

# 11 An Experiential Version of Unconditional Positive Regard

*Marion H. Hendricks<sup>1</sup>*

My client is an elderly gentleman in his seventies. He has been talking about a new sense of opening he felt on his vacation, which he would like to keep. It is unusual for him to feel good, rather than depressed, fearful and angry. I feel pleased and then disappointed. I fall into a very un-client-centered exchange.

*C: What was so special about being at the retreat center, is I had a number of people who said to me in one way or another, 'John, you are of some value.'*

*T: So that good feeling has to do with being in a relationship with other people who feel you as valuable.*

*C: (angrily) Well, that's a dead end.*

*T: No, don't do that. Don't collapse.*

*C: There is nothing here (in New York) for me . . . not relationships.*

*T: (impatiently) If that's what you need, then the next thing is to sense how do you get that for yourself?*

*C: (Silence) Well, I guess I see it as just some kind of lovely vacation away from my usual self.*

My client's good feeling disappears into an angry, hopeless emotion. He does not now let a felt sense form in his body of relating with others who find him valuable. He only knows that such relating *did* feel good during his vacation. He short-circuits letting his body feel that now, because he doesn't see any concrete way it could happen now in his life. He does not know that staying with a felt sense of what would be right opens situations and some step may then form or become possible. He predefines any positive step as impossible. I feel frustrated that he continually creates 'dead ends'.

He goes on to tell me why he can't pursue what he needs. He says he can't be sure that any move he might make would work out.

*T: Right, there is no guarantee, but that doesn't mean you don't pursue where you feel openings for your life.*

*C: (Sigh) To do that you have to be interested in your life.*

*T: Right.*

*C: You have to care for yourself. I think I am quite deficient there.*

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He sounds resigned, angry. Again, no sense forms in him of what he might do from here, or how he might work with this. He has defined this inability to care about his life as his central problem many times. The manner in which he does this makes it another 'dead end'.

He feels angry and depressed and I feel frustrated and angry too. I am firing directives at him: 'Don't do that. Do this.' This is certainly not an interaction characterized by Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR)! My client is attacking himself, and I am attacking him. He insists that he has no capacity for change. We are both angry. I definitely don't feel prizing and warm towards him. I wish to change him so that he will care for himself.

As client-centered therapists, we all know how we want to feel towards our clients — prizing, valuing without any conditions. ' . . . a warm, positive and acceptant attitude toward what is in the client . . . 'not simply accept the client when he is behaving in certain ways and disapprove of him when he behaves in other ways . . . outgoing positive feelings without reservations, without evaluations' (Rogers, 1961 p. 62). We all wish to feel this way. But how does it come about that one does so? UPR isn't something we can simply 'decide' to feel.

### **FIRST PROBLEM: UPR AS A 'POSITION'**

How do I prize and feel warmly towards someone who is repetitively angry, stuck, depressed, cannot process his feelings and attacks me for not changing him? I can deny 'negative' feelings, in order to feel only prizing and warmly towards my client. I can 'have' UPR but not be congruent or I can be congruent and not prize my client. This is the tension between therapist congruence and therapist UPR, which has been discussed for years.

In practice, we have ways to meet this problem which may seem to be UPR, but are not. We may commit ourselves to the *position* that we value our client no matter what. We do this by remaining unaffected by clients in any upsetting way. We 'value' them 'no matter what', as if who they are or what they do doesn't affect us. We maintain our even-toned 'care'. We say to ourselves, 'My client is doing the best she can.' Or, 'I care about you, but I don't like your behavior.' We may 'remain empathic' in order to move away from our negative emotions, putting us in an incongruent state. We try not to become disturbed, angry or feel disgusted.

On the other hand, in our close life relationships, we often feel anger, fear, disgust. We wish our spouse or our children would change, so that they or we will feel better or so they will better fit our needs. Experiencing the 'otherness' of close people is terribly annoying. Because they are the way they are, we don't get what we need. The cat cries and wakes me up at night. My husband likes the temperature boiling hot, whereas I can't sleep unless the room is cool. I am frightened and furious that my teenage daughter likes to go to Manhattan night- clubs.

We don't often have 'negative' feelings with our clients, partly because what they do or experience does not impact so strongly on our own lives. We go home after the hour; maybe we think of them and feel concern, but they are not centrally important to our sense of well-being. But the definition of UPR cannot rest on this relative distance of their lives from ours. *It will be one thesis of this paper that UPR is not a prizing that depends on this distance.* If UPR depended on distance,

we could never have such an interaction with our close people. Something we are not capable of with our loved ones, cannot be what UPR means with our clients. There is a more genuine, deeper kind of UPR that doesn't depend on this insulated, 'hothouse' effect.

We need a definition of UPR that encompasses the whole range of feelings. *There is a kind of UPR in which I might well feel anger, disgust, disapproval towards my clients.* This sounds impossible by definition, but I will develop a concept of UPR in which we needn't constrict the range of our response to the client. This may help solve the problem of the contradiction between UPR and congruence.

### **SECOND PROBLEM: I CARE ABOUT YOU BUT I DON'T KNOW YOU**

My mother loves me. She always will, no matter what I might do. She would do anything she could to help me. She has provided unwavering stability in the background of my life. This sounds like UPR. Her care is unconditional. However, I do not feel prized by my mother.

Positive regard is not something we feel without really knowing a particular person. My mother does not know who I am. My mother has 'UPR' for 'her daughter', no matter who that might be. UPR is not a permanent positive feeling for 'my clients', apart from a particular person actually in interaction with me at a given moment.

