

Explaining people's behaviour in the humanistic perspective

This activity will help you to...

- Apply Carl Rogers' humanistic ideas to real-life behaviour
- Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the ways in which the humanistic perspective understands people

Does this sound like anyone you know?

Eva, Harpreet and Millie had just received their AS modular exam results. Millie was angry.

"I got all 'E's and 'U's!' she snarled, "and it's all because of my rubbish teachers. If they'd been teaching me properly I'd have got 'A's and 'B's no problem. I'm going to complain to the school."

"Come on, Mil," said Harpreet, "what about all those classes you skipped?"

"I only skipped class because the teaching was rubbish!"

"How do you know what the teaching was like?" said Eva, "You didn't turn up often enough to find out! You didn't even read the book for English. What did you get, Harpreet?"

Harpreet grimaced. "I dropped four easy marks in my Chemistry and I only scraped 'A's in Biology, Physics, Maths and French by a few percent. I got full marks in RS and General Studies but they don't really count. They're easy."

"Oh shut up, Har!" snapped Millie, "I'd kill to have your results. Why can't you just be happy?"

"I nearly failed my mock driving test." said Harpreet. "What sort of idiot does that make me? How'd you do, Eva?"

"Oh, not too bad." replied Eva. "I got a 'B' in Physics and I was really happy with that 'cause remember I was really struggling earlier in the year but I asked my teacher to help and she really did help me. I was a bit disappointed with a 'B' in Psychology though, because I thought I would do better. Thinking about it, though, I was a bit complacent with my revision...I thought I could just breeze it. I'll have to work a bit harder in the summer now, but that's the only way I'm going to improve it."

Analysis questions

- How might a humanistic psychologist use Carl Rogers' ideas to explain the different ways these students reacted to their exam results?
- Choose one of the students and suggest how her experiences earlier in life might have led to the way she sees things now.

Evaluation questions

- Humanistic psychologists believe that, to understand a person properly, you need to be able to see the world as they do. To what extent could the validity of your analyses be established?
- How far do you agree that a person's perception of their world is the major determinant of their behaviour?