

Ordinary People Application Paper-Adlerian Theory

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Adlerian therapy, also known as Individual Psychology, was developed by Sigmund Freud's younger brother, Alfred Adler. This theory focuses on a person's social motivation and subjective perception. Adler believed that inferiority feelings motivate us to strive toward a life goal. He thought genetics was less crucial than what we choose to do with our abilities. Rather than Freud's more deterministic stance, Alfred Adler believed that our behavior was purposeful and goal-oriented. He also believed that our environment influences our personality development but that, more importantly, our interpretation of those events inevitably shapes our personality.

The most significant concepts that Adler contributed to his theory are the idea of social interest and community feeling. According to Corey (2017), "These terms refer to individuals' awareness of being part of the human community and to individuals' attitudes in dealing with the social world" (p.101). According to this theory, happiness and success depend on our level of social connectedness. Conversely, anxiety will result if the sense of belonging is not satisfied.

There are three life tasks Adler proposed that we must successfully master: building friendships (social task), establishing intimacy (love-marriage task), and contributing to society (occupational task) (Corey, 2017). When people seek therapy, they usually struggle with one or more of these life tasks. Therefore, therapy encourages clients to increase their social interests and modify their behavior to manage life tasks more successfully. Adler also pointed to birth order and sibling relationships, surmising that specific characteristics were more likely to appear depending on perceived birth order.

The Adlerian theory believes in a holistic concept where understanding the whole person in the context of his or her life, and the social relationships one has is vital. Therefore, Conrad's behavior and reactions must be seen in the context of his family and school life. Particularly his

relationship with his mother impacts how he handles recovery post-suicide attempt.

Unfortunately, there is an apparent disconnect between the two, and their relationship is superficial and strained. Private logic refers to the ideas developed in early childhood that may not work later in life (Corey, 2017). For example, Conrad may have received a message from his mom early in childhood as the second-born son: he is not as loveable as his brother, Buck. As a teenager, Conrad feels like she hates him and will never forgive him for Buck's death, and at the same time, he feels guilty and maybe ashamed when he shares his perspective and feelings with his mom because his truth inevitably hurts her. Conrad may also believe that he should have done more to save his brother, thereby having difficulty forgiving himself for living.

If I were treating Conrad, I would first establish a collaborative relationship with him, work toward understanding his subjective experiences and work on identifying his personal goals for counseling. I would do this to be clear about the goals we would both work toward since therapeutic progress is contingent upon an alignment of clear goals between therapist and client (Corey, 2017). Next, I would explore his family constellation, getting a fuller picture of his perspective of his family culture, parental relationship, and sibling relationship. Another assessment that would help understand his perspective of family dynamics would be to ask for several early memories before the age of 10. According to Corey (2017), "Exploring early recollections involves discovering how mistaken notions based on faulty goals and values continue to create problems in a client's life" (p.111). Finally, the use of encouragement would be communicated throughout the sessions with Conrad so that he can face the difficulties he feels within himself and with his mother. Part of the goal of encouraging Conrad would be to help him recognize and accept his positive qualities and strengths despite how he may feel around his brother's death, for example.

This type of therapy would be helpful for Conrad to make changes that align more with his life goals rather than making choices that would please his mom or friends. What would help him make changes would be insight and self-understanding of, for example, how his family dynamics have contributed to some of his private logic. Interpreting why, for instance, he continued swimming when he felt it was boring would help him gain insight into his motivations and allow him to change those behaviors to align more with his goals which Conrad was able to do when he quit the swim team. Since there is a lot of freedom and flexibility with Adlerian Therapy and Adler was a proponent of time-limited therapy, Conrad could see positive results and changes in his life quickly from this type of therapy.

References

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