

A CASE FOR CLIENT-CENTERED CAREER COUNSELING

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PART 1. INTRODUCTION BY JO

Information services, trait-factor and other directive, decision making models of career counseling are largely inconsistent with a client-directed course of therapy. The highly reflective stance that is characteristic of client-centered counseling eschews interacting with clients in a therapist-focused, therapist-locus manner. The failure to address more long-standing and/or core client concerns is a problem in decision making and trait-factor approaches. The failure of client-centered therapists to conduct and to publish on-going programs of research on the effectiveness of their approach to specific populations contributes to making its usefulness suspect. The current article presents a summary of client-centered career counseling literature. This is followed by a transcribed video-tape demonstration and follow-up dialogue. Finally, two commentaries on the interview are provided.

The origins of vocational and educational counseling belong to public schools, and to military and post war life. Placing individuals in programs of study and training compatible with their interests and skills were identified by Parsons (1909) as requiring a true reasoning between knowledge of self and the world of work. Testing became a key variable in the future of vocational guidance. A presumption of the need for testing was and remains that characteristics of the individual accessible through the testing process are less, or are not at all accessible otherwise. Judiciousness and accuracy in choice of tests has a strong role in psychological counseling. It is, indeed one of the few nearly exclusive provinces of the practicing psychologist. School and military use of tests was and continues to be desirable for obvious reasons. Reliance on testing over and above reasonable and humane (the core conditions) human relationship abilities is perhaps testings' greatest weakness/failing/insufficiency. A less directive tradition, emphasizing emotional factors, was made highly visible by its chief proponent, Carl Rogers, whose exposure to educational philosophy included the works of Dewey, Kilpatrick, Thorndike and Rugg. The non-directive, client-centered, and then person-centered stance permitted consideration of testing, not as the mainstay of the relationship, but as a possible alternative toward achieving a clients' goals.

In his early writings, Rogers had a disposition toward eschewing testing as part of the counseling process. In 1946 (p141) he stated, "For the counselor to interpret tests to the client is to say, 'I am the expert, I know more about you than you can know yourself, and I shall impart that superior knowledge.'" Furthermore, "Tests which are initiated by the counselor are a hindrance ... [they]

tend to increase defensiveness on the part of the client, to lessen .. acceptance of self, to decrease .sense of responsibility, to create an attitude of dependence upon the expert." The reliance on therapist expertise, nearly implicit in the testing process, jeopardizes therapists concentration on the clients' locus the testing process, jeopardizes therapists concentration on their clients' locus.

Client-centered assessment occurs within a humanistic framework. Testing is accomplished within the context of valuing the worth of the client as a person. C.H. Patterson (1971) maintains that clients should be provided with enough information to make an informed decision about tests most appropriate for them and should be facilitated toward their own self appraisal and assessment. The data must be communicated objectively and be understandable and acceptable. The therapists attitudes should include a belief in each persons' worth, respect for individuals, and a belief in the rights of individuals to self-direction, goal and value selection, and decision making (Patterson and Watkins, 1982). Suzanne Freeman's (1990) interview with Patterson cites him as saying, "I have come to the conclusion that these conditions [Empathy, Unconditional Positive Regard and Genuineness] are necessary and sufficient except when the client is lacking in some basic information, understanding, or basic skills ... the client may come without an adequate understanding of his or her own aptitudes and abilities, without adequate information about the opportunities in the field -jobs, careers - the whole world of education and occupation." (p. 293-294)

Patterson (In Freeman, 1990) identifies the essentially non-directive counselor to be faced with the problem of how to go beyond the conditions, and how much to go beyond them. He emphasizes *what not to do*: giving a standard battery of tests, and instead suggests an empathic focus, on pieces of information that the client suggests are needed. "They do not have to ask you for a particular test, but they are asking indirectly if you listen carefully to them." (p. 295) Patterson advocates structuring the counseling relationship, particularly when a client expects you to be the expert, and adheres to the view that career and personal counseling are inseparable. He discourages counselors from directing clients away from personal problems.

