### Adlerian Psychotherapy

#### Chapter 5

Sheila K. Grant, Ph.D.
Professor
California State University Northridge

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#### Adler on Delusions of Power

- "The striving for personal power is a disastrous delusion and poisons man's living together. Whoever desires the human community must renounce the striving for power over others."
- "One thing can save us: the mistrust of any form of predominance. Our strength lies in conviction, in organizing strength, in a world view, not in the violence of armament and not in emergency laws."
- "For us the way and tactics emerge from our highest goal: the nursing and strengthening of social feeling."

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#### Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology

- A phenomenological approach
- Social interest is stressed
- Birth order and sibling relationships
- Therapy as teaching, informing and encouraging
- Basic mistakes in the client’s private logic
- The therapeutic relationship — a collaborative partnership

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#### The Phenomenological Approach

- Adlerians attempt to view the world from the client’s subjective frame of reference
  - How life is in reality is less important than how the individual believes life to be
  - It is not the childhood experiences that are crucial – it is our present interpretation of these events
- Unconscious instincts and our past do not determine our behavior

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#### Social Interest

- Adler’s most significant and distinctive concept
  - Gemeinschaftsgefühl or community feeling
  - Human behavior has value to extent that it’s motivated by social interest, that is, by a feeling of oneness with all of humanity
  - Striving for a better future for humanity
  - A sense of identification & empathy with others
  - Refers to an individual’s attitude toward and awareness of being a part of the human community
  - Mental health is measured by the degree to which we successfully share with others and are concerned with their welfare
  - Happiness and success are largely related to social connectedness

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#### Basic Tenets

- Behavior can best be understood holistically in terms of its patterns or unity. Not reductionistic.
- All behavior is goal directed or purposive, although the individual may not be consciously aware of the purpose
- Every individual strives for superiority (competition, recognition)
- Every individual strives for social acceptance, social belongingness
- Each person interprets life in term of his or her unique perceptions (Phenomenological)
Basic Philosophy

- Humans are motivated by social interest, by striving toward goals, and by dealing with the tasks of life
- Emphasis is on the individual’s positive capacities to live in society cooperatively
- People have the capacity to interpret, influence, and create events
- Each person at an early age creates a unique style of life, which tends to remain relatively constant throughout life

Five Life Tasks

- Friendship or relating to others
- Work or making a contribution to community
- Love and Family Relationships
- Self-acceptance including our sex role
- Spirituality or understanding our values, goals and relationship with others

Some Useful Definitions

- A Teleosocioanalytic Theory
  - Teleo – Goal-directed, Purposeful, Moving toward
  - Socio – Social Interest, Social Belonginess
  - Analytic – Unaware of motives or purpose
- Individual Psychology
  - Person can only be understood as a whole
- Family Constellation: Relationship among family members
- Lifestyle: Your chosen path in life based on fictions and goals
- Fictional Finalism: Distorted view of yourself and the world

Mental Health

- Psychologically unhealthy individuals strive for personal superiority with little concern for other people
  - Although they may appear to be interested in others, their basic motivation is personal benefit
- In contrast, psychologically healthy people strive for the success of all humanity
  - But they do so without losing their personal identity

Some Useful Definitions

- Inferiority
  - Recognizing your limitations & need for others
  - If overwhelming can result in debilitating inferiority complex
  - Lack of inferiority can result in superiority complex
- Adler's inferiority complex is an exaggerated neurotic reaction to inferiority or for superiority
  - Develops in early childhood
  - Subjective perception of self resulting from comparison of beliefs about others in primary group
  - Comparison is made regarding physical characteristics, social characteristics, & goals & standards
  - Inferiority may not be consciously experienced

Biographical Sketch of Adler

- Born in the suburbs of Vienna on Feb. 7, 1870. Alfred was the third child and second son to a Jewish grain merchant and his wife.
### Sickly Childhood

- Developed rickets and pneumonia as young child
- Grew up in shadow of his athletic, handsome older brother, Sigmund
- Felt loved and encouraged by his family

### Over Achiever

- Average student but hard worker
- Strived for perfection
- Received medical degree from University of Vienna in 1895
- Opened general medical practice in poor, working-class part of Vienna
- Patients included gypsies & circus performers

### Family Man

- Met Raissa Epstein, socialist & friend of Leon Trotsky’s wife
- Married in 1897
- Eventually had four children
- Two of them became psychiatrists

### Liberal Reformist

- Began writing about social inequalities
- Demanded that state funds be used to provide most up-to-date standards of health care for ALL people as a basic human right
- Was an impassioned champion for rights of women to equal treatment in their families & society
- Wrote on education stating:
  - primary role of teachers is to encourage the development of competence and self-confidence in students

