

Person-Centred Therapy in Focus  
(Counselling & Psychotherapy in Focus Series)

Paul Wilkins

	7 'Non-Directivity': A Fiction and an Irresponsible Denial of Power?
Loc: 1,730	The Place of 'Non-Directivity' in Person-Centred Therapy
Loc: 1,731	a 'non-directive' approach is seen by some to be a denial of the inevitable power of the therapist
Loc: 1,735	the second of Rogers' six conditions requires that the client is vulnerable or anxious
Loc: 1,736	clients are likely to follow what they perceive as directions from them.
Loc: 1,737	for person-centred therapists to pretend they are non-directive is to deny reality
Loc: 1,738	leads to an avoidance of the real issue of the imbalance of power
Loc: 1,743	the importance of the non-directive approach is found in
Loc: 1,744	Rogers' Counseling and Psychotherapy (1942).
Loc: 1,746	Rogers sets forth the 'characteristics of directive and nondirective viewpoints'.
Loc: 1,747	the basic difference in purpose between these two centres around who chooses the client's goals.
Loc: 1,748	Nondirective counselling is based on the assumption that the client has the right to select his own life goals, even though these may be at variance with the goals his counsellor might choose for him.
Loc: 1,750	if the individual has a modicum of insight into himself and his problems, he will be likely to make this choice wisely.
Loc: 1,753	the second sentence leaves more to discussion and debate,
Loc: 1,754	as to the source of the client's insight.
Loc: 1,754	Does it, for example, arise from an innate actualising tendency or the well-crafted interpretations or interventions of the skilled therapist?
Loc: 1,755	Kirschenbaum and Henderson (1990a: 62),
Loc: 1,757	the nondirective approach overemphasized specific counsellor techniques,
Loc: 1,757	did not give enough attention to the counsellor's attitudes toward the client and how the client perceived the relationship.
Loc: 1,758	he came to believe that the quality of the relationship ... [was more important in] therapeutic change than the specific techniques the therapist employed.
Loc: 1,760	quite early on, Rogers ceased to call his approach to therapy 'nondirective'
Loc: 1,762	Non-directivity in the sense of assiduously avoiding imposing the therapist's will upon the client and trusting that the client will progress in the most appropriate

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	way (that is, belief in the actualising tendency) remains at the heart of the approach.
Loc: 1,764	What Does it Mean to be Non-Directive?
Loc: 1,766	One view is that 'non-directive therapy' was a precursor of client-centred/person-centred
Loc: 1,767	that implicit in the change of name is a recognition that therapy cannot be 'non-directive'.
Loc: 1,767	other view is that non-directivity remains at the core of person-centred practice.
Loc: 1,770	there is still an assumption by some outside the approach that person-centred practitioners are relatively passive,
Loc: 1,779	Although the term 'non-directive counselling' may be out of favour,
Loc: 1,781	a non-directive attitude remains fundamental to the approach
Loc: 1,781	the theoretical basis
Loc: 1,783	a non-directive attitude
Loc: 1,783	responding mainly in the client's frame of reference)
Loc: 1,784	developed and maintained 'because of [the] commitment to, respect for, and trust in the client
Loc: 1,788	clients formulate their own goals and that the therapist is a companion on the journey, not a leader.
Loc: 1,789	by tracking and responding (empathically, acceptingly and congruently)
Loc: 1,790	that person-centred therapy 'works' and only by that.
Loc: 1,791	Mearns and Thorne (2000: 190–1)
Loc: 1,792	person-centred practitioners and theorists in their attention to directivity 'have been decidedly naive over the last 60 years'.
Loc: 1,793	the person-centred view of non-directivity has been essentially structural
Loc: 1,794	whereas a functional view might be more appropriate.
Loc: 1,795	The importance of directivity is not in what the counsellor does but in what the client experiences.
Loc: 1,796	Whether my behaviour as a therapist looks directive or non-directive to my peers is entirely irrelevant
Loc: 1,797	The question which should be asked is not 'is the therapist behaving directly?', but 'is the client being directed?'
Loc: 1,800	when I am sure of my clients'
Loc: 1,800	largely internalised locus of evaluation (at least in the moment),