Super (1950/1988) proposes that the vocational adjustment process involves the implementation of a self-concept. Making a vocational choice and adjusting to an occupation involves developing a picture of the kind of person one is, and then trying to make that concept a reality. Super believes that traditional forms of career counseling have an implicit assumption that vocational maladjustment is the result of lack of information about self or the world of work. He purports that exclusive emphasis on such facts relies, unjustifiably, on trust in logical and rational tendencies of people. Acknowledging human "fallibility in logic," Super purports that vocational counseling as personal counseling sees vocational adjustment as an issue of attitudes more than facts. Non-directive theorists especially, says Super, would be more inclined (than would a directive therapist), to respond to a clients' uncertainty, and other aspects of the psychological self, than to the question of what work the client might be best suited for. In exploring one's objective and subjective selves, the client asks how this can be reconciled, and reorganizes to achieve better self-integration. Super himself viewed the distinction between vocational and personal counseling to be artificial. "*In choosing an occupation one is, in effect, choosing a means of implementing a self-concept.*" (p. 356)

Super (1957) described career counseling as proceeding best when handled non-directively at first, often for several sessions. He discriminates client-centered and vocational counseling on the basis of the extent to which the latter helps the client "more expeditiously by facilitating his encounters with and his interpretations of reality." (p. 308) Similarly, Bozarth and Fisher (1990, p. 53) identify the process of career counseling as therapist facilitation of client selfactualization, where career issues are presented, at least initially, as a key concern. The therapists capacity to suggest real or simulated work activities, and to make information about careers available to clients is an important ingredient in the vocational counseling process. The therapist

does not enter into the relationship with treatment plans or goals in mind. According to Bozarth and Fisher (1990), this non-prescriptive, non-diagnostic, openly inquiring approach is alien to other schools of thought. World-of-work information, testing options and other resources known to be accessible might very well be shared, according to Bozarth and Fisher, when relevant for a client.

In their integrative model of career counseling, Borman and Dickson (1991, p.16) recommend a systematic eclecticism where specific theories are applied depending upon a client's developmental concern. Behaviorism would be applied, for instance, to reinforce information seeking while client-centered counseling would be used after the individual explored information and was more prepared for the task of "self-exploration and the resolution of incongruencies between the experiencing self and the real or ideal self." Borman and Dickson's client-centered "technique" appears incompatible with traditional client-centered assumptions about sufficient attitudes/core conditions serving as the mainstay of the counseling relationship.

The demonstration interview presented here is not the first to be offered for professional consideration. In 1988, Miller (1988b) published clips of a career counseling session to demonstrate the goal of the counselor, as Crites viewed it, to promote the clarifying and implementing the client's self-concept in an acceptable occupational role. Miller's client-centered stance incorporates the core conditions as necessary but not sufficient. Miller supports the view that the career counseling relationship is a personal counseling relationship, that diagnosis, or labeling (e.g., (client as unrealistic or undecided) is undesirable, and that the counselor maintains a fundamental belief in a client's knowing what is best for him or her. Inconsistent with more traditional and more common person-centered positions is Miller's perspective that "the client-centered counselor would more than likely make responses during the session with a high degree of *leading* techniques such as approval, and tentative interpretations. The purpose of these leading responses would be to encourage the client to talk about experiences as they are related to actualizing the self-concept in an occupational role." (p. 65)

Other observations made by Miller (1988a) regarding client-centered career counseling: suggested the reciprocal influence of people upon one another as a dynamic of counseling relationships. His recommendations for creating meaningful counseling relationships include slowing down the process by refraining from administering an inventory in the first session, encourage clients to talk about previous decisions made, both good and bad, and proceeding with the ever-present recognition that the client is the best expert.

PART 11.

THIRTY MINUTE DEMONSTRATION SESSION BETWEEN RUTH AND JO

Jo: Well, I would welcome you to start wherever you would like to begin ... knowing we didn't think through this beforehand. So if you would like to take a minute.

Ruth: Well, I don't know – I finished up this Masters in Counseling Psychology with Marital and Family and I had this idea that I might want to do therapy because I, myself, went through five years of Jungian Therapy and it transformed my life to such a degree that I thought this is a marvelous thing-. This really works. You know. I didn't quite believe it that it could be helpful, to be proven to me and I thought, well, if I could help other people have some kind of an empowerment such as I experienced - that would be a wonderful thing and then the internship was very enlightening and although I felt good about it, I felt you know that I can do this, that I can I do this better; I can get good at this. I found myself really missing adolescents. I used to teach school and I taught French and I found myself missing that exuberance that they have, you know, and the potential they have and the fact that it feels like you're touching the future. It sounds trite but it does when you're working with them you feel like you're at the beginning.

Jo: So much enthusiasm, excitement – that was missing.

