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## MODULE 46

# The Humanistic Perspective

### Module Preview

The humanistic perspective emphasizes the growth potential of healthy people. Abraham Maslow believed that if basic human needs are met, people will strive to actualize their highest potential. Carl Rogers suggested that being genuine, accepting, and empathic helps others to develop a positive self-concept.

### Module Guide

#### Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualizing Person

► Lecture: Obstacles to Self-Actualization

- 46-1. *Describe the humanistic perspective in terms of Maslow's focus on self-actualization, and explain how his ideas illustrate the humanistic perspective.*

According to Maslow, **self-actualization** is the motivation to fulfill one's potential, and **self-transcendence** is the desire to find meaning and purpose beyond the self. It is one of the ultimate psychological needs that arises after basic physical and psychological needs are met and self-esteem is achieved. In his effort to turn psychology's attention from the baser motives of troubled people to the growth potential of healthy people, who are thought to be basically good, Maslow reflects the humanistic perspective.

#### Carl Rogers' Person-Centered Perspective

- Exercise/Project: Perceived Self Versus Ideal Self
- Feature Film: *Dead Poets Society*—Burying the True Self
- Instructor Video Tool Kit: *Self-Image: Body Dissatisfaction Among Teenage Girls*

- 46-2. *Discuss Carl Rogers' person-centered perspective, and explain the importance of unconditional positive regard.*

Carl Rogers agreed with Maslow that people are basically good and are endowed with self-actualizing tendencies. To nurture growth in others, Rogers advised being genuine, empathic, and accepting (offering **unconditional positive regard**). In such a climate, people can develop a deeper self-awareness and a more realistic and positive **self-concept**.

## **Assessing the Self**

46-3. *Explain how humanistic psychologists assessed personality.*

Humanistic psychologists assessed personality through questionnaires on which people reported their self-concept. One questionnaire asked people to compare their actual self with their ideal self. Other humanistic psychologists maintained that we can only understand each person's unique experience through interviews and intimate conversations.

## **Evaluating the Humanistic Perspective**

46-4. *State the major criticisms of the humanistic perspective on personality.*

Critics complain that the perspective's concepts are vague and subjective. For example, the description of self-actualizing people seems more a reflection of Maslow's personal values than a scientific description. Critics also argue that the individualism promoted by humanistic psychology may promote self-indulgence, selfishness, and an erosion of moral restraints. A final complaint is that humanistic psychology fails to appreciate the reality of our human capacity for evil. Its naive optimism may lead to apathy about major social problems.