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Loc: 1,801	am more likely to make responses which could be interpreted as from my frame of reference.
Loc: 1,801	this is an important part of a move to 'mutuality'
Loc: 1,802	it is part of my increasing emergence as a 'person' within the therapeutic relationship.
Loc: 1,810	that, in order to do this, there is a need for therapists to develop 'a sophisticated, highly empathic therapeutic relationship'
Loc: 1,813	194): 'if the therapeutic relationship does not contain the dimension of "meeting at relational depth", it will be virtually impossible to assess the client's locus of evaluation'.
Loc: 1,821	'Directivity' and Therapist interventions
Loc: 1,822	Bowen (1996: 84–94) views 'nondirectiveness' as a 'myth'
Loc: 1,829	Lietaer (1998: 62–73) takes the view that non-directivity is an impossible concept
Loc: 1,831	Brodley (1999b: 79–82) takes exception
Loc: 1,832	pointing out that it refers to an attitude rather than to specific behaviour.
Loc: 1,834	This attitude is about not exerting power over the client.
Loc: 1,835	The nondirective attitude is psychologically profound, it is not a technique.
Loc: 1,837	it becomes an aspect of the therapists character, it represents a feeling of profound respect for the constructive potential in persons and great sensitivity to their vulnerability.
Loc: 1,843	Here, as with other person-centred behaviours, it is intention that matters.
Loc: 1,851	Can the use of 'Techniques' be Person-Centred?
Loc: 1,863	For some, any suggestion or invitation which comes from the frame of reference of the therapist is directive and therefore incompatible with classic client-centred therapy.
Loc: 1,867	there is a way of thinking which does not acknowledge that there is a powerful direction ('Talk to me') in classic client-centred therapy which is in reality no different from the 'directions' of the person-centred creative therapist. 'Dance with me' or 'Draw with me' seem to have no greater weight than 'Talk to me'. To avoid creative and expressive forms of therapy because they can not be person-centred is not only mistaken but potentially limiting. People express themselves in many ways other than words. To deny these expressions in therapy is to restrict and confine when 'holism' is the professed goal. I suppose a classic client-centred argument could be that if these things are important to the client, then the client will introduce them. That may be so – but is it not more likely that the client will obey the implicit 'talk to me' direction?
Loc: 1,877	Rogers as saying in a presentation in 1975: 'If a therapist has the attitudes we have come to regard as essential, probably he or she can use a variety of techniques.'

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Loc: 1,879	The issue of Power: The Myth of Mutuality?
Loc: 1,881	I believe that effective person-centred therapy depends upon therapists being fully present as powerful people who, rather than denying their power in a relationship, are acutely aware of it and seek to exercise it in a constructive, influential way.
Loc: 1,883	however, consciously seek to avoid directing and dominating the other person.
Loc: 1,887	In a mutual relationship no one person continually dominates or leads,
Loc: 1,888	A mutual relationship is co-operative and collaborative,
Loc: 1,894	as the person-centred therapeutic relationship develops, so there is a developing reciprocal trust
Loc: 1,895	This leads to the development of mutuality which is a central process in the person-centred relationship.
Loc: 1,896	From the time mutuality is established, both counsellor and client experience their work as a truly shared enterprise and they can trust each other's commitment to achieve and maintain genuineness in relation to each other.
Loc: 1,930	Lietaer (1998: 65) takes the view that 'nondirective' therapy as it was originally defined was prescriptive and that these prescriptions have outlived their usefulness. He writes (pp. 66–7):
Loc: 1,932	(most) client-centred therapists have lost their directivity phobia; they no longer feel uneasy about describing their work as an active influencing process in which task-oriented responses and Interventions are used to stimulate or even give an impetus to the unfolding of the client's experiential process. They have learned to take the Initiative in an active way as process experts, without slipping into manipulation and authoritarian control.
Loc: 1,935	I am nowhere near as sure as Lietaer that 'most' client-centred therapists would be comfortable with the notion of making 'task-oriented' interventions. Nevertheless, there is an increasing number of therapists describing themselves as person-centred who see themselves as 'process experts' in the meaning of Lietaer
Loc: 1,943	'the concept of collaborative power is inherent in the theory of the person-centered approach' and describes relationships based in it as characterised by:
Loc: 1,945	openness (all information is fully shared) responsiveness (all needs and ideas are carefully heard) dignity (everyone is respected and considered) personal empowerment (each person affected feels free and responsible to participate fully) alternating influence (impact on group process moves from one person to another as a result of self-awareness, wisdom, experience, or expressed need) co-operation rather than competition