Ruth: Yes and when you're meeting people in the situation I was in which was partial hospitalization, of course, you're meeting people at a different stage in life, you know. They have been knocked around and they have had all kinds of trauma and upset and problems, but looking back on adolescents my thought was that if you could only get people early and possibly plant some seeds, they would never end up like that. So that was, I don't know, I just really, I'm just not sure and then, of course, doing certification and guidance right now, I'm thinking, well, you know, that would be a way to touch that age group now, but with the internship and then talking to somebody and he says to me "we don't really do therapy, we do career counseling," that's important too, that's enormously important. I just don't know where I fit into the puzzle yet. I'm just not quite sure.

Jo: That you're hoping to find in a school setting that to work with adolescents you would be able to touch their lives in such a way that you would see this potential really emerge for them and not have the experience with the older people that you worked with - a sense of hopelessness, in a way, of being able to really significantly impact their future.

Ruth: It's a fit for me because I'm an optimistic person.

Jo: Yes, and it was actually rather disarming to find out that in the school system you might not really be able to make that kind of a profound impact upon you.

Ruth: But, see, I don't even expect, having taught high school for many years, I don't even expect to be able to see because I don't think all the time you ever see it and that's OK with me not to see it. You know, I think I learned as a high school teacher that I have no idea what's going to happen with what I've said. I don't know where it's going to go, where they're going to take it, what they're going to do and I will probably never see it. You know, maybe twenty years down the road they might remember, well this teacher said X Y and Z to me and hey, but

Jo: It's not the knowledge of what will happen in the future, it's more of the experience in the present, as though you're touching, you're tapping into this potential for growth that you didn't feel working with the older people.

Ruth: That's exactly right.

Jo: It's really exciting to you to tap into that, not so much knowing how it's going to turn out but really...

Ruth: To be at the beginning - I mean I know it's not the beginning for them in high school. They have had an enormous amount of information already. I mean I really do feel that teachers or guidance counselors can have - you know, you might just say a word to someone which could be the word they've been waiting to hear.

Jo: There's more of a potential for you to have that impact when you reach a teen than when you reach someone who has lived more life.

Ruth: And then you see certain kids that are going in the wrong direction and you know they still have so much time, you know, to correct - and maybe you could be a part of that.

Jo: There's much more hopefulness.

Ruth: Yes. You see one of my values is optimism and you know when I was in my internship and I would go into the partial hospitalization thing it was like ground hog day. Every morning you go in and would hear we had this conversation yesterday, and then we're having it again today, and then we might have it again tomorrow and we might have it every day this week.

(phone rang)

Jo: Who could have anticipated that? (laughter). So it was ground hog day and they had just said that yesterday and felt really ...

Ruth: I mean I felt good. It was a wonderful experience and I feel like I really got close to people and I cared about them and they cared about me and they gave me a party when I left and I felt like I had done something good. The thing of it is that I feel like my whole gear, my whole speed might not be a good fit.

Jo: Your gear - your speed.

Ruth: It's a kind of an energy that I have to pull down, you know, into a different, deeper place for me that - and tap into something that is not as natural a flow for me as it is with the adolescent energy.

Jo: It went fine. You learned so much. You had a good time. It really went better than fine. You fit in but it wasn't really you, the same kind of energy. You feel more uplifted when you are working with adolescents.

Ruth: And they're funny.

Jo: Uh huh. Uh huh.

Ruth: I mean I like to laugh and you know and that's so important working with adolescents and you have plenty of opportunities to do that because they're funny.

Jo: You cherish those moments and you live a lot more of those moments when you're with them so you would get to cherish more of life that way.

Ruth: It feeds me I suppose. It's a kind of selfish thing but at the same time when I was working: with them I felt that I was giving a lot to them and I felt that there was a give and take there - there was a very fluid - it was a very productive give and take.

Jo: So it was more selfish in a sense that you felt that you got so much more out of it, but you felt that there was a lot of fluidity about being able to give that back.

Ruth: Yes... and also there was a variety, you know, and there's a constant challenge because they are constantly challenging you. But to me that's exciting. I thrive on challenge so, you know whatever they would throw me it was just OK, let's go with this and

Jo: You weren't upset by the sudden change. In fact, it was energizing, and much more so than day after day, it sounds like, the same story you were kind of mulling through this stuff with older folks.

Ruth: Yes, and in the classroom too. You know some kids, it's their mission in life to upset your classroom and for some strange reason I enjoy that whole challenge - the struggle and OK, well let's see. I'll take you on. Let's see what you can do.

Jo: Strange as it seems, I love it!