UPR arises in a particular interaction and it is not well understood as a pre-defined 'attitude' on the part of the therapist. The problem is when the care arises from an abstraction, rather than out of really knowing the client. Holding any predefined position interferes with knowing the actual person. 'In order to accept a person you must clearly know him or her. Therefore, accurate empathy can be seen as the main vehicle for building acceptance and positive regard . . . Now that I really know you, I can also accept you' (Braaten 1998).

While empathy is a way we really know someone, I distinguish the warmth within an empathic interaction from UPR. In empathy, we experience how it is to be the client, as though we were she. In a sense, we put ourselves aside, except to allow the client's experience to register in us, as it is for her. We feel the sense that the client's experience makes, as well as feelings of care. Even if the contents being dealt with are painful, angry, sad, this manner of process feels good in the client and therapist. In an empathic interaction we do not form judgments, and thus rarely feel negative emotions. There is a large sense of warmth and connection. Perhaps Rogers meant this warmth as being UPR. But I believe equating the warm feeling in empathy with UPR gives rise to the seeming contradiction between congruence and UPR. In a UPR interaction, we do not put ourselves aside, and we may feel negative emotions.

### **THIRD PROBLEM: I WANT MY CLIENT TO CHANGE**

Most clients come to us because they want change. We all wish change for a person who is suffering, so she will suffer less. And yet, our concept of UPR seems to require that we look away from our wish for change. The concept of UPR I will

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develop can encompass our wish that change would happen, rather than forcing us to pretend that we don't want this.

To summarize these three problems:

- UPR seems to contradict congruence when we have 'negative' emotions in response to the client.
- 'Valuing' clients comes from a formula or definition rather than arising in an interaction.
- We have to pretend that we do not want change for our clients.

I will develop an experiential version of UPR that will help with these problems.

## **THINKING AT THE EDGE (TAE)<sup>1</sup>**

The TAE procedure for experiential theory-building can be found on the Focusing website ([www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org)). It has 14 steps, some of which I will show here. In experiential theory-building we start from what we 'know' in experience and cannot yet say. We go beyond preconceived ideas and begin freshly from our unique felt sense of what we know. I will use the TAE process to articulate my felt sense of UPR. I have many years of experience as a client-centered therapist from which to speak. Using this method, I will make new distinctions that should give us more ways to speak about UPR and to have UPR interactions.

### **Let a felt sense form**

Rather than starting with what other people have written or said about UPR, I bring my attention into my body and ask inside, 'What do *I* know about this whole thing about UPR?' I wait and let a sense form in my body of all that I know about UPR. This is bodily felt and does not yet have words. This is a felt sense.

Then the TAE procedure asks me to write a rough first sentence that says my felt sense of UPR. I let words emerge directly from my felt sense.

UPR is an interaction in which I feel that I and the other person are perfect, exactly as we are, and I have no wish to change myself or the other.

You can notice that my felt sense seems to exclude negative emotions (the first problem), relates to the unique person, rather than to a role (the second problem), and involves no wish to change myself or the client (the third problem).

Next I collect an example of when I actually experienced this sense of UPR. I felt UPR for my daughter recently. She said to me, 'This is just the way I am — joyful, anxious, smart, obsessive, crazy. This isn't caused by some hidden trauma, which, if I found it, would make everything fine. This is just who I am.' I felt upset. I focused on why I was upset. It seemed to me, by calling herself 'obsessive' and 'crazy', she was defining herself in boxes/concepts. This puts her out of touch with who she really is. As I articulated this, I realized *I* was defining her, through what she said, and that I didn't need to, because, for me, there is no such thing as boxes. Then I felt that she is completely perfect exactly as she is and that I could

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1. See appendix A

never wish to change her in any way.

Now we have my beginning sentence about UPR and an example of it. If you would like to, you could find your own particular sense of UPR, write a sentence and find an example.

### **No words fit; any words fit**

A next step in TAE is to find what exceeds logic in your 'knowing' and cannot be said in the usual terms. Then you write a paradoxical sentence that captures this illogic.

UPR is an interaction in which I feel that I and my client are perfect in our imperfection, right now.

The TAE method rests on a certain relationship between language and a felt sense. If we look at the public meaning of the words we are using, we can see that we don't mean exactly what they say. We experience, 'That's not what I mean!' Then we must return to our unique felt sense and further articulate what we do mean. By 'perfect', I don't mean the dictionary definition of living up to some ideal standard. So I must return to my felt sense and say, 'Well then what do I mean?' Now a new phrase comes from my felt sense. I mean that a person is inherently a kind of '*flow or motion*'.

Now we again see if we mean the usual definition of this second phase. By motion I don't mean moving from one location to the other. I mean a kind of openness that *exceeds any definition*. But by that I don't mean formless or vague. The openness I mean is a feeling that I can take in the other person without any barriers. There are *no obstructions*. I feel in a *joyful thickness* with the other person.

Now we have an expanded sentence about UPR:

UPR is an interaction in which I and my client are perfect, in motion, exceeding definitions, no obstructions . . . and I feel in a joyful thickness and don't wish to change her or myself in any way.

We already begin to have more language with which to speak about UPR.

### **Expanding what each word means by writing fresh, linguistically unusual sentences**

The point in this first phase of TAE is to generate fresh language that cannot be understood in old concepts. Since we are trying to say something from our own particular knowing, which can never be identical to someone else's knowing, we need a fresh use of language. The usual meanings of words are not likely to convey our new knowing. These steps are fun to do. A great richness comes.

I go further into my felt sense of my knowing about UPR. I go back to each phrase or word I used above and let it now bring out from my felt sense, new and odd sentences, which can surprise even me, but which feel like what I 'mean' by UPR. I find I want to say: by 'exceeding definitions', I mean that a person is a *vast textured aliveness, always inherently untwisting*.