### You’re in the Army Now

- He served as a physician in the Austrian Army during the First World War
- Served on Russian front
- Became even more convinced of horrors and injustices of war

### Short Stint with Freud

- Adler joined Freud’s circle by Freud’s invitation in 1907, and in 1911 was anointed by Freud as president of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society
- 4 months later Adler was removed from his post & excommunicated
- He founded his own society called the Society for Individual Psychology
Productive Years

- Adler continued to write & see clients.
- He began treating families as he became convinced of the importance of family & social belongingness

Flees Austria, Visits US

- Visited the U.S. in 1926 & accepted a post as visiting professor at Long Island College of Medicine
- In 1934 he fled Vienna ahead of the rise of anti-Jewish sentiment and political upheaval

Adler’s Legacy

- On May 28, 1937, during a series of lectures in Aberdeen University he died of a heart attack
- Rudolf Dreikurs carried on his work in the U.S.
- Other Adlerian counselors & psychologists of note include
  - Heinz & Roweena Ansbacher, Jon Carlson, Raymond Corsini, Don Dinkmeyer and Don Dinkmeyer, Jr., Harold Mozak, Tom Sweeney.
- Adlerian psychology is recognized today as one of the most effective methods for raising and teaching responsibility in a democratic society
- Active Parenting programs are all based on Adlerian theory and principles

Personality Development

- Born inferior & dependent on others
- Must find place in Family Constellation
- Dangers of pampering or neglect
- Encouragement and acceptance is the key
- Develop lifestyle based on our fictional finalism
- Strive for superiority, competence, recognition

Personality Development

- Strive for social acceptance, social belonging
- Strive for friendship, love
- Adler stresses Choice & Responsibility, Meaning in Life, & Striving for Success, Completion, & Perfection
  - Responsibility to work
  - Responsibility to family
  - Responsibility for community involvement
  - Strive for self-acceptance including our sex role
  - Strive for spiritual understanding

Family Constellation

- You are not born in a vacuum
- Your place in the family is instrumental in forming your personality
- Your birth order predisposes you to certain personality traits
### Birth Order
- Basis principle of Adler’s phenomenological view of birth order:
  - Whatever role IS adopted is the one that is most advantageous to finding a place
  - The circumstances are NOT as important as the perceptions of those circumstances

### Only Child
- Birth is a miracle
- Child is center of the universe
- Can be spoiled
- Parents are inexperienced
- Child can lack empathy for others

### Predispositions of Only Child
- Expects to be center of adult attention
- Prefers adult company
- Uses adult language
- May not get along with other children or siblings
- Conservative, dogmatic

### Oldest Child
- First spoiled then Dethroned by next child
- Given responsibilities & expected to set an example
- High parental expectations

### Predispositions of Oldest Child
- Feels privileged & powerful
- Authoritarian, conservative, dogmatic
- Tends to be dependable & hard-working
- Strives to keep ahead
- High Achievement Drive

### Second Child
- “Speeder” as if always in a race (i.e., like training to surpass older sibling)
- Older sibling is always more competent
- Second-born often opposite of the firstborn
- In competition with older sibling
### Predispositions of Second Child
- Competitive
- Pleaser
- In a hurry
- Always trying to catch & surpass others

### Middle Child
- “Sandwiched” with neither
  - the privileges of eldest or
  - attention of younger siblings
- “What about me??
- Often feels squeezed out

### Predispositions of Middle Child
- Peacemaker, negotiator
- Persuasive, manipulative
- May fight social injustice
- May assume “poor me” attitude & can become a problem child

### Youngest Child
- Has many parents
- Treated like baby
- Never dethroned\Tends to be most pampered one

### Predispositions of Youngest Child
- Spoiled, special
- Defies rules
- Revolutionary

### Encouragement
- Encouragement is the most powerful method available for changing a person’s beliefs
  - Helps build self-confidence and stimulates courage
- Discouragement is the basic condition that prevents people from functioning
- Clients are encouraged to recognize that they have the power to choose and to act differently
Therapeutic Goals

- Fostering social interest
- Helping clients overcome feelings of discouragement & inferiority
- Modifying clients’ views & goals—that is, changing their lifestyle
- Changing faulty motivation
- Assisting clients to feel a sense of equality with others
- Helping clients to become contributing members of society

Process of Psychotherapy

- Phase 1: Establishing the Relationship
- Phase 2: Analysis and Assessment
- Phase 3: Encouraging Insight
- Phase 4: Re-Education and Reorientation

Establishing the Relationship

- Active Listening
  - Attending & Listening with Empathy
  - Earning trust through acceptance and encouragement
  - Showing respect

Analysis and Assessment

- Adlerian counseling proceeds from 2 interview forms:
  - 1. The subjective interview
    - Extracts patterns in client’s life, develops hypotheses about what works for client, & determines what accounts for client’s various concerns