Ruth: You know, which it probably sounds pretty sick to some people. I mean I had a wonderful job before I came here and I was teaching at my son's school - teaching French. It was a very small school, a private school, so I had the luxury of small classes and it was very low pay but I enjoyed every single day I came to work - like almost every minute of all the years I was there the other thing is that I was working with people who were just so wonderful, so it seems like I the best of all worlds which made an enormous difference, you know. I didn't make the money.

You know to me it's more important to feel that joy and that happiness in a work setting than money.

Jo: So it was the best of all worlds you say and it was also not a lot of money, so it was the best of the world that was important to you.

Ruth: But the thing of it is though I don't know if I can support myself on that kind of money when I know there is a reality there; that this is another thing I am trying to think of that kind of situation. I have to think about reality and the money I need to live and that kind of thing so-but then I think too that well maybe I'll be with somebody and we'll pool our resources together. I could be with anyone. I could be with a female or male in terms of sharing living expenses and then maybe I could certainly cut down on what I need to spend to live.

Jo: So the draw for you toward going in the direction that makes you the happiest seems pretty clear also to be also a financially limiting place to be so you are thinking about what you would need to do in order to be reasonably comfortable financially, being able to be in a place where you could really enjoy your work.

Ruth: I don't know how unhappy I would be but the thing of it is that I've been poor and it didn't seem to bother me. So, I'm thinking I've done that and it was OK. I remember back and I've been rich and been miserable. So looking back at past experience, I can really see I've tried both of those things and actually I was happier when I was poor. It had nothing to do with being poor and being happy. I'm not equating those two. I'm just saying other things in my life were better that time than they were later on.

Jo: You don't necessarily see being happy as necessitating your being poor.

Ruth: Oh No. not at all! Like anybody I would prefer having the more money the better but it doesn't have a correlation to happiness for me.

Jo: You're saying you're thinking that the kind of a job that you really feel moved towards being in is going to leave you poorer rather than richer.

Ruth: Probably.

Jo: Probably. You're not sure about that.

Ruth: Because I came from a family- I think I am very influenced by my mother in a sense that, you know, she had this thing about prestige and I'm hoping that I'm not living out her dynamic and I think I've obviously been tempted to do that at times in my life.

Jo: So it's disturbing to you to think that prestige may be guiding you.

Ruth: Well, I don't think it's guiding me, but I'm thinking that it has at times. I think when I married my husband it probably had something to do with the fact he was on the fast track and the rising star and somehow you know in my subconscious I thought well my mother would really like this. I mean I didn't think it at the time. I didn't put it together.

Jo: You were just living like that and you're thinking that at some level "I think I might have been pleasing."

Ruth: Uh huh - that I wasn't aware of it because when I was growing up I was always a pleaser and I wanted to do the right thing.

Jo: And so you're finding it difficult to know precisely what it is that will please you.

Ruth: Um huh.

Jo: And to tease out what actions, how your values, let me say it like this-to be able to really figure out whether your being drawn to something based on what will really please you inside or what will be pleasing to someone else.

Ruth: See, that's the scary thing to me because I'm so afraid that I'm going to make a decision based on her values.

Jo: Uh, hmm - very frightening to think that I might decide on my career based on my mother's values.

Ruth: Even with relationships it's scary to think that, well, would I pick this person because he's a professional -that's my mother's value - or would I pick this person who is a garbage collector but he's a poet. You know, it's just there's a whole lot of things that go into that. I don't exactly know how strong I am sometimes in terms of being able to make those distinctions or see that clearly.

Jo: So, you're not questioning your goal or your desire. You know you want to make the decision that's for you but your fear is that you won't be able to discriminate clearly what is genuinely your decision or your value.

Ruth: Or that I'll get sucked into this whole routine, this whole dynamic. I mean my mother died. She's dead. She died in January but, well, she's there.

Jo: So when you say "sucked into this whole routine" I'm not sure precisely if you mean how you've been accustomed...

Ruth: ... make decisions based on the values that she - her values.

Jo: It's something you're accustomed to doing.

Ruth: Uh huh. It's a habit of many years. I mean it's why I stayed in a situation I should have left. There are so many things because that was what she would have done. To me it's a question of courage and awareness.

Jo: So the thought that came to my mind – trusting yourself. Maybe what you mean by courage is the courage to trust yourself.

Ruth: And to go against my whole family because they all have very high prestige jobs. You know, they're judges and doctors and lawyers and you know I see them at reunions and things and they have their measuring scale and I don't want to be a part of that scale and yet it's very difficult to go against your whole context that you grew up through.

Jo: You mean to not yourself apply the scale.

Ruth: Uh huh, which I've done. I've done it. All through my life I've applied their rules. So for the first time I'm applying my own rules and it just feels very shaky because first of all there's a lack of security and

Jo: Support.

