

Carl Rogers Demonstration Interview

19th July, 1985.

Recorded at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dunlaoghaire

This interview was recorded in front of the participants of the International Cross-cultural Communications Workshop being held in Dunlaoghaire during the week in which this interview was recorded. The interview was video recorded in addition to being recorded on several audio tape decks.

C.R. With all this mechanical arrangement I always feel sort of fragmented. And I'd like to take a moment or two just to be silent and get connected with myself and maybe you would like to do the same.

(Long pause).

C.R. Okay?

J. Mhmm.

C.R. I haven't had a chance to get to know you and I have no idea what you might want to talk about, but I would be very glad to hear whatever it is.

J. I think what I want to talk about is the way in which I find it difficult to say No. I work as a counsellor, but not only in my work but outside my work I find it really difficult to say No to people. It's like I care too much.

C.R. Mhmm.

J. If I say No, I feel guilty. It's like I'm only there for other people. It's very unusual for me to take anything for me as a person, as an individual.

C.R. Does that mean that you find it difficult to protect yourself?

J. I think it means I find, yes, I find it difficult to protect myself outwardly. But inwardly I think I have built up a shell; so that I don't, it's like nobody really sees who I am any more.

C.R. So you don't say No and you do a lot of caring things but somehow inside you say No. You build a shell that ... mmm.

J. Yes, it's sort of a, it's like a sort of a wall around me

C.R. A wall.

J. ... emotionally. So that nobody sees what I really feel. I see what they feel, I give to them, they drain me dry, but nobody sees me, nobody listens to me.

C.R. Nobody listens to you but that's partly because you put up a wall so that they can't see you or listen to you, is that it?

J. I guess so, yes.

C.R. So, yes, you give and you listen and you help and you care; but for you, there is nobody that listens, nobody that gets through to you.

- J. Yes, that's right.
- C.R. It must be sort of lonely in there.
- J. Yes, it is.... I don't know why. I don't know what to do to stop it, to prevent it. I don't know what to do to reach out to people from that loneliness. I don't know why I feel like that. I haven't always felt like that. But, yes I have always felt like that. But not all the time. Just some of the time I feel like that.
- C.R. It's become a more pressing problem, is that what you're saying?
- J. Yes, yes it's more pressing now because I am beginning to realise I need time for me, I need to explore that loneliness, that isolation.
- C.R. I need to let somebody in.(pause) Maybe that's not right.
- J. Yes, yes but it's like that frightens me.
- C.R. Huhuh, huhuh. That's a little too much. At least you want to explore your loneliness to find out 'why', but is it feasible that people who hear you would listen to you and be with you.
- J. Mm, yes, I sort of, friends see me as, they call me Mother Earth. 'Cos I give all the time.
- C.R. Always available.
- J. Yes, yes; night, day it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter what. It doesn't matter what I'm doing, when, I'm always available.
- C.R. I'll always give to you.
- J. Yes.
- C.R. Call me in the middle of the night, that's okay.
- J. Yes, but like, you know, I don't feel anybody gives that back to me and that's lonely.
- C.R. There isn't anybody that you feel you could call in the middle of the night.
- J. I guess not, no, no, no, not really, no not any more.
- C.R. Anybody can turn to you for help, but where do you turn for help? You don't know.
- J. No. I've lots of good friends, But, my husband is very good, we're very close, but it's like nobody really hears me, the me that's inside.
- C.R. Nobody really hears the person behind that fence.
- J. Yes.
- C.R. Not your husband, not your friends.
- J. I don't think so, no. I'm not sure whether I hear it (laughs).
- C.R. Huhuh, huhah.
- J. I'm not sure whether I'm really in touch with that. Loneliness and isolation.
- C.R. Maybe you don't even know the person who is behind the fence. Maybe you're not really in touch with her.
- J. No, I don't think I am. I think I have a sense of her.
- C.R. Mm.
- J. But I'm not really in touch with her. And I think the sense of it is that It's like that person is not really any good.
- C.R. Oh, that sounds like her.
- J. You know, not really any value ...
- C.R. So you're not really well acquainted with that person behind the fence but you do have a sense that she's no good, she's not worth anything much.
- J. Yes, she's selfish, self centred, arrogant, wants things for herself. I guess she comes through

sometimes, but not really, not often, its rare.

