

Ordinary People: Adlerian Theory

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Developed by Alfred Adler, Adlerian therapy distinguishes itself from psychoanalysis by focusing on the conscious and the singular individual. It starkly contrasts the belief in the conflicting id, ego, and superego. "Adler stresses the unity of personality..." (Corey, 2021, p. 121). We can only understand people by looking at the whole person. Adler also proposed that the past is not as important as future goals. He felt that people can make choices and behave in such a way that allows them to be the creator of their own lives.

Adlerian theory suggests that the first 6 years of life greatly influence a person's behavior. People are motivated not by instinctual urges but by the desire for socialization. Humans make choices and behave in ways that help them reach their goals, meaning in life, success, completion, and perfection. This journey is lifelong and begins in a place of inferiority. Inferiority feelings motivate humans to strive towards a place of mastery and success (superiority) and wholeness. Essentially, life is what we make of it based on our choices and behaviors while striving for perfection. His theory recognizes biological and environmental factors' role and the limitations they can pose on an individual (Corey, 2021, p. 122).

Conrad plays many different roles in his life. He is a brother, a son, a grandson, a friend, a boyfriend, and a student, just to name a few. To appropriately assess him through the Adlerian lens, all aspects of his life must be explored. In his role as a son, what can be understood when his small gesture of affection isn't reciprocated? What is his perception of the moment? When he finally admits to his teammate that it hurts too much to talk about his brother, what can he do to ease that pain? Can he choose to talk in the future? What can be changed about his behavior that will help him achieve mastery over these feelings? What role does his being the youngest sibling play in his feelings?

As Dr. Berger, I would be sure to build a positive relationship with Conrad to strengthen the therapeutic alliance. While the therapeutic relationship is currently of utmost importance in most theories of counseling, at the time of Adler's research and study it was less so. His emphasis on this was a more novel concept at the time. I'd also make sure to get Conrad's

assessment of his family constellation. Take the time to assess what role he sees himself playing in his family and how he views his individual relationships with its various members.

Adlerian therapy may prove to be quite helpful to Conrad, particularly in consideration of the makeup of his family. It seems that many of his stresses and confusions begin in his home. His differential relationships with his parents leave him unable to be vulnerable and tell the truth about how he is feeling.

References

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