Ruth: Uh huh and they're always sort of trying to push me in a certain direction, you know, trying to steer my choices in a certain way to kind of conform and if I veer off the path, they will make excuses for me but they will still consider me as going off the straight and narrow.

Jo: So you don't want excuses made for you. You want the rule to shift so that an excuse is not necessary, it's just accepted. You haven't veered off of anything.

Ruth: Uh huh but they don't see me that way. The problem is that this is my family and I can't cut them off. I don't want to. But they are a powerful force in my life and they offer me a lot of support

and love in many ways except when I'm going in a different way. It took them a long time to accept the fact that I made this huge life change and it shook everything up for a long time. Now they have sort of settled down with that but I can see other choices I might make that are going to totally throw the whole thing out of whack again.

Jo: So you've introduced to them the idea that you might make decisions that would go against the grain. You've had the experience.

Ruth: Well, I did it the one time and we had a big to do at Christmas time because, you know, every time I had gotten together with them I was always listening and respectful and I just had opinions and talked.

Jo: For the first time.

Ruth: and I got all this very reprovng feedback because I had left my role, you know, of listening to the men talk. I have the knowledge and I just decided to argue a few points and there was shock and horror all around.

Jo: It was an uncomfortable place for you to be.

Ruth: Well, I stuck to my guns but it was unpleasant to do that.

Jo: Unpleasant.

Ruth: It was unpleasant because I'm getting disapproval and nobody wants disapproval. Everybody wants approval and these are my family and I especially need them - especially being a single mother.

Jo: And, so it's really more than just wanting to have the confidence and security in your own decision making and trust in yourself. You also do want the support and approval of your family.

Ruth: To a degree, but I'm not willing to sacrifice my life for it, but I'm scared that I will. Sometimes I'm afraid that the pressure on me will become such that I will decide I'm just going to go their way. I'm just afraid of that sometimes, which is kind of unbelievable. At my age you'd think I would be over that.

Jo: Discouraging to find that you want their support and approval so much so that you might abandon your own desires.

Ruth: Yeah, that's scary. I don't think I would do that but I'm obviously worried about doing that.

Jo: So, it's discouraging, it's frightening, it's worrisome.

Ruth: And then, of course, having a sixteen year old son, you know, he's got plenty of opinions as to what I should be doing.

Jo: The tone in that-it didn't suggest that you feel nearly as discouraged as

Ruth: Oh, no. He's flexible. He has an enormously flexible mind.

Jo: So you do get some support from your son.

Ruth: Well, I don't look for it. I don't expect that to be his role to support me but we have an active dialogue and he's certainly a lot of fun but you know the thing of it is that it's interesting having this witness because you're living with a witness. When you're living with someone he'll certainly

Jo: I guess the sense that I got from it was not so much that you were saying I can lean on my son for support, but I guess I got the sense that you did have somebody who was accepting of the decisions you made that was important to you.

Ruth: Oh, yes. And I was just trying to make the point I don't lean on him. I don't want him to have to support me emotionally.

Jo: Yes, I heard that. That's important to you.

Ruth: I don't want him to have that kind of a burden on his psyche at this point in life. This has really been amazing. This has been very helpful.

Jo: Well, good. I'm aware that we had the phone call that took away about a minute and that we only have a little bit of time left so maybe it would be a good place to stop if it's OK with you. I appreciate your talking so openly.

Ruth: I appreciate what you do.

Jo: Good, good.

PART III.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION WITH JO, RUTH AND PAULA

Jo: We'll take a couple minutes and maybe, Ruth, you could share what you found to be the most useful elements of it, or maybe anything you felt was limiting or didn't feel right, How does that sound?

Ruth: Well, I hadn't really thought ahead about this at all and I was not projecting into the future what would happen and I just decided to come in the same state of confusion I'm always in. You, really helped me sort out things in terms of this whole thing about my fear. I hadn't really crystallized that before.

Jo: It seems a lot clearer, precisely what you are afraid of?

Ruth: Yes.

Jo: I felt that the words "the fear" "the discouraged" and "the worried" were the three elements of it that when the emotion was given voice to – when we found words to describe precisely what it was, not only what it was about but precisely the emotions about that – that felt a shift for me; like there were actually three different elements at least and primarily the fear and the discourage and then you add worry. We really didn't get into that but maybe there's a little bit more around that – but that felt like it shifted me.

