

# **Adlerian Theory of Personal Development and Family Functioning**



**IDAHO  
SOCIETY OF  
ISIP  
INDIVIDUAL  
PSYCHOLOGY**

**Series  
Workshop  
# 101**

# ISIP Position on Ethics

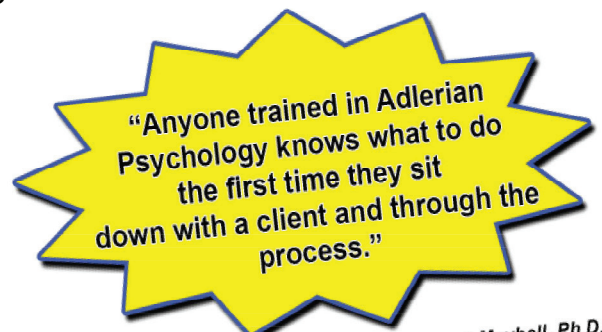
Adler believed that teaching his psychology to a wide audience would increase the mental health of the general population, and that is a good thing. However, Adler and ISIP recognize that knowledge should not be confused with competence. Each person attending the ISIP workshops and the conference needs to be reminded that the practice of psychotherapy in any profession is governed by the ethics and standards established by the profession. It is imperative that each person attending is required to apply the Adlerian tools within the scope of practice established by the person's profession. ISIP is concerned about how the tools are applied. The utility of Adlerian Psychology makes it tempting for trainees to use them even if that trainee's profession would not normally recognize the person's competence.

ISIP is aware of the need to respect the professional standards and practice limitations of all mental health providers. Because ISIP training is not specifically designed to apply to any profession, it runs the risk of being seen as an alternative to developing the competencies and standards of the professions utilizing it. Rightly or wrongly, that can easily be viewed as threatening to the goals and purposes of various professions.

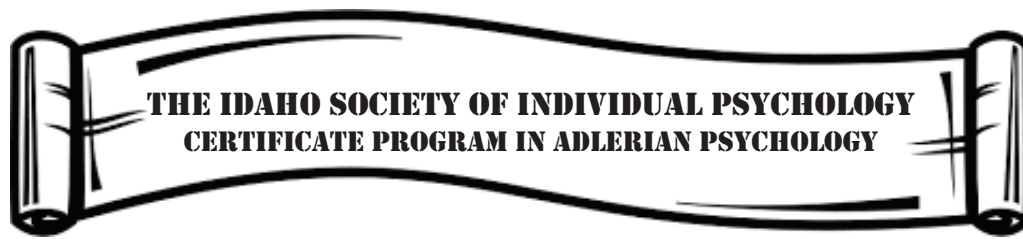
Because of the concerns stated above, this statement, and a statement similar to the one below will be included in all training to alert attendees and prospective attendees of the need to be conscious of and guided by each attendees ethics and state laws.

*“It is the individual responsibility of each attendee to be knowledgeable of the particular ethics and state laws of their profession with respect to areas of authorized practice, as well as those areas of practice that are beyond the scope of the attendees credentials. ISIP is not responsible for any misunderstanding, or misapplication of the training received.”*

As far as the ethics training provided at our annual conference, ISIP does not believe the ethics presentations should be profession-specific since most of us have to be sensitive toward two or three different Codes anyway. The differences are fairly small and usually apply to a limited number of issues or work settings. Since ISIP is committed to promoting Adlerian theory and practice, it only makes sense for our conference to offer training that is Independent from any specific profession. Our goal is to promote ethical practice, regardless of one's profession or licensing. Therefore, it only requires that we present material that is more universally applicable.



Wes Wingett, Ph.D. & Steven Maybell, Ph.D.



## ADLERIAN THEORY

### WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:

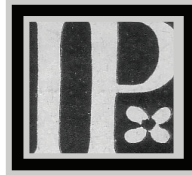
Participants will learn the theoretical concepts of Adlerian Psychology and an introduction as to how they are applied to the practice of counseling and therapy.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

As Adler said, *There's nothing more practical than a good theory.*

#### Participants will:

1. Learn about the pioneering and foundational nature of Adlerian Psychology. How this second oldest system of applied psychology developed many of the important concepts found in today's most recognized therapeutic systems.
2. Learn of Adler's most vital theoretical concepts and how they illuminate our understanding of human nature, the characteristics of mental health, and what it is that leads to human problems and human dysfunction.
3. Understand Adler's observations about relationships, what continues to undermine them, and what the remedy has always been, and continues to be.
4. Learn the essence of the Adlerian model of counseling and psychotherapy that bridges Adlerian Theory with the real-world human beings. Learn how client and therapist work in this model to generate ways the client can live with greater courage, meaning, connection and contentment.



