Statement of where person was at the start of the course

I looked around at my new group and so much seemed different from certificate, new faces, strangers in “my” group, I recall feeling less closeness towards them than old colleagues. I found comfort from my alliance with colleagues from my certificate group, I knew the Tutor, safety in knowing the collage geography and I recall feeling an “its ok, I will welcome you into this group”. The truth is I was just as much a newcomer as everyone else; the group was not an extension of the certificate crowd but a new and beautifully individual group with its own dynamics and life where I would forge relationships of a different kind. I was at a new beginning.

I recall welcoming the coursework, hungering for the reading list, ravaging the handbook
for clues of what the next two years held and at the same time feeling apprehension around my competency level to meet requirements.

“Courage, the capacity to act in spite of known fears, risks and uncertainty.” BACP (2010) Ethical framework for good practice in Counselling & Psychotherapy

I was called into the director’s office at work and told I could no longer have the afternoons to study. I felt a sinking feeling, fear of loss mixed with bitter resentment at them taking away something I loved. I had to renegotiate my terms of employment and recall finding comfort from the moral qualities outlined in the BACP framework mostly courage, I said if I can’t study I will leave.
Personal Growth experienced during the course suitably illustrated.

A way of being.
4 words that sum up a lifetime of work from Carl Rogers became one of the most profound growth experiences I have experienced in all my days.
I experienced a powerful overflow from my study life into my personal life, theory became practice and this practice became part of me, the core conditions embedded in my daily activities. An example: professionally I work in sales, an environment where I have excelled using activities include manipulation, persuasion and closing the deal at all costs and on occasions I have been economical with the truth to get my desired result. I had mastered the art of the chameleon, becoming whoever I needed to be to suit the buyer.

“In the ordinary interactions of life congruence is probably the most important element. Congruence, or genuineness, involves letting the other person know "who you are" emotionally.” Carl Rogers a way of being

A change process took place in me, incongruence and manipulation no longer fitted who I was becoming, pretending to be someone other than me screamed “no” at the level of my soul. I found myself unable to be anything but truthful, the manipulation replaced by positive regard for the buyer’s thoughts and feelings; I became a person cantered sales person moved from the rigidity of making the sale to the fluidity of just being me. My way of being has changed. The paradox is, since becoming in congruent my business dealings, since allowing myself to be me, my sales success has more than doubled and I have received promotion in recognition.

Let’s get a Chinky for tea!

“All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others” George Orwell
animal farm
I would never have considered myself racist, perish the thought, but prejudice had lay dormant and silently become part of my belief system posing as fact born from my own experience. Ethnicity and diversity was the most powerful module of the course and had the most effect on shifting my perceptions. Growing up in 70’s South Africa as a child I accepted without question that white people were more equal than blacks.

The equalities module caused me to feel uneasy, a mixture of shame and guilt arose which I covered up by being incongruent and pretending differentiation did not exist within me. Skills sessions with colleague’s uncovered feelings from my childhood, bringing them into the light and reason of today and the walls of my own denial came tumbling down. I was left feeling vulnerable with questions surrounding my own morels as a human being and the task of building a new set of beliefs based on the truths that lay before me. I understood that any prejudice would distort my relationship with certain clients so I decided to take it to personal counselling.

I walked in to my personal counselling to find a lady sitting in a wheelchair. I had the opportunity to explore ethnicity and diversity in my therapy and this changed me and my practice. I have since counselled an Indian woman who suffers under the tyranny of her cast system; the sessions have been deep and meaningful.
I am so passionate about my newfound freedom from prejudice that I selected the Equalities Act 2010 as the legislation for my portfolio, a remarked change from feeling uncomfortable and wanting to hide. I have changed fundamentally; I no longer say “let’s get a Chinky for tea”

He’s actually a nice guy.

“The facts are always friendly, every bit of evidence one can acquire, in any area, leads one that much closer to what is true.” Carl Rogers.

The most profound change has been the change in me towards me. Before starting the journey I never really considered me as part of my life, I was just driving this machine that was constantly trying to impress, fix and change everything around me. I felt that everything would be ok if other people would change, I would have success if I got the promotion, my life was externalised to such an extent that I didn’t know where I stopped and the world began. The personal development groups started as a place of discomfort where I would sit pretending that the silence didn’t make me feel uneasy, I would only add to the group if I could reference it to theory I was learning on the course. I found myself reading every book I could get my hands on to fuel the constant demand of theoretical quotes needed for me to feel I was contributing. Slowly a change occurred, the silence that was so heavy before somehow seemed welcome and I found myself able to share my
feelings that came up in the here and now with no pressure for it to be clever or fit any theory. The UPR, congruence and empathy expressed towards me by the group set me free to be me. A me I didn’t know even existed. This new “me” came at a price, the price of accepting that it was not the external that needed to change but me. Ouch that was painful, to think that my very own thoughts and views were fallible and that I wasn’t allays right. Acceptance has brought freedom to know and accept myself for who I am warts and all and you know what? I’m actually a nice guy.

Feedback received from other group members and comments about feedback

Hay, teacher, leave those clients alone!

I recall feeling frustration during professional discussion with the way client’s material was being handled in what I perceived as a non-person centred way. I had to dig deep to express my feelings and I clearly recall the flood of emotion that rose up in me, I knew this was not going to be a popular statement but I felt I would be incongruent if I sat on it. The group listened as I put forward my point and the facilitator paraphrased the main points for his and the groups clarification.

