

## Why strive for congruence?

Congruence is the term we use in psychotherapy and counselling to identify that state when what a person says and does, and the way they say and do things, are all of a piece. When people talk about the sorts of things that bring them to therapy they are more often than not incongruent. For example, a person might say, "I really enjoy my job" in a voice without energy that trails off, or someone might tell me that they want to complete their degree course and yet report that they consistently fail to get their essays completed on time. Phobias, obsessions, lack of concentration and many other psychological problems can be seen as signs of inner conflict or incongruence.

Having mixed feelings or confused motives is uncomfortable. We often try to override our awareness of our inner confusion by willing ourselves to be consistent and ignoring the resulting feelings of discomfort. We hope that logic and determination will win the day when what we should be doing is attending to our discomfort, letting ourselves experience the complexity of our mixed and confused feelings.

We may not always appreciate the particular way a part of us makes us feel or behave, but we need to take on trust that all our behaviours are designed to take care of us. If we can be patient and brave enough to give our confusions the attention and space they need, they will find resolution.

If you are aware that some aspect of yourself seems to be troublesome and doesn't sit easily with the rest then try this simple sequence:

*Close your eyes and focus your attention inwards.*

*Imagine addressing that part of yourself which is misbehaving and ask, "How are you trying to take care of me by your behaviour?" Just sit with your question and allow yourself time to get some sense of what the answer might be. Now ask your creative or problem solving parts to work with the part you are focussing on and to come up with some other ways of behaving which will take care of you equally well and yet fit better with the rest of you. You'll need to check whatever solutions they come up with and make sure the new ways sit comfortable with you.*

Sounds crazy doesn't it, communicating with yourself as if you were a committee of parts? Not so crazy though when you consider how often we talk about having mixed feelings, and how on the one hand we think one thing and on the other, another thing.

People who are able to resolve internal conflicts and be congruent possess both strength and calmness. They speak with force and passion. They act with conviction. Their confidence is inspiring. They lead lives that are purposeful and fulfilling, and their power lies in their congruence.

How congruent are you?

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Comments and feedback on this article are warmly welcomed.