Now I have a new phrase, 'inherently untwisting'. This is not a phrase that has

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a public meaning. It probably cannot be understood, but at least it will not be taken to mean some commonly defined idea. Now I can continue to ask into my felt sense what I mean by 'inherently untwisting'.

By 'inherently untwisting' I mean a *spiral movement of turning backwards into itself in such a way that it comes back out in its own forward motion*. Then there is no obstruction.

By 'unobstructed' I mean there are no *discrete shapes* (definitions) between which there would be gaps which can't be gotten over. There is *no gap or hole* in existence.

Again, these sentences do not make much sense in the public language. Just because they don't, they can begin to bring a new intricacy from my knowing of UPR. Each of these sentences checks out with my body felt sense: 'Yes, that is what I mean.'

By 'not defined' (discrete shapes) I mean not trapping our clients in a concept. Definitions hold you suspended within themselves, *stopping growth*. By defining, I mean *standing at a distance* from myself or another and imposing a concept, a fixed shape or pattern. I make the client into an instance of a concept and then *relate to the 'meanings' of that concept*. I proceed from the concept, rather than remaining in the interaction. I '*empty out*' the person and end up with a set of meanings. *Definitions twist people into shapes that constrain inherently untwisting*.

### **Collect facets**

The next step is to collect facets. Facets include anything that relates to the felt sense of the 'knowing' you are tracking. They include times when it came up, what someone said that related to it, any incidents that relate to it, even if we cannot tell ourselves why they are relevant. One reason we collect facets is because any instance is superior to a higher order generalization. When you have a generalization there is nothing further inside it. An instance has specificity. Any real life event has complex structure. It can answer a question.

Here are two facets that have in them the experience of what I 'know' UPR to be:

- Another client says that he is struggling to let himself be as depressed as he feels right now in the session, rather than covering it up to himself or to me, in order to be acceptable. He says that he wants to be as he is rather than performing. I notice how welcoming I feel towards both his 'depressed' experience and his struggle to let himself be seen by me. I have an image of my husband and his 'depressed' moods. I have always had difficulty with them. Suddenly I feel an overwhelming love for him, exactly as he is. I love him *in his depressedness*. I feel that if he had been different, even by one iota, the universe would have suffered an irreparable loss. A life is such a big thing, a mystery, that one can only feel awed. This was a moment of what I mean by UPR.
- I have a client who has what I mean by UPR for herself and others. She says, '*I don't have to do anything*. I don't have to know what is next. *I don't need to erect boundaries to protect myself*.' She doesn't manipulate her own or anyone else's experience.

These are two facets of my 'knowing' about UPR.

### Some terms in which to talk about UPR

After some more TAE steps, not shown here, I end up with terms that are logically and inherently linked in a sentence. Each of my main words and phrases has been linked with all the others. By the processes of logic, I can then substitute any one term for another and generate sentences, some of which will say more about UPR than I started with in my felt sense.

You can see in the Table below my main terms for talking about UPR — *Inherently Untwisting*, *Definitions (fixed shapes)*, and *Not Protecting*— and some of the detail that is built into each term. The first two sentences are examples of linking sentences between my terms, which define a UPR interaction.

#### CENTRAL SENTENCES GENERATED BY INTERLOCKED AND INHERENTLY CONNECTED TERMS

When I don't **define** myself or my client, our interaction is ***inherently untwisting***

*Terms: definitions and inherently untwisting.*

When I am **not protecting** myself, the interaction is ***inherently untwisting***

*Terms: not protecting and inherently untwisting*

#### OTHER PHRASES LINKED INTO THE TERMS

##### ***INHERENTLY UNTWISTING INVOLVES:***

*turning back into itself to come out with its own forward movement*  
*joyful-thickness*  
*a vast expanse of textured aliveness*  
*sadness, anger, hate . . . untwisting by themselves*  
*unobstructed existence (no gaps between fixed shapes)*

##### ***DEFINITIONS (FIXED SHAPES) INVOLVE:***

*standing at a distance and imposing a fixed pattern*  
*trying to change myself or another by rearranging the person from the outside*  
*disconnecting us from ourselves and the other person*  
*twisting people by putting them into fixed patterns*  
*making people into categories and sets of meanings*  
*a person is inherently not contacted from a distance*

##### ***NOT PROTECTING INVOLVES:***

*not doing*  
*not standing at a distance*  
*untwisting happening by itself*  
*crossing, interaffecting, being changed by each other*  
*felt sensing; connecting to the flow of experience*

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### **MY EXPERIENTIAL VERSION OF UPR**

Now we can use these experientially derived and logically linked terms to talk about UPR.

UPR is an interaction in which people inherently untwist by not protecting themselves with definitions. They exceed definitions, and participate in a joyful, thick, textured aliveness.

#### **Definitions block UPR**

As I said earlier, defining means that we stand at a distance from our client and relate to a concept. We drop out the person. As client-centered therapists we know the violence it is to a person to be considered an instance of a category, whether it is diagnostic or interpretive. When we define someone, we trap them and ourselves in a discrete explicit entity or form.

Let us return to the session with which we began this chapter. This is a few minutes later. Both my client and I are still angry and stuck.

*C: Well, I felt at the retreat center that people were kind to me. I don't feel that here, in the city. (Sigh) I don't know how to get out of this thing. To have lived with my mother for so many years. To have been totally ignored, in a way that YOU (angry) have never understood. As Tony said to me, 'your mother did the worst possible thing. She didn't hate you, she made you hate yourself.'*

He and I have been here many times. He does not differentiate further from this point. If I respond to this content about his mother in any way — reflecting, asking about it, being receptively silent, trying to empathically feel what that must have been like, he gets agitated and depressed. After such a session, he may not sleep well for several days and will take medication to calm himself. This is another dead end. Feeling exasperated, I think to myself, 'You lived with the lady for 17 years and without her for 58 years! Can't we get on from here!'