Ruth: Well, that's the key – I think the fact of giving words to it. Somehow it was just all a jumble and I guess when a lot's going on in your life, it's sometimes hard to sort out the threats and this was helpful in helping me sort them out which, somehow, I haven't been as successful in doing my own. So I have a better idea now as to exactly what I'm looking at.

Jo: As part of the barrier or something to making choices because . . .

Ruth: It's just the awareness of the question, the obstacles or whatever was helpful just to define the problem.

Jo: Obviously we only had a half hour to do it, but I was wondering if you thought that it might possible, if given more time, that you would come to make a decision about what you want to or whether that wouldn't be important in the process or what you feel about that.

Ruth: Well, for me I like to make decisions. I have to bring something to a closure and I've spent years sometimes trying to make decisions, but at the end I know that I will decide something and I don't need to rush it. I know I am going to give myself all the time I need to take and what you helped me to do, what I want to do is just become aware of whatever the picture is so that I have all the pieces so that I could look at everything.

Jo: Maybe this would change if you weren't as insightful or introspective or as verbal a client, but my sense was that it wouldn't take us too long, like cons of sessions, for you to not necessarily make a decision - this is the population I will work with; this is what I'm going to do-but just to get enough clarification about the pros and cons of each or where I'm heading-that there be enough clarity for you.

Ruth: That's what I feel too.

Jo: Any obstacles or anything I did that was grating or didn't quite fit or disturbing?

Ruth: No. I thought that you, in rephrasing what I was saying, I was able to look at it somehow clearer. I was able to see it clearer. By hearing you say it, helped me to hear myself clearer.

Jo: There was one point where I was a little bit concerned that I might be putting words in your mouth. I can't remember when. I have to listen back. I didn't feel strongly that way but I thought that I might be a little off and be uncomfortable.

Ruth: I don't remember feeling that way but what I was feeling when you were talking was that you were hearing me and that if I had to correct something that you heard, there was no problem with it- that was all right. Or, if I was clarifying something that you were saying that was just . . .

Jo: Well, my memory is that you corrected me immediately and you clarified it for me. We'll have to look back and see.

Paula: Did you ever wonder what Jo might be thinking as you were talking?

Ruth: No. I never had that thought. I felt totally in the moment with just trying to answer what she was asking me and checking in with myself making sure whatever words I was saying were authentic and genuine and that I wasn't creating or that I was trying to really check in with what she was asking. But for me it was very interesting because I haven't had ever this kind of session because the approach I was in when I was in therapy was very different - well, it was Jungian and we did a lot of dream work. It was kind of a different thing but this reflective, I've never experienced that before although I've done some work with that with clients in internship. But it's really wonderful. It feels very good.

Jo: To really hear yourself?

Ruth: To be heard.

Jo: Good. I'm glad.

Ruth: I appreciate it.

Paula: Ruth, did you experience over the time that you all were working – I noticed it a little bit any shifts within yourself that you felt closer to yourself.? I was wondering because you said I kept checking in with myself if that quality of experience shifted at any point for you. I didn't quite know if you were aware of it.

Ruth: Well, it was very interesting when I started talking about my mother that I didn't realize I was going to say anything about my mother and listening I had this strange feeling I'm talking about my mother. I didn't realize that she played this role. I wasn't quite aware.

Jo: Even though it was an unplanned session and you deliberately didn't want to plan it, you certainly wouldn't have anticipated that that would have come up. So, it was a shift in a way of surprise. Here I am talking about my mother. This is strange. I couldn't have anticipated it.

Ruth: I would never have thought I would be talking about my mother.

Jo: It was some sort of a shift there – a surprise element – her importance, her values and thoughts.

Ruth: I realized how deep that internalization I never really put it together, that this was a core of fear, until now. But see, my mother is very much alive through my cousin Hallie in Chicago that I talk to quite a lot who kind of represents my mother and she calls me periodically and checks on me to see how far off the path I'm going at any particular moment so I have this constant check and it's sort of like confronting the parental values, my mother's values. It's confronting them every time she calls even though we have these pleasant conversations.

Jo: So she's alive very much in you and you knew that but you didn't think it was as strong but she also continues to live on through Hallie in terms of the representation of value through Hallie's opinions.

Ruth: Well, to a degree. There is a certain amount of denial in my family. There is protection of the family name to the exclusion of getting to truth. There was this big scandal that came up this summer. Somebody called up saying that there was this child and the priest – I thought it was hysterical that no one shared my point of view and my idea was let's figure out was this true. Every, one said, "Why?" Let's not talk about this. Let's just forget that this ever happened and cover it up and forget about it. So this is a certain pattern you see that I don't quite go along with.