*Adlerian "Individual" Psychology is the psychological school dedicated to an understanding of persons and to the enhancement of the human experience. As formulated by Alfred Adler, MD., Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D., and many others involved in its development and practice, the theory is based on the recognition of:*

- The unity of the individual in thought, emotion and action and in mind/body (holism).*
- Humankind as social in nature with behavior understood only in its context (social embeddedness/social systems/family systems).*
- The dynamic striving towards goals of security, belongingness, significance and success (teleology).*
- The realization of each person's self-created frame of reference and philosophy of life (phenomenology/lifestyle).*

*Human dysfunction is understood as arising from "mistakes" made in the lifestyle leading to exaggerated feelings of inferiority compensated for through the creation of heightened goals of personal superiority. Social disharmony results from superiority-inferiority relationship dynamics which are in violation of social equality - Adler's ironclad principle of social living.*

*The model for mental health is the compensation for common feelings of incompleteness through an alignment with the human community whereby strength and purpose are realized through cooperation and contribution (community feeling/gemeinschaftsgefühl).*

*The theory in practice is based on a model incorporating empathy, collaboration, education, and encouragement. It leads the individual toward liberation through an understanding of her/his lifestyle and how it both facilitates and impedes effectiveness. It leads the couple, family and group toward relationships of social equality and mutual respect. It assists all of humankind toward the realization of each person's inherent value and place in the unending process of creating a more perfect world community.*



**THE IDAHO SOCIETY OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY  
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**ADLERIAN THEORY**

- ◆ INTRODUCTIONS AND HOUSEKEEPING
- ◆ OVERVIEW OF THE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM AND THIS COURSE
- ◆ CONNECTING EXPERIENCE
- ◆ ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY - HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY STATUS
- ◆ THE MAJOR THEMES OF ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY
  - Holism - The Unity of the Personality
  - Social Embeddedness – (social systems – contextual)
  - The Three Life Tasks
  - Teleology - The Purposiveness of Behavior
  - Phenomenology - Subjective Processes
  - Creativity / Uniqueness
  - The Inferiority Feeling and Inferiority Complex
  - Compensation
  - Striving for Superiority (fulfillment – success)
  - Vertical and Horizontal Striving - Useless and Useful
  - Mental Health - Gemeinschaftsgefühl - Social Interest - Community Feeling
  - The Style of Life (Lifestyle . . . the Core Belief System)
- ◆ DEVELOPMENT OF LIFESTYLE
  - Family Atmosphere and Family Values
  - Gender Guiding Lines and Role Models
  - Family Constellation - Psychological Birth Order Vantage
  - Early Recollections
- ◆ EMOTIONAL DISTRESS & DYSFUNCTION
- ◆ CASE VIGNETTES
- ◆ DEMONSTRATIONS
- ◆ RUDOLF DREIKURS – VIDEO INTERVIEW
- ◆ THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COUNSELOR
- ◆ WRAP-UP
- ◆ COMPLETE AND SUBMIT COURSE EVALUATION



