

Ordinary People Application of Adlerian Therapy

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Adlerian therapy was founded by Alfred Adler. Adler was a collaborator with Freud, but parted ways from him due to disagreement on Freud's emphasis on psychosexual drivers and being too narrowly focused on biological and instinctual motivations. Adler believed that the shaping of personality was more holistic, having relational, social, and cultural influences. Adler was the first systemic therapist, meaning that he believed we can better understand people and their behaviors when we consider the systems in which they live.

Adler also believed that human nature insists that we strive to become better, driven by our innate inferiority feelings. These inferiority feelings then motivate us to achieve, succeed, and accomplish different goals throughout our life. Because Adler has a more forward looking view on human development, Adlerian therapy focuses on reeducating and reshaping individuals through working with an individual's values, beliefs, attitudes, goals, interests, and perceptions of reality.

Based on this theory, Conrad would be considered a typical second child. Since he was born, he had to share his mother's attention with his older brother. He also constantly compared himself to his brother and competed with him, even after his death. He also wanted to be different from his brother by later joining the choir after quitting the swim team, on which his brother was a star athlete.

If I were Dr. Berger, I would treat Conrad by exploring his family constellation, using interpretation to help Conrad gain insight, and reorienting his thought patterns and 'catch himself' when he is repeating old thought patterns. In assessing Conrad using the family constellation, I could elicit the articulation of his belief that his brother is the favorite child, that his mother doesn't care for him, etc. I would then gently interpret what I was hearing to then get

to his motivations behind attempting suicide after his brother's death. Finally, I would encourage Conrad to reorient old beliefs he had about himself as the less-favored and less-loved child. I would also encourage him to reorient his feelings of guilt and anger over his brother's death toward the fact that Conrad simply held on longer and survived.

I think Adlerian therapy could be helpful for Conrad to grow, develop, and move on in his life. It seemed that many of his issues were rooted in his family dynamics and the system he grew up in. By understanding how this system shaped and influenced his current behaviors, acknowledging what is true and not true, and consciously taking different actions based on these insights, Conrad can start to feel a greater sense of control in his life. Receiving encouragement would also help to boost his self-esteem and acknowledge the validation he feels is missing from his mother.

References

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