Analysis and Assessment

- All Analysis & Assessment is geared toward:
  - Understanding the individual’s lifestyle, private logic, faulty assumptions
  - Lifestyle Assessment
  - Family constellation
  - Early recollections
  - Uncovering Priorities (superiority, control, comfort, pleasing others)
Analysis and Assessment

• Once material has been gathered from both subjective & objective interviews:
  • Integrated Summaries are developed, presented to client, & discussed
  • All Analysis & Assessment is geared toward:
    • Understanding the individual’s lifestyle, private logic, faulty assumptions

• Mosak (2000) includes analysis of common basic mistakes
  • Lifestyle conceived of as a personal mythology
  • We behave as if the myth were true
  • Mosak’s Five Basic Mistakes:
    • Overgeneralizations: “There is no fairness in the world”
    • False or impossible goals: “I must please everyone if I am to feel loved”
    • Misperceptions of life and life’s demands: “Life is so very difficult for me”
    • Minimization or denial of one’s basic worth: “I’m basically stupid, so why would anyone want anything to do with me?”
    • Faulty values: “I must get to the top, regardless of who gets hurt in the process”

Encouraging Self-Understanding & Insight

• Self-understanding only possible when hidden purposes & goals of behavior are made conscious
• Insight refers to an understanding of the motivations that operate in client’s life
• A special form of awareness that facilitates that acts as a foundation for change

• Disclosure & well-timed interpretations are techniques that facilitate process of gaining insight
• Interpretations are tentative suggestions in form of open-ending sharing
• Tentative Interpretations or Hypotheses:
  • Could it be that . . . .
  • It seems to me that . . . .
  • This is how it appears to me . . . .

Encouraging Self-Understanding & Insight

• Recognition Reflex
  • Eventually clients come to understand
    • Their motivations
    • Ways in which they are now contributing to maintenance of problem
    • What they can do to correct situation

Reeducation & Reorientation

• Learning to adopt a more constructive lifestyle
  • Enlisting support of others
  • Encouragement
    • Responsibility
  • Change & search for new possibilities
    • Clients’ make decisions, modify goals, & act as if
  • Making a difference
    • Manifested by a change in behavior, attitude
    • Immediacy, confrontation, etc.
Goals of Misbehavior

- All behavior is purposive (has purpose), even misbehavior
- Our behavior is based on our fictional finalism and faulty logic
- We may not be aware of the goals of our behavior
- We don’t throw away behaviors that work

Attention Seeking

- Child’s Faulty Belief
  - I belong only when I am being noticed or served
- Parent/Teacher Reaction
  - Feels annoyed
  - Remind and coax child Response
- Corrective Response
  - Ignore misbehavior
  - Give attention when child not bidding for it

Power

- Child’s Faulty Belief
  - I belong only when I am the boss
  - You can’t make me!
- Parent/Teacher’s Reaction
  - Angry, provoked.
  - Threatens authority.
  - You’re not getting away with that!
- Corrective Response
  - Withdraw from power struggle
  - Encourage
  - Recognition

Revenge

- Child’s Faulty Belief
  - I belong only when I hurt others as I feel hurt
  - I am unlovable
- Parent/Teacher’s Reaction
  - Outraged, hurt
  - Needs to be taught a lesson!
- Corrective Response
  - Avoid punishment
  - Encourage
  - Recognition
  - Enlist cooperation in group

Display of Inadequacy

- Child’s Faulty Belief
  - I am unable
  - Others shouldn’t expect anything of me
- Parent/Teacher’s Reaction
  - Feels sorry, hopeless
  - Expects little of child
- Corrective Response
  - Stop criticism
  - Encourage and give responsibilities
  - Enlist buddies

Examples of Misbehavior

- Malenda gets out of her seat & annoys others
- When you tell her to sit down, she smiles at you & takes her seat
- Fifteen minutes later she is out of her seat again
  - What is her probable goal of misbehavior?
  - How does she make you feel?
  - How does she react to you?
Examples of Misbehavior

- Darren leaves his seat inappropriately
  - When you tell him to return to his seat he glares at you and says, “No, and you can’t make me!”
  - What is his probable goal of misbehavior?
  - How does he make you feel?
  - How does he react to you?

- Escobar didn’t hand in his homework again this week. When you asked him why, he looked down and said, “What’s the use?”
  - What is his probable goal of misbehavior?
  - How does he make you feel?
  - How does he react to you?

Examples of Misbehavior

- Your spouse is always running late
  - You are supposed to meet the boss for dinner
  - You remind your spouse an hour ahead of time, but now you are going to be late again
  - What is the probable goal of misbehavior?
  - How does he/she make you feel?
  - How does he/she react to you?

