

An Interview Between Carl Rogers and Grace

London October 1983

The tape begins towards the end of an introductory comment by Carl:

... (Demonstration Interview> ... I don't like that term, it is an interview in front of a group, but it's an interview for real, it's not something for show, it is the real thing. So it's a good thing that it's an interview in front of a group, but not "demonstration", it sounds as though it's for show.

And now I'd like to take a moment to shut the camera out of my mind, and the microphone and the people and get centred in myself and maybe you would too, Grace.

Carl: OK? ... I don't know what you might like to talk about but I'd be very willing to listen.

Grace: (pause) I'm just at the moment feeling how afraid I am of talking to you.

Carl: Frightened of me, or frightened of the situation, or both?

Grace: In a way it's both 'cos ... it's like ... me being in this situation am I forced to, and I mean when like I say "forced" I don't mean externally, I mean forced in a way to meet with you and also to meet with myself

Carl: So you have to make yourself ... come forward to meet.

Grace: Yeh, and I'm just thinking how much I avoid doing that. I feel OK. about meeting people and ... spending a little bit of time with them ... but there's always a point where I want to run away and I think a lot of the time I do ... when it feels like it's getting too close.

Carl: So you go a little ways in meeting them but there's some point when you feel "No ... now we would really meet if we went any further" and you want to run away.

Grace: Yes ... and ... I'm thinking that it's funny it's, I'm not afraid of what it is in you ... I'm afraid of what's in me and, it's like in a way that I can con myself about what's in me if I don't meet with you, if I meet with you I have to give you something of me.

Carl: So the block is not in me, it's that if you go too far you'll reveal something of you.

(pause)

Grace: I .. er .. For a long time I've felt like there, there is this thing in me and I don't know what it is ... and ... sometimes when I hear other people talking I... and it's not so much the words that they're using but the feelings that I can sense in them ... of ... um ... I feel heavy and I know that their feelings are touching the same kind of feelings in me.

Carl: They're touching that secret part of you that you don't quite know what it is.

Grace: Mm, a lot of the time that is hurt or pain and sometimes it's anger as well.

Carl: But you feel that whatever this is that sort of frightening within is of negative feelings of pain and hurt and possibly anger.

Grace: (nods) And if I get in touch with them that they will overwhelm me and there's a fear of getting lost in them somehow and of not being able to find my way back to the joy that I can feel.

Carl: That if you ever let yourself really live in or feel those feelings, maybe you'd never find your way back to pleasantness and happiness and joy.

Grace: 'Cos I feel like I can't let go of things like hurt and I can't let go of things like resentment ... I want to, I want to let go of those things, but I don't know how, how to do that, so I don't want to explore them. I feel that if I explore them they will always be with me and I've kind of learnt to experience joy...but having said that to you I'm questioning whether it's real.

Carl: Makes you wonder whether maybe the joy would feel more real if you were able to explore some of those frightening feelings.

Grace: (Nods) (Pause>

Carl: But they are scary.

Grace: And I've put them away for such a long time it seems like

Carl: Resentment and hurt and everything like that have just been kept and pushed down for a long, long time

Grace: And there's this rational part of me that says that I don't have a right to feel those things and that I can understand the reasons why the hurt is there and that I should care for the other person that gave me that hurt and it's like in caring for the other person I kind of have to hide the hurt, that, they've caused me.

Carl: So you kind of talk it all away and explain why you shouldn't really feel those feelings are not necessary ... and you shouldn't feel them in relation to the person who caused them.

Grace: Um ... (laughs) ... I've just realised while you were feeding that back that I know the person who caused them, or ... (pause) ... hah ... I feel a bit funny about saying "caused" ... I know how much ... I think I'm doing it again, I'm taking away everything from the other person and saying that they didn't cause it ... I'm the cause ... I was just about to rationalise that I'm the person who caused it and that they couldn't possibly have caused it,

Carl: You can't feel any blame for that person ... it must be you ... and that somehow you do feel that resentment and hurt

Grace: (Nodding)

Carl: ... and you know the person that it's directed toward.

