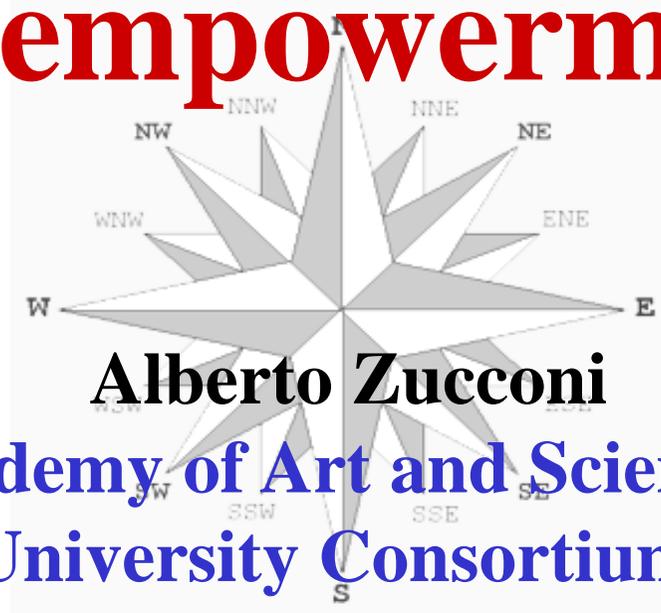


# Power, empowerment and disempowerment



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To manage power constructively and avoid unintentional damage, we need to face that power is a reality, that we have some power and that is important to be aware of how we use it, how others use it, how power is generated, how power is taken away.

To be aware of the uses and abuses of power present in the implicit aspects in our world view, of our professional and relational world.

In this way we will also become more able to empower ourselves and others.

**Empowerment** is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (World Bank, 2007).

**Disempowerment** is the reduction of the power, authority, or influence after which individuals, or groups of organised persons have to make their own choices, decisions and shape their own lives.

**Knowledge is power**

**Ignorance is lack of power**

**Learned helplessness is ignorance plus  
self sabotage**

**Differing narratives, values, concepts of reality, of human nature, generate different relationships, priorities, goals & actions based on strategies of:**

## **Empowerment**

- **Democratic Relationship**
- **Equal rights & opportunities**
- **Promotes responsibility**
- **Bio-psycho-social Paradigm**
- **Health Promotion**
- **Patient Centered Medicine**
- **Biofeedback , neurofeedback**
- **Transparency, shared knowledge**
- **People Centered**
- **Capacity for deep contact, Empathy  
& Respect for all the life forms**
- **Microcredit**

## **Disempowerment**

- Authoritarian Relationship**
- Oppression**
- Promotes passivity**
- Mechanistic- reductionist Paradigm**
- Reductionist Medicine**
- Disease Centered Medicine**
- Electroshock**
- Manipulation of Information**
- Racism, sexism, bigotry etc.**
- Alienation from self, others, depletion of natural  
& human resources**
- Profit to all cost, Subprime caper**

**Why a person, an organization, a community and a nation should be interested in empowerment ?**

**Because everybody wins with empowerment.**

**Empowerment is a win-win solution for all**

# Empowerment at work

Employees empowerment has a **positive impact** on a workplace's quality of work, employee satisfaction, collaboration, productivity, and costs because

- **Employees become more productive**
- **The morale of the workforce improves**
- **Clients satisfaction improves**
- **Lower rates of absenteeism and turn over**

## Empowerment at work

Employees who are granted the power to take charge at work feel an increased sense of responsibility, accountability, and ownership for their work.

They work diligently to meet project deadlines and organizational goals.

They feel energized to do what it takes to get the job done and to do it right.

The Gallop Organization, states that workplaces that empowered and engaged employees have 27% higher profits 50% higher customer loyalty.

(Wagner & Harter, 2006)

# Empowerment in the health professions

**Carl Rogers' critique raised important issues: mechanistic reductionist visions where scientifically outdated and their impact had some risks:**

**Treating people as passive patients increased chances of inducing dependence and learned helplessness, a barrage of diagnostic labeling could become a self fulfilling iatrogenic prophecy, and psychotherapy risked to become a force of political conservatism and people dignity and rights sacrificed to maintain the status quo.**



**Health care has been evolving away from a "disease-centered model" and toward a "patient-centered model." In the older, disease-centered model, physicians make almost all treatment decisions based largely on clinical experience and data from various medical tests.**

**In a patient-centered model, patients become active participants in their own care and receive services designed to focus on their individual needs and preferences, in addition to advice and counsel from health professionals.**

**When patients and providers have a choice among treatment plans, a patient-centered approach has much to recommend it.**

**In such cases, the best treatment strategy depends on the patients' preferences for the different health outcomes that may result from a treatment decision.**

**Mark W. Stanton (2001).**

**Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and National Institute of Mental Health.  
Program announcement. *Patient-centered care: customizing care to meet patients' needs.***

The number of medical home providers has grown to the tens of thousands, serving millions of Americans. Momentum for the model is rapidly increasing with public and private sector investment.

As medical home implementation increases, the Triple Aim outcomes of :

- **better health**
- **better care**
- **lower costs**

**Are being achieved**

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

**U.S. Department of Health & Human Services**

# Empowerment in Education

## Student Centered Education

Spring from the work of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Carl Rogers whose work focused on how students learn and grow.

Student-centred learning moves away from the traditional teacher-centred understanding of the learning process and puts students at the centre of the learning process. Maria Montessori contributed to the student centred learning approach.

