

**Ordinary People Paper: The Adlerian Theory**

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The Adlerian theory is one established in the approach to psychology that examines the entire person as the person overcomes feelings of inferiority and gains a sense of belonging. In addition, the theory focuses on the importance of social interactions and community involvement in order to promote individual growth (Cherry, 2021). According to the textbook, Alfred Adler viewed inferiority feelings as a normal condition of all people and as a source for all humans striving (Corey, 2016, p. 99). Rather than being looked at as a sign of weakness or abnormality, inferiority feelings can be a wellspring of creativity. They motivate us to strive for mastery, success, and completion. In terms of development, at the approximal age of 6 years old, our fictional vision of ourselves as perfect or complete begins to form into a life goal. The life goal unifies the personality and becomes the source of human motivation; every striving and every effort to overcome is now in line with this goal. Adler chose the term individual psychology as his approach. In his context of individual psychology, all dimensions of an entire person's life are interconnected components (Corey, 2016, p. 100). In addition, understanding that individuals cannot be understood in parts rather taking into account all aspects of culture, school, family, and work.

In terms of mental health disorders, research suggests that Adlerian therapy can be helpful in treating mental health conditions like substance use disorders, personality disorders, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and adjustment disorders (Cherry, 2021). Adjustment Disorders are characterized by an excessive reaction to a stressful or traumatic event. The reaction can be related to job issues, relationship problems, health changes, or

**negative life events. Personality Disorders are characterized by pervasive, enduring patterns of thinking, perceiving, reacting, and relating that cause significant distress or functional impairment.**

**As I examined the main character Conrad in the film Ordinary People, he appeared to be a high school kid that continued to display ongoing symptoms of anxiety, low- self-esteem, worry, agitation, and disturbance when around people. These symptoms were highlighted in his hostility, inattention, aggression, and self-harming practices throughout the film. The film was able to capture these symptoms and behaviors in several instances toward his mother, swim teammates, father, and psychiatrist.**

**Adlerian therapy is positive, humanistic, and integrative that can be adapted to the needs of the individual (Cherry, 2021). The application of the Adlerian theory to therapy can aid individuals who are struggling with problems associated with low self-esteem, loneliness, or intrusive thoughts. By affirming the individual and rebuilding social relationships, people are able to gain confidence and empowerment that allows them to pursue their goals and make healthy choices. As a psychiatrist of Conrad, the application of the Adlerian theory would lead me to utilize several techniques that I find effective for treating the symptoms displayed throughout the film. One effective technique identified is the examination of memories. According to Cherry (2021), looking at past moments can serve as a way to gain insight into past patterns of behaviors that contribute to the client's current problem. After exploring several memories, the therapist can look for certain themes that emerge (Cherry, 2021).**

Conrad expresses having memories in the form of dreams that were unpleasant in multiple sessions. He continued to express how his memories of his brother's death caused his distress and intrusive thoughts. As his psychiatrist, this would prompt me to engage in the line of questioning that would provide Conrad with the insight necessary for him to look at how his pattern of behaviors has had a negative effect on his social relationships. In one of his sessions in the film, he expresses his ongoing recollection of the boat accident. When he verbalizes how his brother was "screwing around in the thunderstorm" (Redford, 1980, 1:38:59), I would be able to relay the connection of his anger, loneliness, and disappointment of his brother's action with the love and admiration he displayed by continuing to be a part of the swimming team in his high school. The second technique for application would be providing encouragement. According to Cherry (2021), therapists show that they care for clients by listening and showing empathy. This intervention involves helping people learn how to recognize their own strengths and gain confidence in their ability to succeed. In the film, Conrad meets with his psychiatrist and discusses his ongoing feud with his mother. During the session, this technique is seen as Dr. Burger encourages Conrad to "forgive your mom and yourself" (Redford, 1980, 1:09:24). A third technique I would apply is the examination of the purpose of the behavior. As people explore their behaviors, a therapist might ask a client to visualize success, overcome resistance to change, and establish the expectations that the individual will succeed (Cherry, 2021).

Adlerian counselors provide clients with the opportunity to view things from a different perspective, however, it is up to the client to decide to accept the alternative perspective (Corey, 2016, p. 105). For the educational process of therapy, assisting clients with

**changing faulty motivation, modifying their lifestyle in the direction of becoming more adaptive, flexible, and social; fostering social interest like connecting clients to their responsibility to their community; helping clients overcome feelings of discouragement and inferiority (Corey, 2016, p. 105). In my opinion, the application of this theory would be useful in terms of the interventions that are theorized as tools. In addition, I believe that this theory does an in-depth analysis of the outcomes of mapping out clear goals-oriented outcomes based on the client's motivation and personal expectations. Furthermore, when clients are dealing with suicidal ideations, homicidal ideations, and interpersonal relationships like Conrad, highlighting coping skills, and positive progress is essential at the adolescent age.**

## Reference

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3. Redford, R. (1980). *Ordinary People*. Wildwood Enterprise.