(Pause)

Grace: I feel like I have to put myself in a box that ... (Pause) ... I do, I do feel the resentment but I don't want to because ... how do you get rid of the feelings and ... like that? ... and I don't want to live those feelings

Carl: It's safer to keep it in a box and yet you know very well that you do feel it and you're scared ... if you feel it, then what? will you ever get rid of it?

Grace: (Nods> ... (Long pause) ... I'd like to tell you the person I feel this for, and it's ... actually it's not just one person it's my parents, my mother and my father, but it's more with my mother because she's, I don't know ... I feel it more or it's awakened more in me with my mother because she's around and my father isn't. (Pause) ... And ... I kind of feel like ... I was going to say "they" ... I, like I trapped myself in the past, somehow, but things that I feel angry about ... from way back ... and I'm still stuck there and I can't move on until I've dealt with it, but I don't know how to do that.

Carl: So you know it's your mother mostly, and you know the feelings that were stirred up, were stirred up a long time ago, but how you can work through those, that you're not quite clear.

Grace: (Nods) ... (Pause) ... And now that causes me to ... er ... not be me ... I, I think about those things I said to my mother like "I love you and I understand why those things happened" and things like that, but I've never been able to show her how hurt I feel about it all.

Carl: Again you can explain it away that there are reasons and so on, it's OK., but you've never been able to let her see the hurt and pain that is in you ... and that somehow that keeps you from being all of you.

Grace: I feel like I have to protect her somehow

Carl: Mm, you've got to care for her

Grace: And so every day I push down the hurt and I push down the anger and I push down the resentment and I just ... and I'm somebody else

Carl: That your daily task is to push 'em down, push 'em down, push 'em down and be somebody that isn't quite real.

Grace: And every day I spend time trying to get in touch with the feelings that I know are there but are so far away, and so I'm stuck in the past thinking "Oh! I can't relate to this person because I'm afraid of, of these feelings inside me and that's all because of these feelings that happened in the past and if only I could feel the feelings but I can't and ..."

Carl: So you see it all very clearly, but to try to get in touch with, or to express those feelings of hurt and resentment, that's where you ... can't do it (A few words unintelligible)

Grace: I, er I get rid of little bits of it on other people, you know you can do something really simple to me and I can resent it, you know and I enjoy feeling resentful.

Carl: Your feeling you let out a little bit of it even though you exaggerate the situation in order to feel that resentment, and it lets out a little of the resentment from the past.

Grace: That's exactly it, I didn't use the word "exaggeration" but, er, situations occur sometimes and I exaggerate them so that they can fit into this pattern so that I can feel the resentment and (laughs>

Carl: So you're quite ingenious in finding ways of expressing bits of it

Grace: Yeah ... I am ... (Long pause> ... (Sighs and shakes head)

Carl: I wonder what that shaking of your head means ... It looks like you're saying "Isn't possible"

Grace: I was saying "Isn't possible" and I was thinking I can't blame, I can't blame it on anybody that ... and I was thinking I can't ... um ... I wanted to tell you a bit about what happened and ... but then I thought that by telling you I'd kind of be blaming it on something and ...

Carl: It's got to come so carefully that it doesn't blame anybody or anything, you can't just let it out

Grace: That's what's so awful about it, I know it reminded ... I'm running this battle somehow with my emotions, but maybe it is OK. to blame and to say, to get it all out, and then when it's all out maybe I can do something with it that makes it OK. with everybody concerned, but ...

Carl: So it's quite possible that it's OK. to be unreasonable and irrational even, spill things that aren't quite right, because when you might then be able to make it OK. afterwards once they were out.

(Pause)

Grace: I just realised something ... part of the hurt is about not being considered and I'm talking about when I was young and my parents kept on getting back together again and separating and getting back together again and separating and I went into a children's home and all sorts of things that I wasn't considered, and now what I'm doing is not considering myself, I'm not ... it's like I can't consider myself, I don't think that I'm important enough to be considered.

Carl: That childhood experience of being shuttled around and not being considered in the situation ... er ... resulted in you not being able to consider and take care of yourself ... (Pause> ... and you must have felt very keenly the business of being treated as an object, just put here, put there and not really, not really considered, not really cared about

Grace: I mean how can you say what you want when you're four.

(Pause)

Carl: How can you possibly say when you're four years old "Hey! look at me, I need to be considered, I need to be (hugged?)