- You got in trouble for being late to work
  - You can’t help that you had car trouble
  - If your colleague had not gone out of his way to tell the boss she never would have known
  - What is her probable goal of misbehavior?
  - How does she make you feel?
  - How does she react to you?

Examples of Misbehavior

- Every time you get to the checkout line your son throws a temper tantrum, right in front of everyone
  - What is his probable goal of misbehavior?
  - How does he make you feel?
  - How does he react to you?

- You know that your daughter is doing drugs and having sex
  - When you’ve tried to confront her she just walks away and says, “You don’t really care, you’ve never cared!”
  - What is her probable goal of misbehavior?
  - How does she make you feel?
  - How does she react to you?
**The Power of Encouragement**

- Focus on assets & strengths to build self-confidence and feelings of worth
  - “You are really determined to succeed.”
  - “You can do that.”
  - “I liked the way you handled that.”
- Accept people as they are
- Don’t make your acceptance dependent on their behavior
  - “Whoops! Well you tried. Next time you’ll do better.”
  - “Nobody’s perfect, you are special in your own ways.”

- Have faith in them so they can believe in themselves
  - “You can do it”
  - “I know you can handle it”
- Show respect & trust
  - “I’m going to let you handle that”
  - “You can figure that out, come to me if you need help.”
  - “I don’t agree but I will respect your opinion.”

**Praise Versus Encouragement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRAISE</th>
<th>ENCOURAGEMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focusses on:</td>
<td>Focusses on:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What Child Hears or Perceives</td>
<td>What Child Hears or Perceives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Control</strong></td>
<td>I am worthy only when I obey you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am trusted to be responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>To be worthy I must please you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How I feel about myself is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rewards for Completed Tasks</strong></td>
<td>To be worthy I must be perfect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t have to be perfect as long as I try my best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Gain</strong></td>
<td>I must be better than others</td>
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<td>Contributions are appreciated</td>
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**Natural & Logical Consequences**

- **Reward & punishment** deny children the opportunity to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own behavior
- **Natural & logical consequences** require children to be responsible for their own behavior
- **Natural consequences** allow children to learn from the natural order of the world:
  - If you don’t eat you become hungry
- **Logical consequences** teach children social order & rules:
  - If you don’t complete your assignments you earn a bad grade

- **Natural & logical consequences** motivate children to make responsible decisions by allowing them to experience the consequences of their decisions & actions in an atmosphere of trust & encouragement

**Examples of Natural Consequences**

- If you forget your umbrella and it rains, you get wet
- If you are late for dinner it will be cold, or all gone
- If you break others things, they will not let you borrow them
- If you hit another, they will not like you and might hit you
- If you lie, others will not trust you

**Examples of Logical Consequences**

- If you push or shove in line, you go to the back of the line
- If you don’t put things away, they go in storage for a day
- If you vandalize, then you must clean it up (restitution)
- If you hit others, you will be separated from them
- If you talk back or use obscenities, you must apologize
- If you cheat on a test, you get a zero
### Punishment Vs Consequences

- Punishment emphasizes power & personal authority.
- Logical consequences teach the impersonal realities of the social order.
- Punishment is arbitrary & rarely related to the misbehavior.
- Logical consequences are logically related to the misbehavior.
- Punishment tells the child that he or she is bad or unworthy.
- Logical consequences imply no moral judgment.
- Punishment focuses on the past.
- Logical consequences are concerned with the present & future.
- Punishment is associated with threats & retaliation.
- Logical consequences are based on good will and faith.
- Punishment demands obedience.
- Logical consequences permit choice.

### Applying Consequences

- Be certain the child is capable to doing what is expected.
- Tell the child in advance what the consequences will be.
- Provide choices and accept the child's decision. Use a friendly tone of voice that communicates faith and trust.
- If child does not succeed apply the logical consequences as advertised. Don't give in! Avoid fights. Don't gloat or say, "I told you so." Show respect.

### Advanced Techniques

- Paradoxical Intentions
  - You deserve to feel sorry for yourself, in fact, you need to start feeling even more sorry for yourself.
  - Adler pioneered this trendy technique.
- Acting As If
  - Try acting as if you were unafraid and competent.
- Spitting in One’s Soup
  - Pointing out the real motive or purpose of client’s behavior (e.g., you're trying to make me feel sorry for you) in order to weaken its effectiveness.
- Push–Button Technique
  - Imagine pleasant situation and note accompanying feeling.
  - Now imagine your distressing situation & note feelings.
  - As you follow through with the logical consequence, assure the children that they may try again later & encourage them to succeed.
  - If the misbehavior is repeated, apply the logical consequence & extend the time before the child is allowed to try again.
  - Be patient.
  - Show faith in the child’s ability to succeed.

### References