## *Alfred Adler - Lifeline and Chronology*

1868	Birth of Sigmund Adler (older brother of Alfred)
1870	Birth of Alfred Adler on February 7 <sup>th</sup>
1871	Birth of Hermine Adler (sister)
1873	Birth of Rudolf Adler (brother)
1874	Birth of Irma Adler (sister) Death of Rudolf Adler
1877	Birth of Max Adler (brother)
1884	Birth of Richard Adler (brother)
1888	Adler begins study at the University of Vienna Medical School
1895	Adler receives medical degree from the University of Vienna
1897	Adler falls in love with Raissa Timofeivna Epstein Adler marries Raissa Timofeivna Epstein
1898	Adler sets up private practice in Vienna Valentine, "Vali" (daughter) is born Adler publishes two articles in Austria's "Medical News Bulletin" Adler publishes monograph, <i>Health Book for the Tailor Trade</i>
1901	Adler's second child, Alexandra, is born (later became an Adlerian Psychiatrist)
1902	Adler publishes two more articles in "Medical News Bulletin" Sigmund Freud invites Adler to join the fledgling Wednesday Psychological Society (later renamed to Vienna Psychoanalytic Society)
1904	Adler publishes his most important article to date, <i>The Physician as Educator</i> Adler converts from Judaism to Protestantism Birth of son, Kurt Adler (later became an Adlerian Psychiatrist)
1905	Publication of <i>A Study of Organ Inferiority</i>
1909	Birth of Cornelia (daughter)
1911	Adler is expelled from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society under Freud's impetus Adler forms his own group, initially called the Society for Free Psychoanalytic Inquiry
1912	Publication of <i>The Neurotic Constitution</i>
1913	Adler renames his group the Society for Individual Psychology
1914	Publication of <i>Healing and Education</i> , edited by Adler

1916	Adler is drafted as a military physician for the Austro-Hungarian Empire during World War I
1918	Adler is discharged from military service, begins emphasizing social feeling in his writings
1922	Publication of <i>The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology</i> Adler begins establishing Child Guidance Clinics for Vienna's public schools (32 Child Guidance Clinics were established in Vienna based on Adlerian principles) Psychiatrist, Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D. begins his association with Adler and the Child Guidance Clinics in Vienna. Dreikurs went on to become a major force for Adlerian Psychology development in America. Among his accomplishments were the founding of the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology & the Adler School for Professional Psychology in Chicago.
1924	Adler becomes a professor at Vienna's Pedagogical Institute
1927	Publication of <i>Understanding Human Nature</i> Adler's first lecture-tour of the United States
1928	Publication of <i>The Case of Miss R: The Interpretation of a Life Story</i>
1929	Adler becomes an adjunct professor at Columbia University, starts to shift base of operations from Vienna to New York City Publication of <i>Individual Psychology in the Schools</i> Publication of <i>Problems of Neurosis: A Book of Case Histories</i> Publication of <i>The Science of Living</i> Publication of <i>Guiding the Child: On the Principles of Individual Psychology</i> , edited by Adler
1930	Adler resigns from Columbia University position Publication of <i>The Education of Children</i> Publication of <i>The Pattern of Life</i> Publication of <i>The Problem Child: The Life Style of the Difficult Child as Analyzed in Specific Cases</i>
1931	Publication of <i>What Life Should Mean to You</i>
1932	Adler becomes a professor at the Long Island College of Medicine, his first full-time academic position in the United States
1933	Publication of <i>Religion and Individual Psychology</i> Publication of <i>Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind</i>
1934	Austria is taken over by its fascists, and Adler's psycho-educational movement is suppressed
1935	Austria is annexed by Hitler's Nazi Germany Raissa relocates to New York City and resumes living full-time with Adler Adler becomes mentor to the young Abraham Maslow
1937	Adler's eldest daughter, Vali, imprisoned in Russia until her death, which Adler learns of. Death of Alfred Adler on May 28th, Aberdeen, Scotland

◆ Steven A Maybell, Ph.D. ◆

## **ADLERIAN FIRSTS – ADLER AS A TRUE PIONEER IN OUR FIELD**

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- Holistic Model
- Ego-Psychology / Strengths Based Model
- Humanistic / Existential Model
- Cognitive / Cognitive-Behavioral Model
- Teleological Perspective – behavior as purposive, as goal-related
- Family Systems / Social Systems / Ecological Model
- Feminist Psychology
- Psycho-Educational Model
- Importance of self-esteem as the basis for functional behavior – encouragement
- Inferiority feelings as humanly natural and when exaggerated – a basis for dysfunction
- Psychological Equality (Mutual Respect) as the basis for functional relationships
- Partnership of Client and Therapist vs. "Vertical" Doctor/Patient Relationship
- Birth Order as an important aspect of personality development
- Emphasis on Client Self-Determination and Responsibility
- Paradoxical Strategies
- First Projective Technique (Early Recollections)
- Importance of demonstrating Empathy in the therapy process
- Application of Psychological Concepts to a Parent Education Model
- Child Guidance Clinics - Psychology in the Schools
- First system to employ Counseling Demonstrations as an educational tool
- Family Therapy
- Group Therapy
- Cultural Sensitivity/Competence



