholic, and she was well aware of the dynamics of caretaking, blaming, and pleasing that went on around her during her own childhood.

Satir trained as a teacher, but her interest in problems of self-esteem in children led her to take a master's degree in social work. She set up the first formal family therapy training program in the US and the "Satir Model" is still hugely influential in personal and organizational psychology.

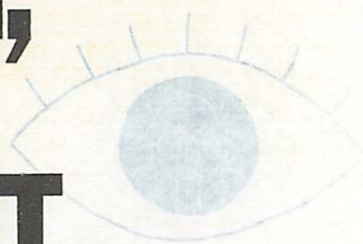
Key works

1964 *Conjoint Family Therapy*
1972 *Peoplemaking*



TURN ON, TUNE IN, DROP OUT

TIMOTHY LEARY (1920–1996)



IN CONTEXT

APPROACH

Experimental psychology

BEFORE

1890s William James says that the self has four layers: the biological, the material, the social, and the spiritual.

1956 Abraham Maslow stresses the importance of “peak experiences” in the route to self-actualization.

AFTER

1960s British psychiatrist Humphry Osmond coins the term “psychedelic” to describe the emotional effects of the drugs LSD and mescaline.

1962 In his “Good Friday Experiment,” US psychiatrist and theologian Walter Pahnke tests if psychedelic drugs can deepen religious experience.

1972 US psychologist Robert E. Ornstein argues in *The Psychology of Consciousness* that only personal experience can unlock the unconscious.

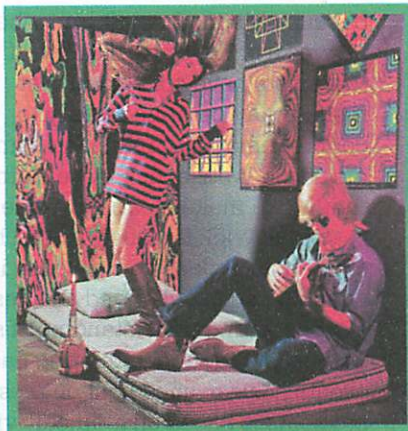
Timothy Leary was an American psychologist who became an iconic figure of the 1960s counterculture, coining possibly the most widely used catchphrase linked with that era: “Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out.”

However, the order in which Leary wished us to do these three things is slightly different. He felt that society was polluted by politics, and made up of sterile, generic communities that do not allow the depth of meaning needed by true individuals. The first thing he

thought we should do is “Drop Out,” by which he meant that we should detach ourselves from artificial attachments and become self-reliant in thought and deed. Unfortunately, “Drop Out” has been misinterpreted as urging people to halt productivity, which was never his intention.

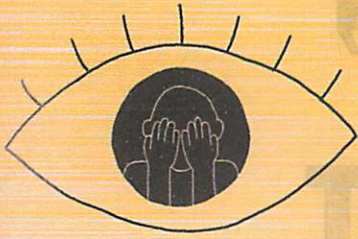
Next, Leary tells us to “Turn On,” or delve into our unconscious, and “find a sacrament which returns you to the temple of God, your own body.” This is a command to explore deeper layers of reality, as well as the many levels of experience and consciousness. Drugs were one way to do this, and Leary, a Harvard professor, began experimenting with the hallucinogenic drug LSD.

To “Tune In,” Leary asks us to return to society with a new vision, seeking fresh patterns of behavior that reflect our transformation, and to teach others our newfound ways. ■



The psychedelic movement of the 1960s was heavily influenced by Leary's call to create a better, more satisfying society by exploring the unconscious to uncover our true emotions and needs.

See also: William James 38–45 ■ Abraham Maslow 138–39



INSIGHT MAY CAUSE BLINDNESS

PAUL WATZLAWICK (1921–2007)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH Brief therapy

BEFORE

1880s Psychodynamic therapy, also known as insight-oriented therapy, emerges. It focuses on unconscious processes as manifested in a person's present behavior.

1938 B.F. Skinner introduces "radical" behaviorism, which does not accept that thinking, perception, or any other kind of unobservable emotional activity can trigger a particular pattern of behavior.

AFTER

1958 American psychiatrist Leopold Bellak sets up a brief therapy clinic, where therapy is limited to a maximum of five sessions.