Why am I angry at my client? What has happened in our interaction? *He has defined himself and I have accepted his definition of himself: 'I am a person who will always hate myself.'* He is standing at a distance from his experience and defining himself in terms of a pattern, rather than sensing his whole situation, which included a new openness he felt during his vacation. I feel thrown out of interaction with him by this definition. If he is only a pattern, how can I care for him? I feel as if there is no one there to relate to. In a UPR interaction, I would not feel his self-hating as a fixed shape. In a UPR interaction, I would prize the 'him' that is also partly *in his self-hating*. I was not able to do this.

I joined him in looking at himself from a distance. He disconnected from his experience, and I disconnected from his experience. We are both seeing him through a pattern. I have also become disconnected from my own on-going experience of him. He became static and flat *to me*.

My client is also standing at a distance from me. I feel unvalued by him. He is angry at me because I have not changed him, and because I have not understood his experience. It is true that I don't know how to change him and that I don't understand his experience. He is defining me as someone who should understand



and should know how to change him. He has often said to me, 'I don't know how to change my self-hate. *You* should know how to change that. Isn't that what being a therapist means?' *He has put me into a definition, 'the therapist who should but does not help him'*. When he does this, he is not in interaction with me. I feel wiped out as a person.

Trapped in definitions, my client and I want to control and change each other. I want him to stop short-circuiting his untwisting by always claiming, 'Because of my mother, I cannot change.' He wants me to be a 'better therapist' and change him! We are not in interaction. We are each relating to our definitions of the other.

### **UPR is a particular interaction, not an unchanging attitude**

Our usual definition of UPR seems to say that we should not feel positively sometimes and negatively sometimes in response to our clients. This variation is commonly called 'conditions of worth'. If I feel positively about a client when she is discussing B, but disturbed when she discusses A, my regard is said to be 'conditional'. The 'positive' side of this response is not the 'positive' that Rogers intended in UPR, because it is to only certain client traits or behavior. The intended meaning of UPR is that 'positive' regard does not depend on *any* definable way the client is being. I am trying to show a way that this becomes possible. UPR involves staying with the flow of experience, even if we see things which we would define negatively or positively. To stay with the flow of experience, rather than patterns, is to remain in interaction.

### **UPR is not a trait which a therapist 'has'**

UPR is a particular kind of interaction which does not always happen. Interaction *means* not standing at a distance, not categorizing or judging the client. Judging is an assignment of fixed shapes and takes us out of interaction. Because UPR is a kind of interaction, rather than a property of the therapist, it is sometimes present and sometimes not, depending on the particular interaction. If I demand UPR from myself as an automatic trait, then I am standing at a distance, outside of myself. I am trapped in my definition that a therapist should experience UPR. I put away my experience, thereby becoming unavailable for the kind of interaction I am defining as being really UPR. It is empirical whether UPR will arise in any particular interaction or not. It becomes important to ask how a UPR interaction arises.

### **If we stay in the flow of experience, we don't need to protect ourselves**

When we lose the flow of experience and have only a definition, then we need to protect ourselves from the meanings of the definition. When my daughter said, 'I am obsessive,' I took that as defining her. I felt scared. I disconnected from her and felt only the *meanings of the definition*. The meanings scared me. I 'emptied her out' by relating to meanings instead of a person. I am standing at a distance, unavailable for interaction. I am enclosed in the definition and the definition generates emotions in me. Definitions can generate positive emotions as well as

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negative ones. These also are not a UPR interaction. When we don't lose the flow of experience, then we don't need to protect ourselves from the meanings of definitions and we become available to interact in a UPR manner.

Not defining is not just an absence. How do we not define? Or how do we let go of definitions we have made? We can directly refer to the on-going flow of experience at any moment by bringing our attention into the body and sensing, 'how is this whole thing for me right now?' By this simple move we stop defining our experience. We directly enter a sense of intricacy and complexity, which does not yet even have words. By asking internally into this complexity the body stirs, responds and moves. This movement is life inherently untwisting. After many experiences of this untwisting, a bodily knowledge develops that definitions and emotions are not opaque entities like stones. It is their own nature to arise and untwist. *It is because a felt sense exceeds definitions and emotions, that a UPR interaction can include definitions and emotions.*

The capacity to perceive definitional patterns is a unique human power. Patterns are involved in all typically human acts and productions and are inherent in any experience. The felt sense comes after this capacity, not before it. The vast texture does not wipe away any definition, but always exceeds any definition and also any emotion. It is because a felt sense exceeds definitions and emotions, that a UPR interaction can include definitions and emotions.

### **Emotions untwist by themselves in a UPR interaction**

What is twisted, stuck, painful has implicit movement. There is even a sense in which the twisted gives rise to untwisting. Untwisting inheres in twistedness. From inside the vast texture, emotions like sadness, anger, fear are simply part of the person being perfect exactly as she is right now. If it were possible to displace these painful emotions, other than by untwisting, the untwisting that inheres in them would be lost and there would be a loss or a hole in creation.

When I felt UPR for my husband, it wasn't that I no longer saw or had reactions to his depressed moods. In the moment of UPR, I felt them quite clearly, and still didn't like them, but I loved him exactly as he is — which includes his depressed moods. We can't, and would not wish to parcel out what we will include as being *this person*.

