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**Application of Rogerian Theory in relation
to the discovery of photography and analysis of self.**

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During a panic attack I left the house and began taking pictures with my parents digital camera, discovering that photography provided a temporary release and distraction from the physical pain.



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Specific of these attacks was a complete lack of emotional awareness. To understand how such attacks developed, I considered childhood experiences to gain insight.

What began as a secure attachment with my parents up to the age of 5 or 6 where my core needs were met, this would change into an ambivalent attachment style. This was due to each parent providing different parenting styles. Factored into this was that I would see my Father far more frequently than my Mother. She worked predominantly night shifts, often unavailable during the day and only available for a few hours in the evening before returning to work. During the day, my Dad would look after me whilst Mum would sleep.

My Mother would adopt a free flowing, unstructured, creative approach to our activities. Alternatively my Father was uncreative, structured and disciplined. Therefore I experienced very different responses from each parent. My preference was for my Mother, but she was mostly unavailable. Of specific interest here then, are the responses received from my Father.

During the weekends especially, my Mum would be asleep and I would spend the day with my Father. This time involved structure; shopping and visiting grandparents. Whilst shopping, I often became bored and began playing in the isles, leading to Dad telling me off. As this constantly happened, I eventually convinced my Mum to allow me to stay at home. We would later go to my Grandparents, but my Dad and his parents would stay in the kitchen drinking coffee and smoking. I'd be left in the living room and again felt bored. I have barely one or two memories of interactions

with my Grandparents. Again, I asked my Mum if I could not go, and this request would be granted. Removing myself from my Fathers strict routines reduced the probability of experiencing boredom, but would arguably become the start of a social isolation.

I would stay at home watching TV on mute or at the lowest volume whilst quietly playing with toys as Mum slept. When my Dad was in the house, he insisted on absolute silence. When playing with my toys I could become frustrated and sometimes angry. If I expressed these emotions, I was immediately scolded by my Dad to keep quiet. To exemplify how serious my Dad was, I recall when the dog began barking. Dad picked them up and threw them back into the kitchen, shouting in strained whispers. When some friends from school knocked on the door asking for me, he would get angry and scold the children for making a noise. I remember almost choking on some food, I ran to my Dad in a panic but was met by being told to keep quiet.

From a Rogerian perspective, we can consider how this constantly imposed silence became a condition of worth. As a child, I learnt which behaviours pleased my Dad which were,

- **'Do not get angry'**
- **'Do not show emotion'**
- **'Be quiet and do as you're told'**

By achieving these behaviours and avoiding negative responses from my Dad, I concluded that these are valuable behaviours to adopt. By doing so, I become a person worthy of his praise and love. These conditions of worth became introjected values, thus forming my self-concept. My self-actualising tendency, informing the organismic self, held an innate desire for expression. But by adopting the conditions of worth which stipulated that silence equates to worth and value, I lost trust in my organismic valuing process, impacting my self-actualising tendency. By suppressing the expression of my subjective experiences, this created a new incongruent self-concept that prioritises silence.

This would impact behaviour. For example, I would turn my back to Dad whilst holding my breath whenever I'd experience these moments of frustration until I felt the blood rushing to my head. I would bite my hand or harm myself with some of the toys on my arms. Consequently, through these conditions of worth, I would grow to conclude,

'I am a person who never feels angry' or
'I deserve to be punished for expressing feelings of frustration or anger'

'I am always a quiet person' or
'I deserve to be punished for being loud or speaking up'

The constant reinforcement of these conditions of worth throughout childhood lead to emotional invalidation. Although this is one specific aspect of childhood, through others that would follow, I would eventually conclude,

'My thoughts and feelings are wrong and to acknowledge or
experience them is a crime.'

By losing contact with my organismic self and living through an external locus of evaluation, this created an incongruence; a internal conflict, thus leading to anxiety.

When I experienced this anxiety physically through pain and panic attacks, I was unable to access the emotional causes because I had internalised those messages of emotional suppression, and introjected them deeply into the core of self.

From a psychodynamic approach, I developed an intellectualisation defence. This manifested through the behaviour of writing, attempting to apply logic and reason to objectively explore and explain emotion, or rather the lack of.

Visiting the Doctor ironically reinforced this defence. Since I failed to recognise these occurrences as anxiety or panic, the Doctor would also use logic and reasoning through objective testing to reach a clinical diagnosis. I would read various articles regarding chest pain, all whilst choosing to ignore (or rather deny) anything relating to panic or anxiety.

Eventually this defence failed, application of logic and reasoning were proving ineffective. By photographing, one could perhaps consider that the relief from anxiety this activity gave came from my subjective experience of visual images. Subjectively, I would state that photographs provided me with a different language with which to explore emotion, a visual language as opposed to a written or spoken one. Even if the specific emotion remained undefined, photography became a much safer place to access the foundations of developing a route for emotional exploration. Therefore, the discovery of photography was also the discovery of a method that allowed at least surface level access to my organismic valuing process. This provided a potential route to rebuilding my trust in this internal process, and thus paving the way to reengaging with an internal locus of evaluation.