1974 US psychotherapist Jay Haley publishes *Uncommon Therapy*, describing Milton Erickson's brief therapy techniques.

Psychotherapy often relies heavily on patients gaining an understanding of themselves, their history, and their behavior. This is based on the belief that to counter emotional pain and change behavior, we need to understand where our emotional patterns are rooted. Austrian-American psychologist Paul Watzlawick described this process as "insight." For example, a man who grieves for an abnormally long time after his partner leaves him might come to realize that he has deep issues with abandonment, because his mother left him when he was a child. But a number of therapists have concluded that insight may be unnecessary to counter emotional pain, and some, including Watzlawick, have claimed that it can make a patient worse.

Watzlawick famously stated he could not think of a single case in which someone changed as a result of a deepening understanding of self. The belief that understanding past events helps to shed light on present problems is based on a "linear" view

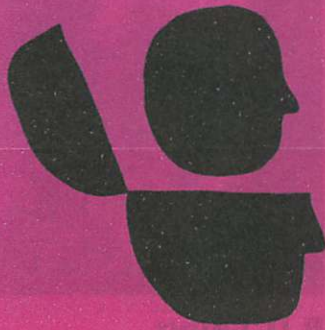
of cause and effect. Watzlawick was drawn to the idea of circular causality of human behavior, which shows people tend to return to the same actions again and again.

Insight, Watzlawick suggested, may even cause blindness, both to the real problem and its potential solution. He supported the brief therapy approach, which targets and tackles specific problems more directly in order to achieve quicker results. But he also felt that for any therapy to succeed, it must offer the patient a supportive relationship. ■

“Anybody can be happy, but to *make* oneself unhappy needs to be learned.”

Paul Watzlawick

See also: B.F. Skinner 78–85 ■ Elizabeth Loftus 202–07 ■ Milton Erickson 336



MADNESS NEED NOT BE ALL BREAKDOWN IT MAY ALSO BE BREAK-THROUGH

R.D. LAING (1927–1989)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH Anti-psychiatry

BEFORE

1908 Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler coins the term "schizophrenia" to refer to the splitting of mental functions.

1911 Sigmund Freud proposes that schizophrenia is purely psychological, though it cannot be treated with psychoanalysis.

1943 French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre introduces the distinction between the true self and the false self.

1956 Gregory Bateson, British social scientist, defines a "double bind" as an emotionally distressing dilemma in which all the potential resolutions lead to negative consequences.

AFTER

1978 CT brain scans reveal physical differences between chronic schizophrenics and non-schizophrenics.

Mental illness is **not biological**; it is developed through **difficult social interactions**.

Psychosis is a valid and understandable **expression of distress**.

Mental illness should be valued as a **cathartic and transformative** experience.

Psychiatry wrongly **stigmatizes** mental illness because it **does not conform** to social norms.

Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through.

At the end of the 19th century, the notion that mental illness was different in degree—rather than in kind—from the psychological suffering of normal people began to gain acceptance. Sigmund Freud suggested that neurosis and normality are part of the same scale, and that anyone is capable of succumbing to mental disturbance

in dire circumstances. It was from this context that R.D. Laing emerged as the preeminent icon of a new cultural trend.

Biology and behavior

Like Freud, Laing challenged the fundamental values of psychiatry, rejecting its focus on mental illness as a biological phenomenon and highlighting the significance of the

See also: Emil Kraepelin 31 • Sigmund Freud 92–99 • David Rosenhan 328–29

social, cultural, and familial influences that shape personal experience. Although he never denied the grim reality of mental illness, his views were in stark contrast to the accepted medical basis and practice of psychiatry.

Laing's work calls into question the validity of psychiatric diagnosis on the grounds that the accepted process of diagnosing mental disorders does not follow the traditional medical model. Doctors perform examinations and tests to diagnose physical illness, whereas psychiatric diagnosis is based on behavior. According to Laing, there is also an inherent problem in diagnosing mental illness based on conduct, but treating it biologically with drugs. If a diagnosis is based on behavior, then so too should be the treatment. He argues that drugs

also hinder the ability to think, and as a result interfere with the natural process of true recovery.