Jo: So you don't subscribe to it and you get rebuffed if you do.

Ruth: I'm some kind of a traitor too....

Jo: ... the clan.

Ruth: the clan, that's right, which must be protected at all costs.

Paula: Ruth, what was your most important learning that came out of today?

Ruth: I think learning exactly what the dilemma is.

Paula: The conflict and fear?

Ruth: Yes, and realizing choices, upcoming choices that are going to be impacted by this two-pronged pull and I think if I am conscious of the darkness that it becomes light so it helps.

Paula: Jo, I am kind of wondering if there was anything that you experienced sitting with Ruth that you didn't say or comment on that you are aware of but . . .

Jo: Maybe, I don't remember something I felt strongly about – like that I wanted to say but, didn't. I think I commented my hearing how excited and exuberant you felt working with teens think I said that and I could feel the good work that you felt you did over the internship that it was really good but it didn't seem to be your pace – it didn't bring you as much enthusiasm or excitement. I think I said that. Maybe a moment, where there was some sadness over the loss of your mom, but I didn't feel that so strong and didn't think you were really into that and you were at a different place and didn't want to get into that, because of the agenda that we had. Perhaps had we been in a counseling relationship where we wouldn't have been wanting to do a demonstration interview you would have gone on that path, I don't know.

Ruth: No.

Jo: But I didn't feel that was strong nor did I feel like I was neglecting something in that for the sake of the agenda.

Ruth: I didn't feel that either that there was any sacrifice with that.

Jo: I heard that your wanting to make sure that I understood that you didn't want to put your son in a position of support (I think I might have been misunderstood or expressed myself unclearly). You corrected me so there was no problem and then I think I clarified that and I wanted you to know that I did understand that. I think it was an important value for you to not put your son in that position.

Ruth: That was the moment now that you were reminding me that I think about now. I think I was saying that this was my ideal - not to put him in that position but sometimes I might do that but sort of speaking it out loud is reaffirming my commitment to try not to do that but sometimes it might happen. But it's something I want to avoid strongly any time I'm aware I might be going in that direction.

Jo: To try to encourage him to be a supportive person toward you rather than to naturally express himself genuinely which might be in the direction of not supporting you.

Ruth: Yes, I want him to express himself genuinely and if he disagrees with me, I want him to come out and say it and he does. He is very forthright so I figure I give him the leeway to disagree with me and I listen to him. He makes some good points.

Jo: You had talked some about his being flexible and you have an openness to hearing him knowing that he is flexible you feel trusting of allowing him to go places that you might otherwise be inclined to put up a blockade to.

Ruth: Right. Because he's very perceptive and it's also because I respect him and teenagers in general, you know, I figure that there's a lot to learn there and I've run into kids in my class room that I felt they are at a higher level than I am and they are very evolved people and just younger and sometimes you can learn a whole lot and I feel that way about him-without relinquishing that parental role.

Jo: Yes, well I feel we could go for another hour - it's important to you ... but we won't do that

PART IV.

COMMENTARY BY PAULA

In this career interview with Jo and Ruth, I would like to comment on two parts of the session that stand out to me. One is the development of the theme in the session and the second is the clients' deepening experience of congruence.

For myself, there is an experience of amazement, excitement and awe when observing how a client's concern moves within a phenomenological theme during a session, beginning with the part that is clear and known, and then moving into the more nebulous and on-the-edge-of awareness experience. At the beginning of the session, Ruth focuses on a current career question of what direction to pursue now that she is completing her counseling Master's degree. During her internship placement, she felt accessible working with an older population but is more drawn to working with adolescence. Her enthusiasm for teenagers is noticeable as she describes feeling challenged, spontaneous, being able to make a difference, and "the fact that it feels like, like you're touching the future."

As Ruth speaks about this path of her heart, her aliveness increases. She contacts the part of herself that is clear to her and reflects what she values. I experienced her in this moment as solid, sure, moving toward a deeper state of congruence and providing internal support for herself.

Then a shift in the interview occurred. Up to this point Ruth focused on the topic of working with adolescence, a time in the developmental cycle that deals with emerging identity. Now the phenomenological theme turns to the establishment of her own identity in relationship to others. Ruth begins to explore the conflict of others' expectations of her and her coping with this type of pressure. I hear Ruth asking, how can I be myself and still be connected with my family? Ruth acknowledges that previous decisions have been based on others' value systems, at times, these choices being made without full awareness. She wonders if she will repeat these behaviors, "That's the scary thing to me because I'm so afraid that I'm going to make a decision based on her (mother's) values."