However, to say that a person is perfect in her painful emotions, does not mean that we white-wash suffering. It is always right to alleviate suffering. I remember my daughter saying to me when she was about 12 years old, 'Mommy, it used to be if I were scared you could make it all go away. Now you can't anymore.' It was right to 'make it all go away' when I could. In our early interaction, her fears untwisted and her body relaxed. Later, her body knew when some different way of dealing with her painful feelings became right.

When a person is outside of a UPR interaction, emotional pain seems to be a fixed shape. Within a UPR interaction, we experience that painful emotions come and go on their own, as part of the vast texture of aliveness. This inherent untwisting is 'wiser' than any manipulation from the outside.

### **A UPR interaction is in the texture of aliveness**

What happens if we don't define ourselves or our clients? That which is more than definitions appears. This 'more' is a vast texture of aliveness which, without exception, exceeds any definition at any point. It includes verbal exchange and even definitions, but it is a vast, inexhaustible texture. It is not that we are lost in this vast texture. It is rather that *the vast texture is this person*. This person is irreplaceably different than any other person, not because of any content. *The content is different because it is generated by her texture*. So even if we say the exact same words, or both feel the same emotions, as soon as we go further we are immediately different. I am also a vast texture. The crossing<sup>2</sup> of two 'more than defined' people, from both sides, generates possibilities that cannot ever be predefined.

I am here deriving the non-directiveness of client-centered therapy. I can offer an additional understanding of what non-directiveness actually is. It is not that we never suggest something to a client or answer a question. The content of a specific UPR interaction can never be prescribed. To hold to any particular form of behavior (e.g. reflecting, not answering a question) on the basis of theory is to define, rather than to be in the vast texture. *Rather than being a particular behavior, non-directiveness is our deep bodily recognition that anything we can know (define) about the client does not limit what can happen.*

### **THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE IMPLICIT: A NEW KIND OF CONCEPT**

Shifting to a philosophical level, I will point to a new kind of concept that is being used here. The TAE process I used to build an experiential theory of UPR is the process which was used to generate 'A Process Model' (Gendlin, [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org)) and other writings on the 'Philosophy of The Implicit'. This kind of concept-making was entwined in Rogers' re-formulation of client-centered therapy. (Rogers, 1959). Client-centered therapy has been difficult to convey to colleagues because its basic approach to therapy and people is so different and there are not commonly understood concepts with which to explain it. It has been accused of being simple, but, on the contrary, it expresses a new more complex paradigm badly needed today. We can use concepts from 'A Process Model' to communicate and further articulate client-centered therapy. I will briefly discuss one relevant concept.

#### **Interaction-first concepts**

Interaction-first concepts start with the assumption that, in some sense, body and environment are one.

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2. ' . . . you affect me and with me you are not just yourself as usual either. You and I happening together make us immediately different than we usually are. Just as my foot cannot be the locking kind of foot pressure in water. We occur differently when we are the environments of each other. How you are when you affect me is already affected by me and not by me as I usually am, but by me as I occur with you' (Gendlin, 1997 p.33).

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Body and environment are one event, one process. It is air-coming-into-lungs. We can view this event as air (coming in) or as lungs (a coming into). Either way it is one event, viewed as environment or as body. Here we are not calling it 'environment' because it is all around, but because it participates within the life process. And, 'body' is not just the lungs, but the lungs expanding. Air coming in and lungs expanding cannot be separate. We need not split between the lungs and air' (Gendlin, 1997, p. 1).

Even though lungs and air do not look alike, internal to the behavior of breathing, they are one.

In this philosophy any defined entity or anything fixed is the product of a process. It takes a special kind of process to keep something the same over and over. This reverses the order in which we usually think. We usually start from separated entities and then see them acting upon each other.

Breathing is an example at a most basic, physiological level. At a more complex level, the body and the situation/environment are one in behavior.

When an animal hears a noise, many situations and behaviors will be implicit in its sense of the noise, places to run to, types of predators, careful steps, soundless moves, turning to fight, many whole sequences of behavior (Gendlin, 1997, p. 7).

When we come to the human level, our body-situation interaction includes language, emotions, cultural routines, other people, the past, the future and vastly more. Even our breathing is affected by our 'situational', not just our physical environment. Humans have a capacity to form a 'bodily felt sense' of our situations. We can become able to refer directly to this sense, in which our bodies and our situations are one process.

I used an interaction-first concept when I said that UPR is not an attitude inside the therapist; it is, rather, an interaction. To say UPR is an attitude in the therapist, which the client may or may not perceive, assumes that we first have two separated entities: a therapist, inside of whom there is an 'attitude', and in a different location a client who may or may not 'perceive' this attitude. Then we have the problem of getting these separated entities in contact with each other. I reversed this. A new kind of interaction makes new participants. A UPR relationship can make for therapeutic change because it is an interaction process. This interaction re-creates the two individuals. Because both people are involved in a *single* interaction, the quality of the process necessarily changes how the client experiences herself. She now experiences herself as she is with the therapist who is experiencing her.

To say that the client might not perceive the therapist's UPR or prizing attitude assumes that these prizing feelings are entities inside the therapist, rather than a kind of interaction. *This implies that the client's experience of the therapist is not part of the therapist's UPR.* Rather than thinking of the therapist attitude as a content in the therapist and rather than thinking of the client's feelings as 'contents' which the therapist has warm feelings about, we can clarify the situation. 'Warm feelings' are interactions. Un a UPR interaction the vast texture determines the feeling quality beyond the fixed contents.

