

Ordinary People Adlerian Theory

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The Adlerian theory is named after Alfred Alder who was the founder of individual counseling. Mr. Alder influences have been felt in the studies of contemporary counseling and psychotherapy. Many of his therapeutic techniques are used by many in the areas of therapy. Adler's grew up in Vienna to a large Jewish family. He grew up in a neighborhood where he was exposed to different ethnic groups. During Adler childhood he was exposed to illness, injuries, and was very envious of his older brother who did better than him academically. Adler graduated from the same college as Sigmund Freud and was a part of the inner circle Freud Psychoanalytic society. Adler style approach was different from Freud which led to a split between the two. Adler theory was to treat the whole person.

Author Siang -Yan Tan (2011) states that Adler, "focused more on social motivations and subjective perceptions in explaining behavior" (59). Freud focused on the human sexuality which is only part of the human. Adler approach took into consideration a persons childhood, cultural, psychological, social, and physical aspect of a person and how each part played an essential role in a person's development. Adler also believed a person first six years of life had an effect on how a person view and made decisions in their lives but he also believed that it was not the defining factor and a person life evolves and can be changed based on experiences. Adlerian Theory also focused on other concepts such as family counseling, group counseling, socialism, feminism. Adler believed a person had a chose in how they wanted to live their lives. Once a person becomes aware of how things in a person life affects their behavior you have a free chose in changing that behavior. Where as Freud focused on studying the unconscious for a person to change Alder believe in the conscious or the

here and now. Adler theory is in line with the Christian view of free will. God gives each individual the free will to choose between right and wrong or we have been given a choice as humans to choose what course we want to set for our lives.

Adlerian concept of family constellation plays a significant role in understanding a person. I would utilize it to understand the character, Conrad. By the therapist using this technique in the movie, *Ordinary People*, the therapist got to know why Conrad felt about certain things in his life when it came to relationships, himself, and how he saw the world around him based on the experiences that he had as a child. The therapist was able to explore how the relationship with his mother and brother played a role in how he viewed himself, when compared to his brother Buck. Conrad was able to use another technique of Adler called early recollection to remember things from his early childhood and feelings that he had towards it. Author Corey (2021) refers to family constellations asks the questions of the, “conditions that prevailed in the family when the person was a young child” (110). It allows the therapist an insight into the person's views on morals, family relationships, parent relationships, religious views, and cultural interactions. These subjects are things that a client may need to focus on for change. Author Corey (2021) states, “the goal of eliciting the client's perceptions of self and others, of development, and of the experiences that have affected that development” (111). I do believe that early recollection

and family constellation compliment each other because in order to explore the family dynamics it would lead to remembering things from the past.

Reorientation and reeducation would be another technique I would utilize to treat Conrad. Once you have explore your life experience and come to terms with what you have experience then it time to make a change. Author Corey (2021) explains that concept of therapy as the time to, “as reorientation and reeducation: putting insights into practice. This phase focuses on helping clients discover a new and more functional perspective” (113). Once Conrad made the revelation of him holding on and living compared to his brother letting go and dying, it was now up to him to accept the fact that he was alive and what was he going to do going forward. It was a choice of Conrad to change his mindset of being a victim and focus on the fact that he has survived, and he had a life worth living. In the scene at the end with his father, Conrad makes the statement of blaming himself and not being any good. His father reminds him to not think like that and encourage him by reminding Conrad of his strengths and not his weaknesses. It is Conrad who will have to continue to remind himself that he survived for a reason and that it was through his strength that he held on. Conrad will have to choose to give up the negative thoughts for a more positive outlook on life and what he can do to make it a meaningful life.

The drawback to the Adlerian theory is because it focuses on self. By focusing on the whole you it would mean opening up parts of yourself to a

stranger to explore not only your life but other individuals that are related to you. In some cultures it is taboo to talk about family business. It is an old saying that what goes on in the house stays in the house. By seeking healing for yourself you are exposing in some instances the pain and mistakes of others. In many cultures this is not acceptable. A therapist will have to work through those barriers by being cultural sensitive and being aware of how a person perceives sharing their personal business to a stranger. It is not easy for some even if it means a person will receive healing at the end.