

Aspects Of Social Identity, Self Concept, Self Esteem, Self Functioning And Gender Aspects (Part 9)

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5.1 How does someone become fully functioning

According to humanistic psychology, there is more to life than simply having all of your immediate needs met. Humanistic theorists maintain that people are not content when their immediate needs have been met. Rather, they are motivated to continue their development in a positive manner. Carl Rogers referred to this state as becoming a fully functioning individual. Rogers also says that “The good life” is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination (Carl Rogers,1961). Rogers maintained that we naturally strive to reach an optimal sense of satisfaction with our lives. He called people who reach this goal fully functioning.

Abraham Maslow (1970) used the term self-actualization to describe it. This growth process is assumed to be the natural manner of human development. That is, we progress toward this satisfying state unless certain problems prevent us from doing so. Humanistic therapist allows clients to overcome obstacles or problems and continue growing. Rogers describes this ever-unfolding of one’s self as a “process of becoming”.

This is where Roger’s theory of the development of the self comes into play. Carl Rogers strongly believe that there is one primary motive in life-the motive to self-actualize. This means to develop the self that was meant to be.

5.2 Journey into selfhood: Positive Regard and Conditions of worth.

According to Rogers, all children are born wanting to be loved and accepted by their parents and others. He called this in-born need the desire for **positive regard**. Parents frequently make their positive regards on conditions expressed in the statements. For example, parents push children into sports and the children might stay in sports even though they do not like sports just to earn the love and positive regard of their parents.

The requirement set forth by parents or significant others for earning their positive regard are called conditions of worth. Children may become preoccupied with living up to these condition of worth, rather than discovering what makes them happy. They behave in specific ways to earn the love, respect and positive regard of parents and other significant people in their lives. Positive regard when it must be earned by meeting certain conditions is called conditional positive regard.

Children who experience many conditions of worth may lose touch with their own desire and wants. They begin living their lives in an effort to please others. They become what others want them to become and their self-understanding contains only qualities that others condone. They are moving away from the ideas of a fully functioning person. What matters most is pleasing others. As they reach adulthood, they remain preoccupied with what others think of them. They work primarily for approval from others, not out of their own sense of self-direction. They are dependent on others for positive regard and are constantly looking for the conditions of worth which must be satisfied. They hide their weaknesses, distort their shortcomings and perhaps even deny their faults. They act in ways that make everybody except themselves happy. They have been working to please others for so long that they have forgotten what they want out of life. They have lost self-direction and are no longer moving toward self-actualization.

Rogers believe parents and other significant others should accept the child without conditions, communicating that they love and value the child as the child is. Rogers called this unconditional positive regard. With enough unconditional positive regard, children will know that they will be accepted and loves no matter what they do. Under these conditions, children no longer feel a need to deny thoughts and feelings that might otherwise have led to a withdrawal of positive regard. They are free to experience all of themselves, free to incorporate faults and weakness into their self concepts, free to experience all of life. They trust themselves, follow their own interests and rely on their feelings to guide themselves to do the right thing. In short, they begin to take on the characteristics of a fully functioning person and begin to actualize the selves that they were meant to be.

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