

The fully functioning person: a bio-psycho-social viewpoint

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The most valuable natural resource
of every nation, community
or work organization
is

PEOPLE.

WE live in a period of globalization and of growing complexity.

And in order to meet our present and future challenges we need effective ways to cope.

Resilient and creative people are more capable of effective **crisis management** than those who are **poor copers** and as a result are more **vulnerable** and **dysfunctional**.





In the **Anthropocene Era**

promoting processes that protect and foster the development of fully functioning persons, families, groups, organizations and communities is not only of vital importance for human survival and welfare but also for the welfare of the entire **planet.**



*“... the choice of the word ‘**anthropocene**’ was in itself a significant evolutionary step, challenging us all to face the truth about the part we now play in our planet’s life, and begin to accept the responsibilities that come with it.”*

(Walter Truett Anderson, 2012)

Humanistic Psychology instead of focalizing only on pathology has studied people that are particularly healthy and fully functioning, investigating the common denominators of those people

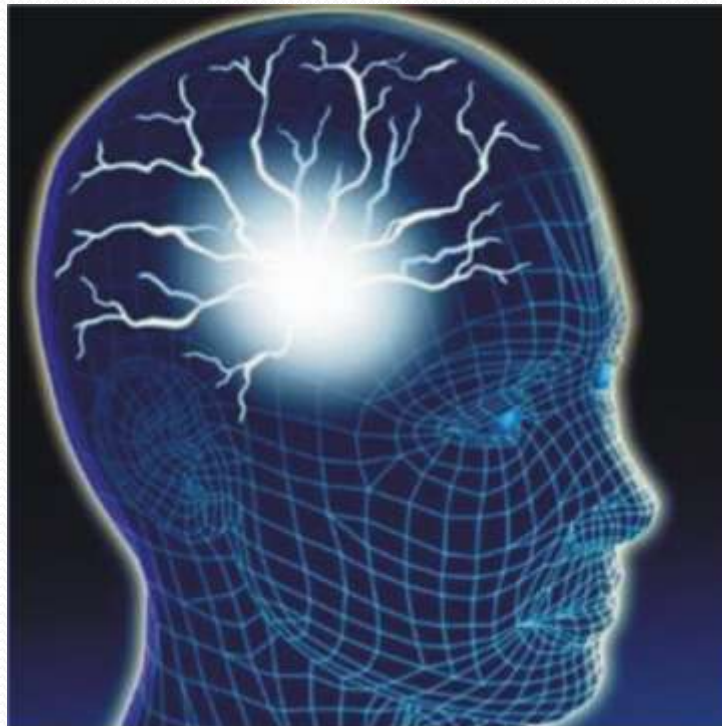
The vision of Human nature in Humanistic Psychology



- From infancy to old age human beings strive to actualize their highest potentials, establish and maintain close mutual connections with others.
- People, possess enormous inner resources for self-regulation and self-healing which can be accessed in the service of recovery and growth.
- Healing and self-actualization is facilitated by participation in relationships characterized by key interpersonal conditions: **mutual respect, warmth, acceptance, genuineness and empathy.**

Theoretical Assumptions of Humanistic Psychology

The origins of psychological distress



All paradigms of psychotherapy are based on a vision of human nature, from which descend their own view of health and illness and the process of what creates disease and pain and what promotes healing, health and well-being.

The humanistic view is that people experience pain when spontaneous movement towards **self-actualization and successful connections** with significant others becomes cut off, blocked, violated or exploited.

If these disconnections or violations occur early in life, or persist over long periods, people develop **defensive psychological coping mechanisms** which further cuts them off from the deeper organismic flow of life.

Self-awareness becomes interrupted and authentic interactions with others become impossible. When this happens vital life satisfactions become unavailable, causing **further distress and alienation** which then may spiral into deeper difficulties which frequently ends up in a crisis.



Kurt Goldstein described **self-actualization** as the tendency to actualize, as much as possible, the organism's individual capacities in the world.

The tendency toward **self-actualization** is the only drive by which the life of an organism is determined.



Abraham Maslow based his theory on his case studies of historical figures whom he saw as examples of **self-actualized individuals** including Albert Einstein, Ruth Benedict, Frederick Douglass, Jane Addams Eleanor Roosevelt, Max Wertheimer, Henry David Thoreau....

Maslow examined the lives of each of these people in order to assess the **common qualities** that led each to become **self-actualized**.

In general he found that these individuals were, accepting of themselves and of their life circumstances; very creative; **focused on finding solutions to cultural problems rather than just to concentrate on personal problems**; open to others' opinions and ideas; had a strong sense of privacy, autonomy, human values and appreciation of life; and a few intimate friendships rather than many superficial ones.

They also all reported the frequent occurrence of **peak experiences** . These occasions were marked by feelings of harmony and deep meaning: feeling at one with the universe.



