

## ADLERIAN PSYCHOTHERAPY

### Chapter 5

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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."

## 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

## 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

## 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

## 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** (competence, recognition)
- Every individual **strives for social acceptance, social belongingness**
- Each person interprets life in term of his or her unique perceptions (**Phenomonological**)

## 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 & Rowena 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

- Adlerian counseling proceeds from 2 interview forms:
  - 1. The objective interview
    - How problems began
    - Any precipitating events
    - Medical history including meds
    - Social history
    - Reasons client chose therapy at this time
    - Client's coping with life tasks
    - A Lifestyle Assessment

## 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

## Analysis and Assessment

- Mosak (2000) includes analysis of common basic mistakes
  - Lifestyle conceived of as a personal mythology
  - We behave *as if* the myth were true
  - Mozak'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

## Encouraging Self-Understanding & Insight

- 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?

### Examples of Misbehavior

- 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?

### Examples of Misbehavior

- 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?

### Examples of Misbehavior

- 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.”

## The Power of Encouragement

- 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

PRAISE		ENCOURAGEMENT	
Focuses on:	What Child Hears or Perceives	Focuses on:	What Child Hears or Perceives
External Control	I am worthy only when I obey you	Belief in Self	I am trusted to be responsible
External Evaluation	To be worthy I must please you	Internal Evaluation	How I feel about myself is important
Rewards for Completed Tasks	To be worthy I must be perfect.	Recognizes Effort	I don't have to be perfect as long as I try my best
Personal Gain	I must be better than others	Contributions	My contributions are appreciated

## 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
  - Children experience consequences of their action or inaction
- 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 of 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

## Applying Consequences

- **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**

## 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
  - You can control your feelings by what you think & imagine

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