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**APPENDIX 1**

<b>TAE STEPS</b>	<b>HOW TO DO THE TAE STEPS</b>
<b>Steps 1–5 Words from the felt sense</b>	<b>Steps 1–5 Words from the felt sense</b>
<p><b>1 Let a felt sense form</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose something you ‘know’ and cannot yet say, that wants to be said. Write it down in a few paragraphs in a very rough way.</li> <li>• <b>Have this knowing as a distinct felt sense to which you can always return.</b> Write that in one sentence, even though the sentence doesn’t really say it. Underline one key word or phrase in the sentence.</li> <li>• Think of one instance, example, or time when it actually happened. Write that instance down.</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Non-logical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be particularly attentive to anything that does not make the usual logical sense.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1 Let a felt sense form</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose something you care about, something you are tracking but cannot well say. It needs to be in a field in which you are knowledgeable and experienced. Do not start with a question, but with something that you ‘know.’</li> <li>• Let yourself sense the whole felt sense of this. What in this do you ‘know’ and wish to articulate? Sense what is live <b>for you</b> in it. And within this, again, what is the live point <b>for you</b> in it? When you sense this central crux, write a single rough sentence.</li> <li>• You need a specific example, an event that actually happened, which exemplifies your felt sense of knowing.</li> </ul> <p><b>2 Non-logical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is new about something can seem quite illogical. This may be the most valuable part. Please assure yourself that you are not dropping this out.</li> </ul>

## **UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD**

- If it helps, write a paradox .

### **3 No words fit**

- Take out the key word from your sentence in Step 1. Write the usual (dictionary) definition of the word and notice that it is not what you meant.
- Return to your felt sense and let another word come to say what you mean. Write the usual definition of the second word.
- Return to your felt sense and let a third word come. Write the usual definition of the third word.
- **Accept the fact that there is no established word or phrase for that knowing.**

### **4 Any word fits**

- **Now let the first word speak from your felt sense after all. Let yourself feel THIS in your sentence.**
- Do this with the second word. Do this with the third word.
- Write a sentence that articulates exactly what the first word pulls out from your felt sense (which the other two do not).
- Do this with the second and third word.

- To help you to hold on to what seems illogical, you can write a paradoxical sentence, for example something is 'x' and also not 'x'. If this is not helpful, skip this step.

### **3 No words fit**

- If you have made a paradox in Step 2 , be sure both sides are now included within the word or phrase.
- Building theory is partly to communicate. Therefore we consider the public meanings of the words. If you are saying something new, none of the words in their usual meanings will say it exactly.
- Take the underlined key word (or phrase) which carries your central meaning. Think of its usual public meaning. Look it up in the dictionary if you like. You recognize, 'that's not what I meant'.
- Let a second word come from the felt sense to say what you do mean. Make sure it is not just a synonym, but a word with a somewhat different meaning.
- When you consider its public meaning, you see that the second word does not fit either.
- Let a third word come from the felt sense. Again its public meaning is not what you meant.
- Now you have written down the three words and their ordinary definitions.
- No word fits. None should, if this is new.

### **4 Any word fits**

- You are now keenly aware that these three words do not say what you mean. Take the first word and insist that in this sentence it does speak from your felt sense. The sentence can make the word change. This time, do not give up your sense. Do not let the word say what it usually says. **Wait until you feel this whole sentence speaking from your felt sense, in a way**, even though most people might not understand it so.
- Go back and forth between your meaning and the usual meaning, until both have become familiar to you.
- So far all this was private, just inside you.
- Now for each word write a sentence to say what that word means in this sentence when it speaks from your felt sense.
- Now you have three sentences, one for what each of the three words means when it speaks from your felt sense.

**5. Expanding what each word brings out by writing fresh linguistically unusual sentences**

- For each of the three, write a fresh, somewhat wild sentence which expands what you mean. Phrase the sentence so that it makes no sense unless it means what you mean. Then it cannot be misunderstood.

- Underline the new details which each of the three sentences brings out. Make a list of the underlined details.

- Now string all three sets of details into the slot in your original sentence.

**5. Expanding what each word brings out by writing fresh linguistically unusual sentences**

- Check your three sentences from Step 4. If you already have fresh new phrases, very different from a usual use of words, you can skip this step.
- Check whether you used any major public words. If so make fresh phrases to replace those.
- Let your felt sense express itself into fresh language. Use sentences that make no sense unless they are understood as you mean them. If you let your felt sense speak directly, something linguistically unusual can come.
- Here are examples of linguistically unusual sentences: 'Knowing the rules is a container from which new ways open'. 'Definitions stop cellular growth'. 'Behavior shows something it has'.
- List the separable items that occur in these sentences. If this step went well, each item says something from your original felt sense.
- Make one long string of these three meanings of the three words (omitting the words themselves). Fit this long string in where the underlined key word appeared in your original sentence.
- Play with the grammar and order, and eliminate excess words until you have a sentence you like. Now you have a sentence with more elaboration to say what you are tracking.

**Steps 6–8 Facets**

**6. Collect Facets**

- Collect facets (incidents, any kind of examples).

- Choose three facets and write them. Include the details which relate to your felt sense.

**Steps 6–8 Facets**

**6. Collect Facets**

- A facet does not need to illustrate all of your felt sense. Include anything that relates to the felt sense of the 'knowing' you are tracking. Include times when it came up, what someone said that related to it, any incidents that relate to it, even if you cannot tell yourself why they are relevant. Do not omit odd or private things such as 'the time the dentist said ...'
- Do not include general ideas or metaphors. (It isn't an actual example to say 'it's like heating something to agitate it'. It could be an example, if you say 'that time when I heated the . . .') Choose and write three instances that actually happened.

## **UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD**

• Also copy your original facet from step one here.

### **7. Each facet contributes more detailed structure**

- In each of the four facets, underline a specific pattern which this facet contributes.
- Using this pattern, write an odd sentence about each facet.
- Now underline the structural detail in each of the odd sentences.