Grace: (Weeps)

Carl: I guess you're saying and feeling it now ... (Pause) ... and it hurt like hell.

(Pause)

Grace: (Blows nose) ... and even now I can't consider myself, I feel like I've got to wipe the tears away and talk to you and ...

Carl: Don't have any undue show of emotion ... got to be polite and proper

Grace: I always feel guilty when I'm crying, you know, I always feel that I'm not allowed to cry.

Carl: Don't cry ... be a big girl ... but when the tears were dropping that was the four year old feeling very hurt.

(Pause)

Grace: And angry, very angry

Carl: And angry (Unintelligible) Damn you, why don't you consider me?

Grace: (Wipes tears) Now my rational mind has come back and I'm saying I understand how it was with your mother, she's told you a bit about that

Carl: So don't feel those feelings, there were reasons for your mother's actions ... mustn't feel those feelings

Grace: She'd feel very hurt if I ... It's almost like a reverse ... I feel like I have to mother her sometimes, like I have to reassure her that it's OK.

Carl: You didn't hurt me

Grace: Yeah.

Carl: It's not true, but still you must be a good mother to her.

Grace: And that makes me angry sometimes too.

Carl: Why do I have to be her mother

Grace: Yeah ... (Pause) ... I'm frightened now that I might get lost in what I'm feeling.

Carl: It's scary to let yourself down into those feelings, you might not be able to get out.

Grace: But it almost feels like self pity and I don't know I can accept that, that I pity myself or I feel sorry for myself.

Carl: You almost feel ashamed of that but you do feel sorry for yourself.

Grace: (Nods>

Carl: You realise "I went through a helluva lot" ... (pause) "I really do feel pity for myself".

Grace: (Laughs) I've washed it away now. I'm thinking about that time when I was in the children's home, it was a Catholic home, it was a convent and they used to say things like that, like, you know, everyone's got this thing about pity yourself, that you should think about other people and that was so much around me at the time and I think I really learnt it very well.

Carl: You just don't feel things like that, you think about other people ... a good lesson in sitting on your feelings ... You learnt it all too well.

Grace: It wasn't such a good lesson; I feel good because ... I feel I'm just beginning to feel those feelings ... I talked about they're coming out a little by little.

Carl: It's not quite so frightening because you realise "Yes, I am in touch with them and they're not overwhelming me coming out little by little"

(Long pause)

Grace: I somehow wish I could explore more with you.

Carl: You wish?

Grace: I wish I could explore more with you, because I don't feel frightened with you

Carl: You feel that this is a fairly safe place, that I'm a fairly safe person.

Grace: Yes.

Carl: You'd like to get at more of it. There's the hurt and anger of being shuttled back and forth and there's the suppression of the convent, the orphanage, but there are others.

Grace: (Nods) There's a lot more.

Carl: A lot more.

Grace: At the moment I don't feel as frightened as I did, although I'm sure that that might come back, that fear.

Carl: But for the moment they don't seem quite so scary.

Grace: And that feels like such a relief because, I was just thinking about all the times that I meet people and how much it stops me from being with people sometimes.

Carl: It's really good to have that fear lessened a little when it's really stopped you from some (Unintelligible)

(Pause)

Grace: And I think I'm also getting the feeling that what's so bad about telling other people that I'm hurt?

Carl: What's the big deal, what's the big crime in saying I'm hurt, I am hurting. Why does that seem so bad?

Grace: And it has

(Pause)

Grace: I think perhaps I was trying to be somebody else.

Carl: Trying to be somebody that you were not.

Grace: Trying to be what other people wanted me to be, I think, I think it's all part of not considering me, and considering other people, what it is that they want from me, how they want me to be.

Carl: So I've got to be what they would like and not consider me.

Grace: I think I'll be me for a while.

Carl: You think you'll be your for a while did you say?

Grace: Yes

Carl: Might be your experiment, huh?

Grace: Yes

Carl: You'll really consider yourself and be yourself and not try to be what other people want you to be. We're going to have to stop in a couple of minutes ... Would you like to stop now?

Grace: Yes

Carl: Good.

Transcribed by Bob Lusty, October 1990.