Approach to schizophrenia

Laing's main work centers on the understanding and treatment of schizophrenia—a serious mental disorder characterized by severe disruptions in psychological functioning—and on explaining it to ordinary people. Schizophrenia, he says, is not inherited, but is an understandable reaction to unlivable situations. He applies social scientist Gregory Bateson's theory of the "double bind," in which a person is put into situations where he or she faces conflicting expectations, and every action leads to negative consequences, resulting in extreme mental distress.

Illness as breakthrough

Laing was revolutionary in viewing the abnormal behavior and confused speech of schizophrenics as valid expressions of distress. For him, psychotic episodes represent attempts to communicate concerns, and should be seen as cathartic and transformative experiences that could lead to important personal insights. Laing accepts that these expressions are difficult to comprehend, but he explains that this is merely because they are wrapped in the language of personal symbolism, which is only meaningful from within. Laing's drug-free psychotherapy tries to make sense of a patient's symbolism by listening in an attentive and empathetic spirit. This is based on the belief that people are healthy in their natural state, and that so-called mental illness is an attempt to return to it. ■



R.D. Laing

Ronald David Laing was born in Glasgow, Scotland. After studying medicine at Glasgow University, he became a psychiatrist in the British Army, developing an interest in working with the mentally distressed. He later trained at the Tavistock Clinic, London, England. In 1965, Laing and a group of colleagues created the Philadelphia Association and started a radical psychiatric project at Kingsley Hall, London, where patients and therapists lived together.

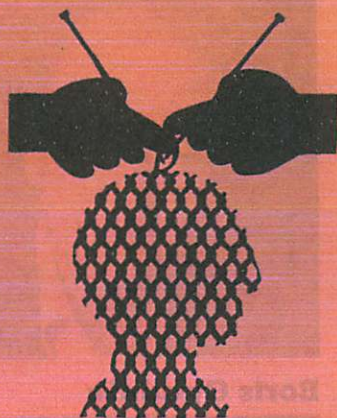
Laing's erratic behavior and spiritual preoccupations in later life led to a decline in his reputation. As he was unable to develop a workable alternative to conventional medical treatment, his ideas are not generally accepted by the psychiatric establishment. Yet his contributions to the anti-psychiatry movement, particularly in family therapy, have had a lasting impact. He died of a heart attack in 1989.

Key works

- 1960 *The Divided Self*
- 1961 *The Self and Others*
- 1964 *Sanity, Madness and the Family*
- 1967 *The Politics of Experience*



Shakespeare's *King Lear* is an iconic example of a man driven mad by difficult circumstances. In Laing's view, Lear's madness is an attempt to return to his natural, healthy, state.



OUR HISTORY DOES NOT DETERMINE OUR DESTINY

BORIS CYRULNIK (1937–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH

Positive psychology

BEFORE

1920s Freud says that early trauma negatively impacts an infant's brain and can override any genetic, social, or psychological resilience factor.

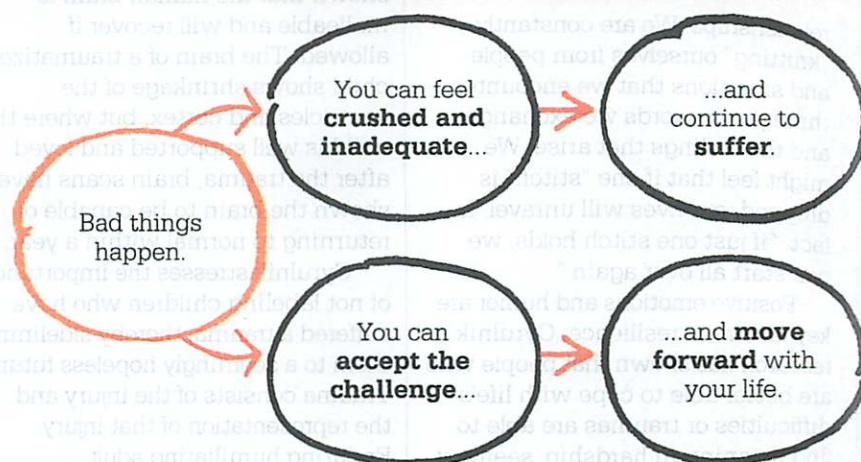
1955–95 A longitudinal study by psychologist Emmy Werner following traumatized children into adulthood suggests that one-third of the population tends toward resilience.

