

Review of

Person-Centered communication: Theory skills and practice

by Renata Motschnig and Ladislav Nykl

**Revised English language version translated from the German by
Renata Motschnig (Original title: *Konstruktive Kommunikation:
Sich und andere verstehen durch personenzentrierte Interaktion*)**

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I was quite delighted by the immersion into the person-centered approach that *Person-Centered Communication: Theory, Skills and Practice* provides its reader. Renata Motschnig and Ladislav Nykl bring to their writing many years of experience in their respective fields of computer science and psychotherapy, as well as teaching, parenting, and participating in many, many person-centered groups. The authors' long experience in assimilation and implementation of the approach shows forth on every page. Both are Czech and now residing in Austria. It is a pleasure to read the beautiful English of this translation by Motschnig.

The authors intended that this book find a wide audience; I hope that it will. They bring to the reader's consideration Carl Rogers' "overarching contribution to better interpersonal understanding" and point out that:

... [T]he quality of communication that is in the foreground of this book can also be considered as a key competence that transcends disciplines and cultures and is ever more needed by our intertwined and networked society (Motschnig & Nykl, 2014, p. 10).

While delivering what its subtitle suggests, theory, skills and practice, the book somewhat defies categorization; it appears to be an easy-reading self-help book for improving one's relationships and one's writing, but it definitely serves well as a textbook in interpersonal communication and writing, and, also, as a thoughtfully written treatise on the person-centered approach. As the latter, its delivery of person-centered theory and implementation is nuanced in a manner one might expect from experienced client-centered therapists who are fluent in empathic, respectful and transparent self-expression as well as in empathic acceptance of the other. It contains many examples from family life, therapy practice, and writing tasks, including memos and emails.

The book is formatted in textbook style with shaded, shaped and bordered text boxes and bold section headings. At first sight, I was taken aback by this presentation, which suggested to me a didactic skills and application version of person-centeredness. Now, thanks to the transparency of communication within the book and the authors' clear presentations of theory, self-development, implementation and

relatedness, I understand and appreciate the book's format as empathic, constructive and facilitative to a wide swathe of readers. It is a highly practical guidebook for implementation of the person-centered attitudes for individuals in any field of endeavor, and this therapist enjoyed and benefited from reading it.

The authors take the reader on a stroll through Rogers' (1959) landmark theory statement, including the theory of therapy, the theory of interpersonal relationship, deteriorating and improving communication, and the applications to family life, education and learning, group leadership, and group tension and conflict. The book further addresses themes of self-development that we find in *On Becoming a Person* (Rogers, 1961).

For me, the frosting on the cake was reading the sections on online communication and writing. A list of writing style guidelines complements and rivals the classics of style that most of us have on our bookshelves. These general writing guides are short and clear. A brief essay on the prose style of Carl Rogers highlights the art of the book in hand and also reminded me why I so enjoy and appreciate reading the works of our giant psychologist-visionary. He said:

We may say then that psychotherapy is good communication, within and between men. We may also turn this statement around and it will still be true. Good communication is always therapeutic (Rogers, 1961, p. 330, cited by Motschnig & Nykl, p. 151).

I would say that the same is true of art. It facilitates communication within the person and between persons. Here we have a beautifully written book that is imbued with empathy for its reader and clarity of purpose as it illuminates its content.

References

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