For Carl Rogers human nature has a fundamental tendency, the **actualizing tendency** where **self-awareness** generates **self-regulation**.

According to Rogers the human organism has an underlying "**actualizing tendency**", which aims to develop all capacities in ways that maintain or enhance the organism and **move it toward autonomy.**

This tendency is directional, constructive and present in all living things.

The concept of the actualizing tendency encompasses all motivations; tension, need, or drive reductions; and creative as well as pleasure-seeking tendencies a drive to fulfill the genetic blueprint.

Each person thus has a fundamental mandate to fulfill their potential.

The research of Carl Rogers on the **fully functioning person** found the following **common denominators**:

- Self aware, integrated, in touch, deep, authentic, trusting, creative, good capacity for affiliation and communication, balanced and realistic
- Psychological health, maturity, existential depth, effective self-regulation, respect for themselves and others
- Openness to experience (instead of the rigid defense stance of the person feeling under threat)
- Personality: mature, fluid, absence of rigidity / fundamentalism
- Maximum of adaptability
- Trust in themselves, their organism, their intuition, feelings and their values
- Sense of direction, purpose, leadership qualities

The process of the fully functioning person is seen by Rogers as a challenge:

“This process is not, I am convinced, a life for the faint-hearted.

It involves the stretching and growing of becoming more and more of one's potentialities.

It involves the courage to be.”

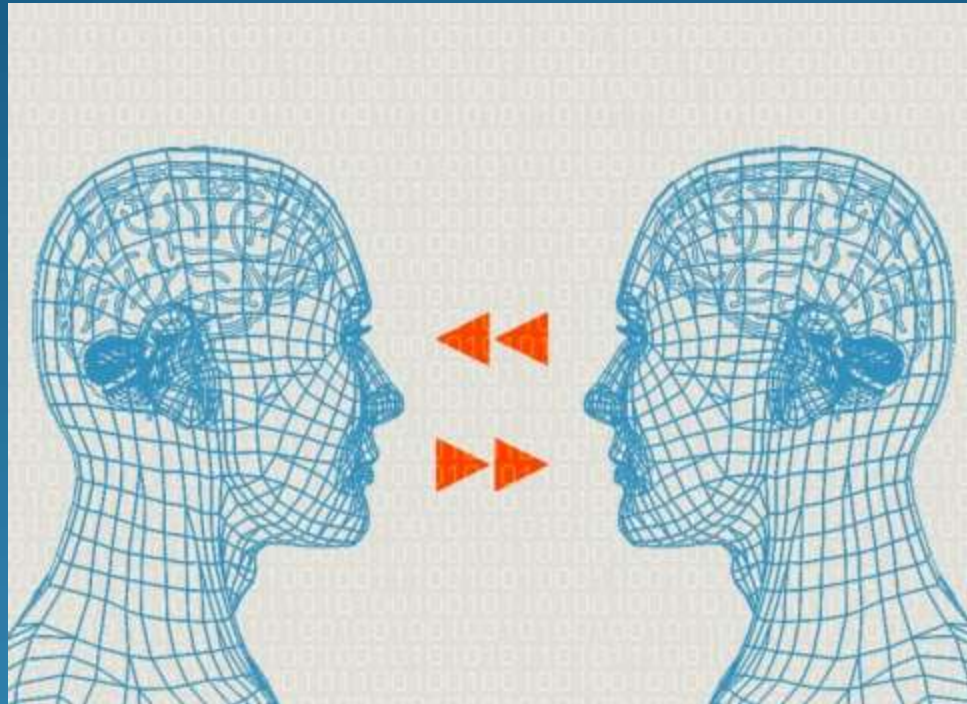
(Carl Rogers 1961)

Carl Rogers' research over the last 70 years has identified specific qualities in relationships which promote the development of fully functioning people as well as the healing of partially functioning people:

Respect

Empathic understanding

Authenticity/congruence (deep contact)



**People that are related to in this
nourishing way tend to reproduce
these qualities in their
new relationships.**

Unfortunately, this also tends to hold true in the **opposite case**:

when people are related to in unhealthy, dysfunctional, demeaning, disrespectful and violent ways they tend to suffer from such mistreatment and tend to reproduce the same relational patterns with others;

their **capacity of contact with their inner core is lost, self-regulation becomes impaired** and as a result they become rigid and defended and **risk fragmentation**.

We need to be aware on how we construe our experiences of what we call reality: the relationship with ourselves, the others, the world.