1988 John Bowlby asks for a study of resilience.

AFTER

2007 The UK government starts the UK Resilience Programme in schools.

2012 The American Psychological Association forms a task force on psychological resilience.



When tragedy strikes, some people are devastated. Unable to summon their coping mechanisms, they fall into deep depression or despondency, sometimes losing hope and even the will to carry on. They may become entirely preoccupied with the disaster and suffer nightmares, flashbacks, and anxiety attacks. Other people, however, react differently. They seem to manage not only the normal ups and downs of their lives, but also potentially overwhelming losses and traumas. Instead of becoming depressed and

unable to cope, somehow they are able to deal with painful circumstances and move on.

Boris Cyrulnik is interested in this difference of reaction. To find out why some people are so deeply affected, while others are seemingly able to “bounce back,” he has devoted his career to the study of psychological resilience.

Resilience is not a quality inherent within a person, Cyrulnik found, but one that builds through a natural process. He says that “alone, a child has no resilience... it is an interaction, a relationship.” We build resilience from developing

See also: Sigmund Freud 92-99 ■ John Bowlby 274-77 ■ Charlotte Bühler 336 ■ George Kelly 337 ■ Jerome Kagan 339



After disasters such as tsunamis psychologists have witnessed the formation of resilient communities, characterized by the residents' determination to overcome adversity.

relationships. We are constantly "knitting" ourselves from people and situations that we encounter, through the words we exchange and the feelings that arise. We might feel that if one "stitch" is dropped, our lives will unravel. In fact, "if just one stitch holds, we can start all over again."

Positive emotions and humor are key factors in resilience. Cyrulnik's research has shown that people who are better able to cope with life's difficulties or traumas are able to find meaning in hardship, seeing it as a useful and enlightening experience, and even to find ways to laugh. Resilient people always remain able to see how things may turn out for the better in future, even if the present is painful.

Meeting the challenge

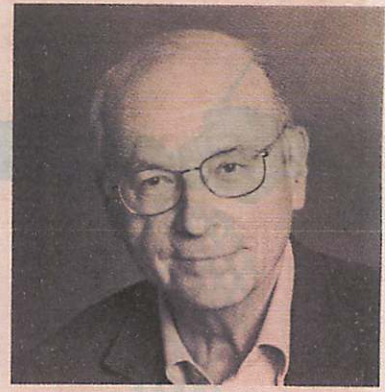
It had previously been thought that people who show more resilience are less emotional in general, but Cyrulnik believed that the pain is no less for resilient people than it is for others; it is a matter of how they choose to use it. The pain may continue, even over a whole lifetime, but for these people it raises a challenge that they decide to meet. The challenge is to overcome what

has happened, to find strength in the experience instead of letting it defeat them, and to use the strength to move defiantly forward. Given the right support, children are especially capable of complete recovery from trauma. Cyrulnik has shown that the human brain is malleable and will recover if allowed. The brain of a traumatized child shows shrinkage of the ventricles and cortex, but where the child is well supported and loved after the trauma, brain scans have shown the brain to be capable of returning to normal within a year.

Cyrulnik stresses the importance of not labeling children who have suffered a trauma, thereby sidelining them to a seemingly hopeless future. Trauma consists of the injury and the representation of that injury. Enduring humiliating adult interpretations of events can be the most traumatic experience. Labels, he says, can be more damaging and damning than the experience. ■

“Resilience is a person's ability to grow in the face of terrible problems.”

Boris Cyrulnik



Boris Cyrulnik

Boris Cyrulnik was born to Jewish parents in Bordeaux, France, shortly before the outbreak of World War II. In 1944, when the Vichy regime controlled unoccupied southern France by arrangement with Germany, his home was raided and his parents were taken to Auschwitz concentration camp. His parents had placed him with a foster family for safety, but within days they turned him over to the authorities for a small reward. He escaped while awaiting transfer to a concentration camp and worked on farms until the age of ten, when he was taken into care. He grew up in France, without any relatives. Largely self-taught, Cyrulnik eventually studied medicine at the University of Paris. Realizing he wanted to reevaluate his own life, he began to study psychoanalysis and later neuropsychiatry. He has devoted his career to working with traumatized children.