- C.R. You are sort of ashamed of that selfish, arrogant and miserable person that's inside.
- J. Yes.
- C.R. Even though sometimes she pokes her way out through the fence.
- J. Yes, but then I feel even more ashamed and push her back down and push her back inside.
- C.R. Mm Mm terrible mm mm.
- J. Yea, its like I need to ... I need to experience that part of me 'cos it's unknown, it's just a sort of vague feeling.
- C.R. You would really like to experience that sort of selfish, greedy, arrogant person; get to know her.
- J. As you say that I think, oh no, I don't want to know her.
- C.R. She doesn't want that.
- J. Yea (laughs), yea.
- C.R. Stay away from me.
- J. Yea, I don't want to know you, go away. I have to be good, I have to be kind, I have to care, I have to give, I haven't got to be any of that person that's not nice and kind and caring and giving and never takes from anybody else but always continues giving, giving, giving.
- C.R. So that's the person you have to be. You can't get acquainted with this selfish, worthless person.
- J. No. I just ...
- C.R. Somehow that would be frightening.
- J. Yes, I guess it does frighten me. Yes it does frighten me. It's like, like the dark side of me.
- C.R. I don't want to look at that dark side.
- J. No, I turn my back on it all the time, but I know it's there and it keeps sort of prodding me, saying I'm still here.
- C.R. You may not want to be in touch with it but it keeps telling you "I'm still here."
- J. Yes.
- C.R. And don't you forget it.
- J. Yea, yea.
- C.R. It sort of won't let you alone.
- J. No, it won't, no. It sort of turns on, you know.
- C.R. You can't shake it off.
- J. No, when I try to ... to care; it's like it's there clinging on, saying you know, I'm still here, what about me?
- C.R. When you are caring for somebody else, it nags away at you.
- J. Yes, its clawing at me, it's pulling me. It's after me.
- C.R. Clawing at you.
- J. Yea, so I sometimes wonder whether I really do care, at all, about anybody whether I'm capable of caring about anybody.
- C.R. Maybe that person inside keeps me from really caring about anybody.
- J. Yea, I guess so, but I don't know what to do about that. I don't know how to integrate it, how to make it whole, how to accept that, that person inside of me.
- C.R. How could you possibly accept that, that kind of miserable person?

J. I can't accept that miserable person, I don't like that part of me. I guess I don't like it so I try to push it away, try to reject it and force it down and push it further and further and deeper and deeper inside.

C.R. It's not a part of me I won't have anything to do with it, and still it claws at you.

J. Yea it keeps coming back and clawing, yea. mm yea, pulling me down, yea. Sometimes it makes me feel, sometimes it does pull me down it depresses me, I end up feeling really, really low, depressed and I don't want to talk to anybody, I don't want to see anybody, I just want to be left alone and sort of like leave me with my misery and sadness and I don't want that.

C.R. Don't come in because I'm alone with this dark part of me and I don't want anybody.

J. Yea.

C.R. ... in touch with me. You're also saying, I can't possibly accept that miserable person. How can I accept someone who is ...

J. I can't understand that because I accept misery from other people all the time. If I can't accept my own how can I really accept theirs, I guess?

C.R. So if somebody else says I'm greedy and selfish and arrogant, I could accept that.

J. Yea, yea.

C.R. Sure.

J. Yea, yea, yea. I would say that's OK. Its OK. to be like that, we're all like that. But I don't accept mine.

C.R. You seem to be a good counsellor for somebody else.

J. But not for me. No, no, yea, I have to sort that out, because I don't think I'm genuine in saying that's OK. you can be like that. If I don't accept that in me I have to ...

C.R. There's something wrong with that?

J. Yea, it's a mismatch.

C.R. Mm mm. How can it be that I can say it's OK. to be selfish, I understand that, like everybody. And then, but I can't possibly accept that I'm like that.

J. (quietly) yea.

C.R. If someone, it strikes me you're so much harder on yourself than you would be on a client.

J. (quietly) I am.

C.R. Much more judgemental.

J. (quietly) yes, yes.

C.R. That you can be a miserable person.