Jo consistently connects empathically with the client's world, helping Ruth to remain congruent with her experience of discomfort at not always being certain what voice is authentically her own. By staying with Ruth's ongoing experience, the therapist facilitates the client's continuing to clarify her identity and strengthens her ability to distinguish her voice from others. Ruth recounts new behavior with family members and envisions a future in which she is more congruent with herself, with her values, and with others. Still there is ambivalence about succumbing to family pressure as she states, "I'm not willing to sacrifice my life for it, but I'm scared that I will."

On one hand, Ruth is worried about not having the awareness or courage to follow that which is most truly herself. On the other, there is a determination to move ahead with a congruent lifestyle.

As Ruth contacts different aspects of the conflict, I am struck that she does so without a sense of self judgment. I believe her ability to suspend self criticism facilitates the fluidity of her being able to move from one position to another, the process itself contributing to her sense of identity and connection with an internal experience of congruence.

Following the session, as Jo and Ruth process their experiences, I asked Ruth if she ever wondered what Jo might be thinking as Ruth was talking during the session. I was curious to know Jo's presence had influenced her choices, recapitulating the experience of pleasing others. What came forward was Ruth's describing her experience with Jo as being "totally in the moment checking in with myself, making sure whatever words I was saying were authentic and genuine and that I wasn't creating." The relationship with Jo facilitated Ruth's contacting and strengthening inner experience of congruence.

As the self-actualization tendency flows throughout the lifespan, we have opportunity to shift towards more integrated and ongoing experiences of congruence. Coming into contact with: authenticity may impact our relationship with self, with others, and with our career path. At mid-life, as in Ruth's case, we may re-enter a place of exploration regarding identity in relationship others and the impact of these relationships on career choice. Connecting with and voicing our uniqueness and our distinctiveness from others, strengthens our identity and sense of commitment.

PART V

COMMENTARY BY RUTH

Reading back and recalling the session, there are a few points I wish to clarify and comment upon. In the follow-up discussion, Paula asked if I recognized a shift at any point. I realize that one came when talking about Christmas, more so than at any other time. Christmas of 1996 was very pivotal for me because for the first time, I really did act like a grown-up within the family

gathering, instead of “little Ruthie”. And things have not been the same since. And I can’t go back to the way it was. That is a source of relief (I broke free) and pain and anxiety at the same time (my family is not as happy with me).

The topic of my mother is certainly not one that has not been previously addressed by me in therapy. Indeed it was one of the major themes with my previous therapist who practiced out of a Jungian tradition. What I had not done, previous to the current session, was to connect my current decision making regarding careers to my relationship with my mother. I believed that I had worked through issues with my mother long ago. I realized in reviewing the session that some of these "mother issues" were still alive. I dislike that within the session it sounds as though I blame my mother for pressuring me into adopting her values. For instance, I appear to blame her for the fact that I stayed with my husband. The truth is, I know that she would have supported me no matter what. She was a feisty woman who believed in women's independence. Staying with my husband had more to do with feelings of shame, unworthiness, and fears of abandonment originating in my infancy and early childhood.

Also, concerning my mother's death, in our follow-up dialogue you allude to us maybe talking more about that if the interview had not been for demonstration purposes. I respond with an emphatic "No," meaning at the time I would not have done so. I was definitive because at that time I hadn't yet felt her death, despite the fact that I went through it with her. It has really hit me only within the past few months.

Comparing Rogerian and Jungian therapy effects upon me I would say that the former drew me more into focus with my own thought processes while less cognizant of alternative viewpoints. I stayed very close to my own internal progression without any steering one way or another. Jo stayed more "invisible," becoming more of a mirror a mirror that I might not have held up so steadily before. I was able to see conflicts and so forth more clearly, and to then sort out the threads and come to some conclusions. The process seemed clear and easy to understand; and it was an efficient one for me as it rather quickly resulted in clarity regarding the career issue. The process drew out the salient pieces of information I needed to look at regarding a career decision. Jo's mirroring helped me to focus on what was relevant.

An outcome that I attribute to the session is that I know now that I do not want to work with the partial hospitalization population, or with people experiencing psychoses of a very serious nature, and that I would be satisfied working with families, couples, individuals; in a high-school guidance office; or even back in the classroom teaching.

It is also interesting to me to note how I “correct” problems I have confronting my family through my firm commitment to a different kind of dialogue with my son. As a result of the session I realize more clearly why that commitment feels important to me.

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