Key works

1992 *The Dawn of Meaning*
2004 *The Whispering of Ghosts*
2009 *Resilience*



ONLY GOOD PEOPLE GET DEPRESSED

DOROTHY ROWE (1930–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH

Personal construct theory

BEFORE

1940s Gestalt therapy is founded, introducing the notion that perception influences meaning.

1955 George Kelly publishes *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, outlining the theory that everyone has a set of constructs (beliefs) about the world and the people in it.

1960 Psychologist and statistician Max Hamilton constructs the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D), a tool used to measure clinical depression.

AFTER

1980 Psychologist Melvin Lerner publishes *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*, explaining how we wrongly believe that people get what they deserve.

If people could stop blaming themselves for things that have happened in their lives, the rate of depression would decrease dramatically. This premise is the foundation of Dorothy Rowe's success in treating the problem.

We are generally brought up to believe that the world is a fair and rational place; that if we are good, good things will happen to us. But if things go well when we are good, what does that say about us when things go wrong? Our belief in a "Just World"—where the good are rewarded and the bad punished—makes us blame ourselves for the bad things that happen to us.

When we are wronged or hurt in some way, there is a tendency to ask, "Why did this happen to me?" People look back to see what they did to cause the situation, even in the case of a natural disaster. Self-blame, guilt, helplessness, and shame irrationally arise when bad things happen, and these can lead to depression.

Rowe explained that we create and choose our beliefs. Once we understand this, we can let go of

the idea of a Just World and think more rationally about negative experiences. We might suffer from bad parenting, job loss, or even a devastating tornado, but these things did not happen because we are doomed to misfortune, nor do we deserve to be treated badly. To recover from these setbacks, we need to stop personalizing events, start externalizing them, and realize that sometimes bad things just happen. ■

“

To turn natural sadness into depression, all you have to do is blame yourself for the disaster that has befallen you.

Dorothy Rowe

”

See also: Fritz Perls 112–17 ■ Carl Rogers 130–37 ■ Albert Ellis 142–45 ■ Melvin Lerner 242–43 ■ George Kelly 337



FATHERS ARE SUBJECT TO A RULE OF SILENCE

GUY CORNEAU (1951–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Masculine psychology

BEFORE

1900s Freudian analysts describe the Oedipus complex, which states that sons feel naturally competitive with their father.

1950s French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan argues that the son sees the father as embodying the law.

AFTER

1991 In *Iron John: A Book About Men*, American author Robert Bly says that fathers fail to give their sons what they need to become men, and suggests that they need to reawaken the "Wild Man" within.

1990s American writers Douglas Gillette and Robert L. Moore publish five books exploring Jungian archetypes and the male psyche.

Before French-Canadian analyst Guy Corneau published *Absent Fathers, Lost Sons* in 1991, psychology had given little attention to emotional communication between men. Corneau's book examined the difficulties of intimate conversations between the male generations. He recounts his attempts to make an emotional connection with his own father: reaching out, seeking approval, but receiving only silence.

Withholding approval

Corneau recognizes that this sequence of events is a familiar pattern in men, who are often unable to shower their sons with the praise, affection, or recognition craved by their offspring. When the son experiences this silence, he may try harder to impress, or he might withdraw, but the silence remains irrevocably imprinted in his mind, according to Corneau. The phenomenon may stem from a competitive interplay of male egos; a man who showers his son with praise would somehow be



Communication between fathers and sons is often characterized by silences. While sons long for recognition and approval from their fathers, fathers are reluctant to give this approval freely.

compromising his own power, making it less valuable. From the son's point of view, if approval is given too easily, without some degree of withholding, the father is then no longer worthy of impressing. It appears that in most forms of society there is a belief that men cannot be both strong and open.

Corneau says that this behavior does a disservice to men. They are denied the opportunity to express affection toward their sons—and the sons are forced to go without that affection. ■

See also: Sigmund Freud 92–99 ■ Carl Jung 102–07 ■ Jacques Lacan 122–23