J. Yea.

C.R. Selfish, greedy and arrogant and clawing at me.

J. You need stamping on.

C.R. That's right. Stay down there, take a deeper place.

J. Yea, you're a naughty girl.

C.R. Mm mm.

J. You're naughty, you should not be here.

C.R. I don't have any place in my life for a naughty girl.

J. Mm mm. I have learnt to be good and kind and gentle and giving and I don't want you in my life.

C.R. Quit sticking around.

J. Yea, yea.

C.R. Quit hanging around.

J. Yea, leave me alone.

C.R. Go away.

J. Well, I guess if it did I would lose something, I wouldn't understand that. In other people, I guess I wouldn't understand that when they are like that selfish and ...

C.R. So it's that part of you that helps you to understand the misery and the selfishness and the arrogance in somebody else.

J. Yea, but I don't show mine, that's OK.

C.R. Nevertheless, it's a precious part of you because it helps you understand others. It sounds like that's what you're saying.

J. Yea, yea, yea, Yes it's like I can only really understand others when I'm in touch with that part of me as well, and. Well I suppose if I get rid of it, if I push it out then I can't get in touch with it. So how can I get in touch with it in other people.

C.R. You realise that if you could put it away entirely that would be a real loss for you.

J. (Mutters)

C.R. So in some sort of crazy way, you do value it in yourself because it makes possible being helpful to other people.

J. Mmm I never realised that before, I never realised I needed it. I thought it ...

C.R. That you were better off without it.

J. Mmm.

C.R. Then you realise ...

J. Something I had to grow out of and I had to grow and to be more caring and more kind and more good.

C.R. Uh uh and leave that away entirely, just be the nice girl, caring helpful person.

J. Mmm, yea.

C.R. Now suddenly you realise that I need that person.

J. Because if I haven't got it I can't be, I can't be caring and good and ...

C.R. It's pretty helpful.

J. ... mm (Pause)

C.R. Mm. that sort of hits me.

J. Yes, it's sort of saying how do I, I mean if I need it I've got to stop abusing it.

C.R. Uhuh, Uhuh. If you need it you've got to stop hitting (?) it.

J. Yes, I've got to start ... caring for it as well.

C.R. It's hard to say that, but you realise, if I need it I've got to start caring for that naughty little girl.

J. Yes, I guess that's going to be hard to do.

C.R. Uhuh, hard to say it and even harder to do.

J. Yea, mmm, yes because it means I have to make demands on people.

C.R. Mmmmmm.

J. I've got to say no.

C.R. You would have to say, make room for all of me, not just my good caring helpful kind generous self.

J. Yea, yea. I've got to start saying to people look I'm shitty as well. You know take that as well, not just, look I have to start saying I'm not going to listen to you right now.

C.R. Mmmmmm.

J. I have to break into conversations when someone is talking to me and they start telling me their problems even though I'm with them socially, 'cos that always happens to me, I have to start sort of changing the subject or something and doing something or saying, I don't want to hear this right now.

C.R. Yea, you'd just be tough enough to say. I'm not ready to listen to you now. I don't want to listen to you now.

J. Yea.

C.R. I need the time to myself, or I need something different for myself.

J. Yea, yea.

C.R. Wow.

J. Oooo

C.R. Who me?

J. Yea (laughs) it's a bit scary.

C.R. It is scary.

J. Mmm. I guess it could go two ways. I guess I could affirm that in me when I've done it or I guess I could feel guilty and start pushing back down again and that's my choice.

C.R. Mmm Mmm. Suppose I told somebody, no I can't listen to you now, then I could feel very guilty about that, oh, I'm not a helping person, I'm not a good person or you could feel, oh that's OK. that's human.

J. Mmm mmm, I guess it's more me as well to say that.

C.R. It's what.

J. More me.

C.R. Mmm mmm mmm.

J. To say, to say that even if it hurts them.

C.R. Mmm mmm.

J. It's still more me.

C.R. It would be more you if you said that, than to pretend, oh yes, I'm always feeling I don't want to.

J. Mmm Mmm. Yea, and I've done that lots of times.

C.R. You have.

J. Lots and lots of times ... yea, now I guess I've got to go home and practice (general laughter).

C.R. It's quite a job, isn't it.

