

Carl Rogers' Seven Stages of Process

Carl Rogers' seven stages of process describe how individuals move from psychological rigidity and defensiveness toward emotional openness, self-acceptance and autonomy during person-centred therapy.

Stage 1 (Defensive)

Closed, defensive, resists change and blames external factors.

The client is closed, defensive and completely remote from their feelings.

They blame others for problems and refuse to communicate about themselves.

Stage 2 (Loosening)

Talks about problems, but treats them as external.

The client becomes slightly less rigid.

They talk about external events and other people, but still do not own their feelings or accept personal responsibility.

Stage 3 (Emergence)

Discusses personal experiences, but only in the past tense.

The client begins to talk about themselves, but often as an object or from the past rather than the present.

They struggle to accept current emotions.

Stage 4 (Awareness)

Expresses current feelings but feels intense shame or fear.

The client starts to describe their present, here-and-now feelings.

However, they often feel critical or ashamed of having these deeper emotions.

Stage 5 (Acceptance)

Freely expresses present emotions and takes personal responsibility.

The client freely expresses current emotions and takes clear ownership of their feelings.

They begin to trust their own inner judgment and decision-making.

Stage 6 (Integration)

Experiences vivid, raw breakthroughs where long-held emotional blocks dissolve.

Emotions are felt fully and accepted as they happen, even if they are painful or difficult.

The client experiences deep internal growth and congruence.

Stage 7 (Autonomy)

Self-acceptance, autonomy and openness.

The client has become psychologically fluid and autonomous.

Embracing a moving, changing self with openness to life, they live authentically in the present, trust their feelings and judgments, and exercise personal freedom.