For Rogers self discovery is the only significant form of learning.



## **Student Centered Education**

**There is growing evidence that courses with learner-centered approaches—those approaches that use active learning strategies to engage students directly in learning processes**

- enhance academic achievement**
- promote the development of important learning skills, critical thinking,**
- problem solving,**
- work cooperatively with others**

## **Benefits of the student-centered approach:**

Every learner benefits from effective instruction, no matter how diverse their learning needs (Stuart, 1997).

Learner motivation and actual learning increase when Learners have a stake in their own learning and are treated as co-creators in the learning process (McCombs & Whistler, 1997).

Learners that experience success in taking new responsibilities gain self-confidence and self-esteem (Aaronsohn, 1996). National Research Council, & Committee on Learning Research and Educational Practice. (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*

Learners have higher achievement when they succeed thanks to their own abilities and effort.(North Central Regional Laboratory, 2000).

## Power in the helping relationships

As professionals using Person Centered Approaches we facilitate positive change in our clients by supporting and promoting self awareness and self regulation.

We as professionals and as persons can equally benefit from the same process of self awareness and self regulation on the issues of power and professional relationships.

In my opinion, we can and we should promote this awareness in the field of the helping professions and in mainstream society as well, since this is part of the duties of a professional engaged in promoting health and well-being and we have everything to gain from this.

**In order to facilitate the appreciation of our contributions we need to further the understanding of **HOW PSYCHOTHERAPY WORKS****  
**See more clearly if different psychotherapy approaches promote or not the same kind of change.**

**We need to see things in a broader context and use various effective tools.**

**We need to use the combined tools of enquiry including:**  
**History, Philosophy, Sociology of Science,**  
**Sociology of Knowledge,**  
**Sociology of Medicine and Health,**  
**Sociology of Psychology,**  
**Sociology of Psychotherapy,**  
**Sociology of Psychiatry,**  
**Epistemology, Hermeneutics**

**80 year ago the discoveries in the “hard sciences” sprung from the work of Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg and others generated a new, integrated view of the universe based on**

**relationships**

**Rogers' criticism of mechanistic visions of human nature, as well as the dangers of psychopathological labeling, is grounded in a paradigm that had been known to top physicists and biologists since the 1930's.**

**The observer and the instruments used for observation interact with the phenomenon observed and co-construct it.**

**mechanistic and reductionistic vision  
of human nature which in turn  
originate the theories of  
ethiopathology and of treatment of  
disorders.**



**Do all the psychotherapeutic approaches really work in the field of promoting change?**

**Are we effectively protecting and promoting health & well being of individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations, communities?**

**Do we have an **human ecology approach** and do we establish empowering relationships?**

## Empowering Effectively Requires:

- **Cognitive competence** (*to know*)
- **Skills** (*to do*)
- **Attitudes** (*to be*)

### In order to be:

- *Person centred*
- *Group centred*
- *Community centred*
- *Organization centred*
- *Culture centred*

*Empowerment generates Responsibility*

**Respons-ability** = the ability to respond  
more **effectively**

**To be more deeply in touch and  
to behave more congruently**

**Person Centered Approaches are holistic approaches focused on health rather than illness; empowering rather than imposing standardized solutions.**

**They promote the development of potentialities of individuals, groups and organizations through the process of freeing people to be responsible for what they do, rather than encouraging passivity and dependency.**

*Caring, holism and ecology are essential issues in developing strategies for health promotion. Therefore, those involved should take as a guiding principle that, in each phase of planning, implementation and evaluation of health promotion activities, women and men should become equal partners.*

**(WHO, Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986, p. 3 - 4)**

The bio-psycho-social view of health and its determinants is a radical departure from the **mechanistic biomedical approach**. Medical doctors will still treat illnesses, but they will no longer exclusively be focused on disease as they were doing with the bio-medical model.

Health professionals must foster a significant change in the way people understand how health is created and promoted.

WHO, Ottawa Charter, 1986

**Psychotherapy researchers know that the focus of the funding agencies is mostly limited to the individual or the family, not much on the social construction of reality that **attack, pollute and undermine health and well being, human dignity and resilience with large dosages of inequalities, exploitation, racism, sexism, ageism, violence, reification, unemployment...****

**Why this is so?**

..”To enable “*people to increase control over and to improve their health*” **health professionals must adjust their perspectives** Health professionals must become promoters of learning and empowerment. For the health promoter the focus includes individuals, the health system, the workplace, governmental agencies, communities and society in general.”..

**World Health Organization, Ottawa Charter ( 1986)**

# The politics of disempowerment

## Being a Patient may be dangerous to your health!

In addition to the evidence that the health care system in developed nations is both more expensive and less effective than desirable, there is a further, more subtle cost in our way of relating to health care in the industrialized world: **The hidden dangers of being a patient**. Modern medical practice is structured with the doctor at the top of the ladder, with the other health care professionals below and the patient at the bottom rung. Whether healthy or ill, most people in industrialized countries do not experience being in charge of their own health. They have fallen into a pattern of “**learned helplessness**” in regard to their health and well-being.

(Zucconi & Howell, 2003).

**Society need to grasp that the most important natural resource is**

**People**

**We spend a lot of resources in maintenance of infrastructures what about putting people first!**

*Let's be courageous !*

*Let's empower ourselves*

*Let's empower the people  
in our lives*

*Let's have a society and culture that  
effectively promotes empowerment  
and we will have **more able and  
responsible** citizens*



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