J. Mmm. Mmm. It's not going to be easy. Yeah, it's not going to be easy. I've got to start letting more of me through.

C.R. Mmm mmm. You need to open up that fence or something and let more of you come out. Even that shitty person, that no good naughty little girl; find a place for her. So it comes into mind. Maybe you should adopt her (general laughter). Sounds like it's your homeless waif.

J. Yea yea, I feel like almost like giving birth to her ... Yes, but she's sort of is homeless.

C.R. She's what?

J. She is homeless.

C.R. Homeless, mmm. That's right.

J. Sort of wandering down the other side with no real place to go.

C.R. She hasn't got any real secure home at all.

J. (very quietly) No, she hasn't. Yea, mmm, she didn't when she was little and she still hasn't.

C.R. Mmm mmm mmm.

J. And it's got to be in me somehow.

C.R. Mmm mmm.

J. It's like, yea I knew her when I was little. She was there, I was there with her, in fact I wasn't good and caring and nice then, I was just her.

C.R. Mmm mmm mmm.

J. But now she's left wandering round somewhere and I've left her out and I ought to take care of her because she's my history, she's my background.

C.R. Mmm mmm mmm. She's you.

J. Yea, she's me, yea. To me she's very ... It's the insecure little child in me, and she's about 6/7 years old, and she's still there.

C.R. You used to know her and be her, yet she's become really unknown.

J. She's not known now.

C.R. A little girl without a home, not accepted, not loved.

J. Yea, she's sort of ... she's the little girl that has put up the, she want's to put up the shell ... shell to protect herself.

C.R. Huhuh huhuh. She needed to have some protection that she wouldn't be completely homeless, rejected person so she put up that shell and hides behind it.

J. Yea.

C.R. Oh. But she needs a lot of loving.

J. (very quietly). I think she does. (long pause). Yes, I guess that's me that's saying I need a lot of loving.

C.R. Mmm mmm.

J. But I never knew that, I thought I could do without it.

C.R. I'm sorry, say it again.

J. I didn't know that, I thought I could do without it. I didn't need love.

C.R. Mmm.

J. All I had to do was give it.

C.R. Just give, give, give.

J. And like if I give, give, give, then maybe somebody will give me some back.

C.R. Now you realise that it's got to start with you, it's got to start with you loving that little girl.

J. I've got to love me before I can ...

C.R. Before your love means very much to somebody else.

J. Yea, before I can really love anybody else, I have to love me it's like, Oh. I've said that before. I've said it to people and it's like a theory when I say it, but to actually ...

C.R. There's nothing new about it, except in your gut.

J. Yea, yea it's like I'm feeling that. I've never felt that before (laughs).

C.R. You've said it, you've heard it, but to feel I really need to love myself in order to love somebody else. You really feel that in you, that's new.

J. Yea, it is that, I've got to start liking me.

C.R. Mmm mmm.

J. I've got to start giving my nice self something of me.

C.R. You've got to be this caring giving person, but now you want to be this caring giving person with

you.