### **8. Crossing the facets**

- If it can help, 'cross' your facets. You ask: 'What does looking from the second facet let me see in the first facet, that I could not see just from within the first facet?'
- If crossing gave you new details, write sentences to capture each.

• Any instance is superior to a higher order generalization. When you have a generalization, you only have it. An instance has specificity. Any real life event has complex structure. It can answer a question.

### **7. Each facet contributes more detailed structure**

- Ask yourself in what way the facet is an example of what you are trying to articulate. All real events have 'structural details' that don't appear when we generalize. In an actual experience the relationships you are tracking have specific characteristics. Let each facet give you one new elaboration, a specific pattern which you did not have before. The 'structural detail' need not be central to your felt sense, but don't adopt anything that somehow lessens your felt sense.

### **8. Crossing the facets**

- You might already have done this. 'Crossing' means trying out whether you can attribute to one what is true of the other. When the facets do not contain the whole central thing, looking at each through the other may expand them and give you what is additional structure for your central thing. Look at each through the other.

## **Steps 9–14 Theory**

### **9. Write freely**

- Freely write what you are now thinking, that comes out of this process.

### **10. Choose three terms and logically link them**

- Choose three words or phrases other than your three original words to be your **main terms**. For the sake of these instructions, decide which will be 'A', 'B' and 'C in a box'. Put the three terms in a box.

## **Steps 9–14 Theory**

### **9. Write freely**

- This is a free space to write anything you want.

### **10. Choose three terms and logically link them**

- These three terms are your major notions. A term can be one word or a whole phrase. Each should bring a whole cluster along with it. Choose from among all the new entities you have differentiated.
- If you imagine a triangle connecting the three terms, **is your felt sense somewhere within the triangle?**
- Any other important things you may have thought of on the way, can wait until a later step. This step concerns only the central nucleus. Later you will expand it to cover more and more.



- Now define A in terms of B, and also in terms of C.  $A = B$ .  $A = C$ . First write each equation as an empty formula. You don't yet know what it might mean.

- Rewrite the sentence  $A = B$ , replacing the = sign with the word 'is'. Now consult your felt sense. (A 'felt sense' B) Find the smallest change you can make on one or both sides of this sentence, so that the 'is' becomes true. (Always insure that you keep the crux of your felt sense.)

- Do this also with the second sentence.

### **11. Inherency & reversal**

INHERENCY:

- Rewrite the 'A is B' sentence, adding the word 'inherently' after the word 'is' 'A is inherently B.'
- You do not as yet know what this might mean.
- Dip into the intricacy of the felt sense to find out why these two things are inherently connected. What is the very nature of 'A', such that it has to be 'B'?
- Do this also with the ' $A = C$ ' sentence.

- If you are using a phrase as a term, keep the phrase the same for every occurrence of that term from now on.

- Now define 'A' by using the second term, 'B', to tell about 'A'. This is a formula:  $A = B$ . Also define 'A' by using 'C':  $A = C$ . Write each equation out as a formula, even though you don't yet know what it might mean.

- The = sign means 'is' or 'are'. In a new sentence, where the = sign appears, write the word 'is' or 'are'. It means that you are saying that what is on the left side is (amounts to, can actually be) what is on the right side.

- If the sentence is grammatical and true, and speaks from your felt sense, let it stand. If not, keep the word 'is' (or 'are') and add or change whatever you need on either side, so that the assertion is true and also speaks from your felt sense. If it seems too inclusive, you can say 'some,' 'one kind' 'is at least'.

- You will need to return to your felt sense to find what you need to do to the sentence to make it true.

- If you added something to 'A' in the first sentence, you need to keep that in 'A' also in the second sentence.

- Now you have one true sentence that connects 'A' and 'B', and one that connects 'A' and 'C'.

### **11. Inherency & reversal**

INHERENCY:

- Since 'A' and 'B' came from one felt sense, it will be the case that 'A' is inherently 'B', not only that it happens to be 'B'.
- This requires entering into the felt sense behind the two terms, so that you discover what each inherently is, so that it is already the other. Be sure that the illogical crux remains in the connections between the two. There has to be an 'Aha' about this. Of course! 'A' always was nothing but the sort of thing that has to be 'B'.
- Example 'A' (Free people) are 'B' (creative). This may be observably so. But, how is it inherently so? Human nature is inherently the sort of thing that is creative (changes the environment, makes new things), and to be free is to develop in accord with one's own nature. So, of course.

## **UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD**

### **REVERSAL:**

- If your 'A' fits under 'B', let your new pattern redefine and restructure the wider category so that it too now has the complex pattern of your felt sense. Insist that it shall be so, then consult your felt sense and wait until you realize, yes, of course, the wider thing always was already so.
- You will need inherency and reversal also in the sentences you will generate later.
- Reorder or change your two sentences to take account of the inherency and/or the reversal.

### **12. The nucleus of your theory generates sentences**

- Take your two main sentences from Step 11. From all the details you have so far, (for example what you underlined in Steps 5 and 7), select those which are within or between the three main terms. Put your two sentences and your details in a box. Organize the details under your terms.
- Now, since 'A' is 'B', you can substitute 'B' for 'A' in your second sentence ('A is C'), so that it becomes the new sentence 'B is C'. Write it first, then see what it could mean. (You probably already thought this one.) Fix or add, so that it is true and speaks from your felt sense. Write it immediately below the box.
- Now also reverse the sentence so that 'C is B'. It might (or might not) suggest another meaning. If it says something further, modify it to make it true and add it below the box.
- On separate sheets, using each detail from the box one after the other, substitute each in for 'A', or 'B', or 'C', first in the one main sentence, then in the other. (If it is a detail between two of the terms, you can substitute it for either term.) Wait each time, to see what sense the new sentence might make. Only then fix it to make it true.