My views were met with a degree of challenge where the group explained their feelings on the matter and I recall the disagreement being unanimous. I left the group feeling lighter for having shared my feelings and a number of colleagues approached me afterwards to thank me for my courage. This was not the end of this issue but merely the beginning. The scenario played over in my head for most days of the following week but this time it was different. I was processing the feedback I had received and my perception was beginning to change, I was moving from a fixed view to a more fluid acceptance that not everything in life is black and white, that there is a grey area and sometimes this is needed. As a result of this encounter I have found my perception has widened, I gladly embrace a wider acceptance of modality and see the intertwining of the philosophies on a theoretical level. I feel this encounter has moved me forward in my thinking and views and who knows, I may even consider study of a different model in future years.

And the flower goes to….

text doesn’t have to be negative for me to learn from it, I find it interesting that the question is worded to paint feedback as being negative. I found in my life that negative feedback has been easier to take than positive feedback. At school when I was told I wouldn’t amount to anything because of my laziness, I kind of agreed and that sat well with me. When the feedback was positive, an uneasy feeling came up in my stomach and I would find it easier to disbelieve the feedback putting it down to the giver being incongruent rather than accepting it. On the residential weekend we gave flowers, I
listened to the brief and assured myself that I would receive no flowers as I don’t share the
closeness within the group that I see with the others. I got a flower and positive feedback
about my strength within the group my feeling was this was a charitable gesture so that I
didn’t feel left out. I got another flower and another and another still form different
colleagues with different feedbacks, all positive. I don’t recall all the words of the positive
feedback but what I do know is that that exercise will be with me for the rest of my days, it
was the day that I looked at the evidence and realised I was accepted, prized and valued.
This has changed the way I move forward, shaken the doubt from me and I now walk with
a new found freedom that I am who I am and that’s ok for me.

**Slow down, you move to fast**
One of the most valuable feedback comments came from you Rory. I am quite driven
which is not always a good thing. In personal therapy I have considered that this may be
about me trying to catch the stuff I missed when I was younger. My drive is evident in my
professional career and in the thirst for knowledge surrounding the things I put my hand
to. Clients do not share my drive and during a tutorial it was put to me that I may need to
watch the pace I work at with clients to avoid dragging them along at my pace, to fit my
agenda of getting them well.

I was totally blind to this but took the feedback and evaluated it, I recorded sessions with
clients and listened to them and I could almost hear my expectation for the client to
actuate. It was almost as if I were willing them through the stages of process “come on,
let’s get some self-actualising going” having the feedback allowed me to see this and it is
something I have taken to supervision and worked on. One of the solutions I now use is to
have at least 15 minutes to myself before a client arrives at my practice, this is time to
change gear and put my day, my agenda away to make place for the client to bring theirs.
My practice has improved and now clients guide the way, I follow trusting they will find
where they need to go, if they walk into doors and chose not to open them then that’s ok,
this is their journey, not mine.

**List of strengths and limitations**

**Limitations**
I have noted a tendency to head towards burnout, I am so keen to give everything I have
that I sometimes neglect myself. I understand that if I am exhausted I am unable to be
there for my clients and that I have a duty of care to myself first but still seem to burn the
candle at both ends.

Strive for perfection. I am conscious that I have a “get it right at all costs” attitude. This
may be useful in business but has little place in my practice where I can find myself
putting expectations on myself and my clients.
Endings are a little sketchy for me. My past experience was such that endings tended to be catastrophic leading to personal pain and I developed coping strategies for dealing with this one of which is to avoid the situation. I continue to work on this in supervision and I am slowly recognising that if I don’t look too far back the recent endings in my own life have been moves to positive change.

**Strengths**

Empathy, this one word is so important to me. I feel oneness in my sessions and can truly feel the subjective world of the client. This almost magical way of being is not something that I can explain or show you yet I know my clients feel its presence in our sessions.

**Drive**

the same drive that is down as a limitation goes down on the positive side as it’s a driving force that leads me to excel. I look forward to future CPD and building a practice; I look forward to the marketing and business side of the journey and know that my drive will stand me in good stead.

**Learning**

this is the most surprising for me and not a strength I ever thought I would list when considering myself. School was a blur of disappointment for me and my parents and I resigned myself to the fact that I would not amount to much. I feel I have been resourceful in applying myself to the learning process and am surprised that “learning” is now regarded as a friend and strength. I know it may be corny but putting on a black gown and cap for me will be an accomplishment as previously it was impossibility. This week my mother gave me a “congratulations” card for my achievement in the skills assignment, she was bursting with pride.

Statement of where the person is at the end of the course, their counselling philosophy and plans for future development.

I find myself less certain at the end than I was at the beginning. This started as a hunger to get a qualification, a professional diploma with my name on it as I saw this as a passport to the future. Now at the end I see the diploma is worthless, it’s a piece of paper that will probably end up in a box, the true passport is the development within me and the changes in how I act and interact an organism with my world.

I take with me my philosophy that counselling is a spiritual journey where self-actualisation is the process of spiritual growth. I am comfortable with me and no longer feel uncomfortable in situations which affords me a level of freedom to go out and interact without anxiety, this is a positive way for me to be going forward as I often used to avoid any situation that was uncomfortable. My most significant learning has been in facing discomfort and I look forward to the discomfort that life now has to teach and guide me.
I look forward to continued my professional development and see myself at the beginning, not end, of my academic journey.

I had so many fixed plans at the beginning of the course and now I find myself faced with so many fluid opportunities that there is no room for the fixed plans, they are of the old me.

I intend lifting my legs up and shouting wheeee as loud as I can as I allow myself to be carried on the current of life, I will go where it takes me and not try to swim against it as I have done for many years.

Thank you Rory for being an orchestrator, without a guide on the hill I feel certain I would have got tiered and lost. You allowed me to believe in me and for this I am grateful.

Bibliography