- J. Yea. I want to take care of that child, as if she was one of my children, Oh. I'm going to protect her, I need to protect her.
- C.R. You say as if she were one of your children, it seems to me she is your child.
- J. She is, yea.
- C.R. She is your own child.
- C.J. Yea, she's my first born.
- C.R. That's right.
- J. Yea.
- C.R. And she's led a kind of a sad existence and needs to be ...
- J. Oh. yea, yea, ever since she was about 7. You know I sort of felt like isolated and cut off and got really as if anybody ever really knew who I was and wanted to know who I was, so ... there are sometimes people who didn't want to know and it hurt so I started protecting I guess and building up layers.
- C.R. Put her away and became the sort of person you wanted, a nice giving generous lovely person.
- J. And then everybody would like me. Yea, if I was good and kind and generous and smiled and then people would like me they would ... It's like banging ...
- C.R. Mmmmm.
- J. And I can't do that. People have to learn, they have to accept me as I am.
- C.R. They are going to have to accept all of you. That you're a little girl and some of your selfishness, oh.
- J. Yea. I think that some of the ... yea, may be then some of the sadness will leave that little girl.
- C.R. Uh uh.
- J. Because she's very very sad, you know like nobody, nobody loves her. That's how she feels.
- C.R. That's right.
- J. She knows that that's not true but she feels that nobody loves her.
- C.R. It sounds as if nobody had loved her.
- J. Mmm
- C.R. But you realise that's what I've got to start doing.
- J. I guess, yea I've got to start loving her, then maybe I might really realise that other people love her as well. Because it's always a sort of, er, they only care for me for what they can get from me, they don't really care about me. It's just what they can get, it's just that I'm always there and I have an ever-open ear. You know.
- C.R. But if you're a whole person maybe then they'll begin to love you, not just this generous ...
- J. Yea, yea.
- C.R. I think our time is almost up. You have something you want to say?
- J. I don't know, this is incredible (laughs).
- C.R. (laughing) it's incredible to meet you. But I'm very glad to have made the acquaintance of your little girl.
- J. I'm glad I let her out.
- C.R. Right, mmm mmm.
- J. Yea, yea. I think I knew I was sort of fighting to let her out but I wasn't in touch with that. I was talking to somebody last night and I was trying then to let her out.

- C.R. And now you've had this impulse, its something that hasn't quite happened.
- J. Yes, yes it's not quite happened but maybe now I can go home and be my child.
- C.R. And take care of your personal ...
- J. Yea
- C.R. Well certainly thank you very much.
- J. Thank you.
- C.R. Pleasure, and I wish you all the luck in the world as you go home and try to look after her. I think she's worth looking after.
- J. Thank you.
(They kiss)
- C.R. Would you like to say anything to the group about how the experience felt to you?
- J. Er, I think the word really is, exploration. It felt like an inner exploration of me. It's kind of wonderful. It's like at first I was a bit frightened, I didn't think I could do that but, it was like an unfolding, I could feel the unfolding inside but everything sort of, like, you know, defences coming away.
- C.R. Like peeling an onion.
- J. Yea, yea, yea and then I sort of got scared again because I was in touch with what it was, I was in touch with that little girl and I can see her now, I could see just what she looks like and I couldn't sort of, I was scared to let her in, I guess I tried to push her out again, shove her away at first, but then I sort of. I think I let her through when you recognised her as a little girl. That's when I let her through because you'd seen her and I sort of couldn't do that before that I think she may just sort of gone and hidden in my big toe or something. But I had to sort of let her out, and sort of give her recognition and that, it felt a bit scary, bit risky, but it was OK. just because she was accepted. But I felt she was being accepted by everybody, not just you. That was so good, that it wasn't just you it was I felt everybody in the room was accepting this sort of scared little kid. It was good, I felt that you were with me all the time, even though there were times when I felt I was so, I wasn't with you, I was in me. Sort of getting in contact. But I felt you were with me all the time sort of stayed there and didn't, you're still there, not obtrusive not pressurising but there, ready, open and yes sort of something wide open. It's all like that, that felt good.
- C.R. I know for me I felt that very quickly that I could get in tune with you, I don't know it wasn't difficult and I felt there was one time when I got a little too deep with what I said and you were frightened a little and pulled back.
- J. I didn't know.
- C.R. But, er
- J. It might have been when I sort of, sort of, 'Hang on a minute,' you know, 'I'm going to look after her'.
- C.R. And then when you began to use the metaphor, you began to use metaphors particularly about this dark side of you, the shadowy side. I thought, OK. it's going to be alright and then the little girl was very real to me and I, I just felt well, I felt what I often do in what I have mentioned I think in this group, I felt a sense of awe. It really is incredible how given the opportunity a person does put aside layer after layer after layer. If this is a safe and acceptant relationship; and what you said, you described what I want to be, a companion to a person, in a search I want to be there with them, not pushing ahead not looking behind but just be there with them where they are and I felt good about the way I did that with you. (Pause) I don't know how to make the transition to the large group but I think this is not the time for a lot of intellectual questions about therapy. There will be a group on client-centred therapy this afternoon but I hope maybe now the group could pick up again with its own process, I don't quite know how we go from here to there, but I do appreciate it very much, talking with you.
- J. Thank you.
- C.R. Let's pull back into the group.