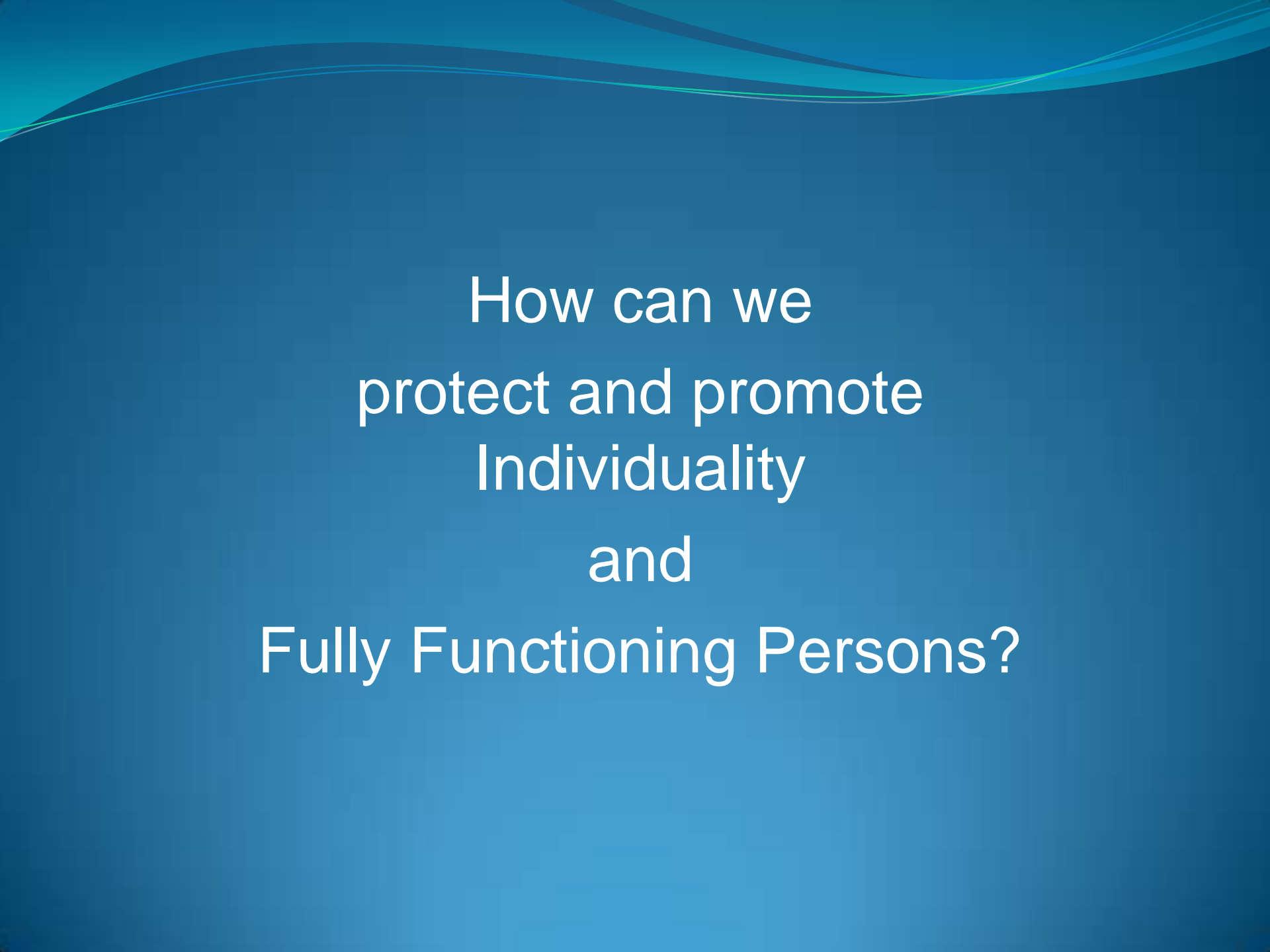
We need **more** people that relate to themselves, to others and to the planet with **more**

Respect

Empathy

Authenticity/congruence (deep contact)





How can we
protect and promote
Individuality
and
Fully Functioning Persons?

By fostering the conditions that protect and promote individuality in all the processes of the construction of reality, identity, social roles and behaviors.

By relating to others in respectful, emphatic, genuine and congruent ways and applying them as the relational foundations in:

- ***Parenting***
- ***Schooling***
- ***Workplaces***
- ***Community***
- ***Society***
- ***Culture***

*Each of us is part of the daily
social construction of reality.*

Are we part of the solution

or

are we part of the problem?

A pair of hands is shown from the wrists up, cupping a glowing, translucent Earth. The Earth is depicted with swirling blue and white patterns, suggesting clouds and oceans, and it has a bright, ethereal glow. The hands are positioned symmetrically on either side of the globe, with fingers slightly curled. The background is dark, making the glowing Earth and the hands stand out. Overlaid on the center of the Earth is the text "Hvala! Grazie! Thank you!" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

Hvala!
Grazie!
Thank you!

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