### **REVERSAL:**

- Reversal means defining the big thing by your new pattern. Anything that includes your 'A' (or 'B' or 'C') has in fact already itself this more complex nature which made it possible for 'A' to happen in them. Do not fit your new thing under an unchanged wider category.
- Example: The ordinary sentence was: 'Take the dream with you into the day'. This leaves 'the day' in its unchanged meaning; only the dream brings the felt sense. Reversal: 'Take the day with you into the dream'. This changes 'the day' so that it is re-understood from the nature of dreams. We get a new insight into what daily human life is.
- The reversal consists in defining the larger thing in terms of the new complex patterning of the smaller thing.
- If inherency or reversal gave you anything new, rewrite your main 'A is 'B' and 'A is 'C' sentences, reordering or reorganizing them so that they take account of the inherency and/or the reversal.

### **12. The nucleus of your theory generates sentences**

- Connect two of your terms. Leave other details for later. You might have five kinds of details: Within 'A'. Within 'B'. Within 'C'. Between 'A' and 'B'. Select all details which fall within your terms, or between 'A' and 'C'.
- Draw a box around this. Consider it the nucleus of your theory. From now on, do not change anything within the box unless you discover a terrible mistake. Now only new additions and elaborations follow. Write them under the box.
- By substituting a detail in for a main term, you can generate a very large number of new sentences. Pick the details that seem most important to you, and put one of them into one of your two sentences instead of the term 'A', of 'B', or 'C', to generate a new sentence.
- When a new sentence seems quite wild or false, stay with it and pinpoint what is wrong with it, so that you can change the sentence to make it true without losing what was new and wild about it. Apply inherency and reversal where possible.
- For example, it may seem both ungrammatical and false to say that some detail from a very odd instance 'is' 'B'. But

Be sure that the change you make keeps the crux of your felt sense.

- Many of these new sentences will be obvious and unnecessary, but quite a number of them will say something new and surprising. Collect all valuable sentences below the box.

**13. Large applications**

- The odd structure of your terms can now serve as a 'model' for anything else. Your terms can bring their structure into any large area such as art, religion, education, art, metaphor.
- Choose either your AB or your AC sentence from inside the box at Step 12. Write it down with a blank in place of one of the terms.
- Choose any area outside your field. Substitute it into the blank in your sentence.
- Write your sentence with the substitution.
- Now wait for something about the topic to leap up, which makes it truly like that. Freely write what you are now thinking.
- You might want to choose something specific from that area to put in the blank, rather than the whole area.

**14. Elaborate your theory in your original area of interest**

- Stay within your field and apply your theory to any topics close to yours. Your theory is located near other matters in your field. List some of these related topics.

it can be exciting to rethink the nature of 'B'. Might 'B' have this odd patterning? How might that be true of 'B'? Then — aha! — it might suddenly emerge for you that this is indeed so! It might tell us more about the nature of 'B' than we knew before.

- By substituting you can make a great many logically correct new sentences which you can adjust according to the felt sense underneath them. You become able to say more and more.

**13. Large applications**

- What would come, if we apply **just your pattern** (not what it is about) to human nature, society, the state, groups, interpersonal relations, the physical sciences, truth, beauty, ethics, writing, sexuality, language, — any large idea?
- We know that the pattern you have articulated can happen in human experience. The pattern probably does not yet exist in the common language of our society. One tends to think about these Big Things with very poor simplistic spatial patterns. Therefore it is likely that your new pattern can bring out something important from such Big Things. These large things are unclear accumulations of much meaning and experience. The usual concepts about them are much poorer. Looking at a large thing through your theory, surely some aspect of it will cross and reveal some way in which the large thing truly has, or should have, the pattern of your theory.
- You can modestly limit your claim by saying 'One aspect of' or 'one kind of' the large thing has (or should have) the patterning of your theory. Do not let fixed definitions or old ways of thinking limit what can be said about these large things. By applying your model, something new and further can leap out at you from all that you know of such a large thing. Although it can say something true, this is largely a playful move unless you happen to be an expert on the given topic. Then you could develop it.

**14. Elaborate your theory in your original area of interest**

- You can build the structure of your theory into any topic in your field. This is the serious development of your theory. It may continue for years. You can derive one or

## **UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD**

- As you bring up each related topic, let your theory restructure that. Let yourself have a felt sense of what is right or important in the related topic and cross it with (look at it through) one of your terms. Assert that A (the new topic) is structured like, or a special case of B (Your term). Write sentences about the sense in which this is true. You are **deriving** concepts for the related topics from your initial concepts.
- You can also go further into the felt sense under any term in your theory, and ask what are different kinds of A or different ways in which A happens.

more new terms for the topic when it acquires the specificity that the rest of your theory can give it. In this way the theory can develop and elaborate itself indefinitely within your field.

- If you logically derive a sentence which does not seem true, go more deeply into your felt sense so that you can modify the assertion until it seems true. Introduce additional distinctions.
- Also if you add new distinctions to your theory where it keeps wanting them, then you may realize that you have derived certain topics in your field.
- People sometimes don't value their theory because they feel that it 'must be' what some older existing theory 'really means', if correctly understood. But the old theory alone does not give people this precise way. You are redefining its old terms with your precise concepts to give them this new precision.
- Your theory can be entirely new. We do not need to be afraid of new theories. We need them.
- The function of a theory is social. Being able to speak **precisely** about something lets us build it into the world in which we live.

*Thinking At The Edge* Eugene Gendlin, Ph.D.