

10 Ways to Practice Unconditional Positive Regard



In his book, *A Way of Being*, Carl Rogers (1980), an American psychologist, states, “As persons are accepted and prized, they tend to develop a more caring attitude towards themselves” (p. 166).¹

He describes a concept called “unconditional positive regard”, which means to accept and respect others without judgement. This opens the door to change.

It is not easy to suspend judgement. But when what someone is doing is hard to understand or we just simply don’t like them, a suggested starting point might be to think: “I don’t know this person well enough yet”.

What seems to be offensive can be a call for compassion. (Note: Offering unconditional positive regard does not mean putting ourselves in danger—if you feel unsure, it is important to leave the room and ask for help.)

Everyone will have their own way of communicating unconditional positive regard. Here are 10 simple suggestions adapted from Mearns and Thorne:²

- 1. Going over to the person and greeting them**
- 2. Suspending judgement**
- 3. Shaking hands with them**
- 4. Using their first name**
- 5. Smiling (and being authentic)**
- 6. Using a warm tone of voice**
- 7. Holding eye contact (if appropriate for their culture)**
- 8. Being present and attentive**
- 9. Showing genuine interest in what they say**
- 10. Offering a hug (ask first) or touching their arm/shoulder**

¹Rogers, Carl. (1980). *A Way of Being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

²Mearns, D. and Thorne, B. (1999). *Person-Centred Counselling in Action*. (Second Edition). London: Sage Publications.