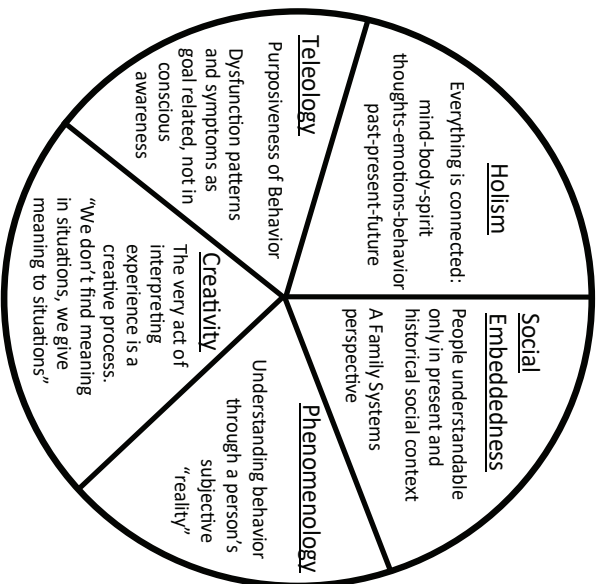
## WHY ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY HAS NOT BEEN MORE RECOGNIZED?

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1. Adler's Personality - Was for more interested in making a contribution by getting out ideas that were useful than getting recognition for them.
2. Freud's Rejection - Demanded that his followers not credit or reference Adler.
3. It was so far ahead of its time, was incompatible with the prevailing views in psychology. Due to its holistic, value oriented, non-pathologizing perspective and lack of medical jargon, it was perceived as "Unscientific.
4. Adler's emphasis on training non-medical professionals and lay-persons, e.g. counselors, social workers, teachers, parents, the public, etc. (lacked status)
5. It's Place in History - "Neo-Freudian" therefore rejected by Freudians and Non-Freudians alike.
6. Introduction of new and controversial modalities, e.g. family counseling, outreach to schools, public forum counseling – all rejected by the medical establishment.
7. Since so many have knowingly or unknowingly "borrowed" from the Adlerian model, to give recognition now is to admit ones lack of originality (at best) or plagiarism (at worst). Now, so many theories and models are more similar than not to Adlerian concepts and principles, the attitude frequently is, "What's the big deal."
8. "Threatening" Concepts and Principles:
  - Social Equality: No one to be superior to, including women, children, students, and clients.
  - Responsibility and Self-Determination - No one to blame.
9. Difficult in Application - e.g. the challenge and effort involved in understanding a client uniquely and holistically vs. the ease of fitting a person into a diagnostic label.
10. In English, the term "Individual Psychology" lends itself to distortion and misunderstanding.

Steven A. Maybell, Ph.D. (2003)

The Primary Theoretical Constructs



[+]

Vertical Striving

Towards Subjectively Created Goals



COMPENSATION



INFERIORITY

Feeling

[-]

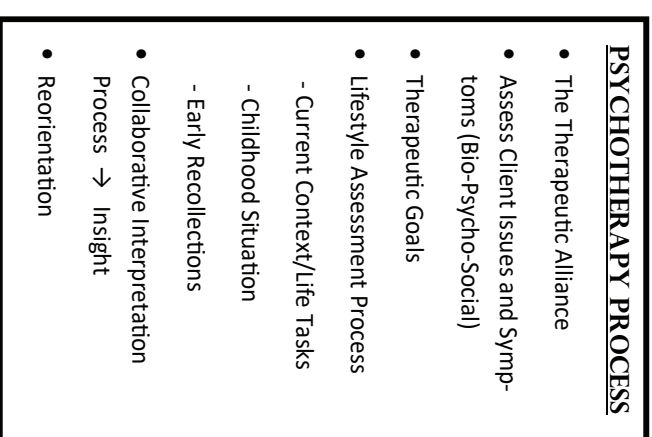
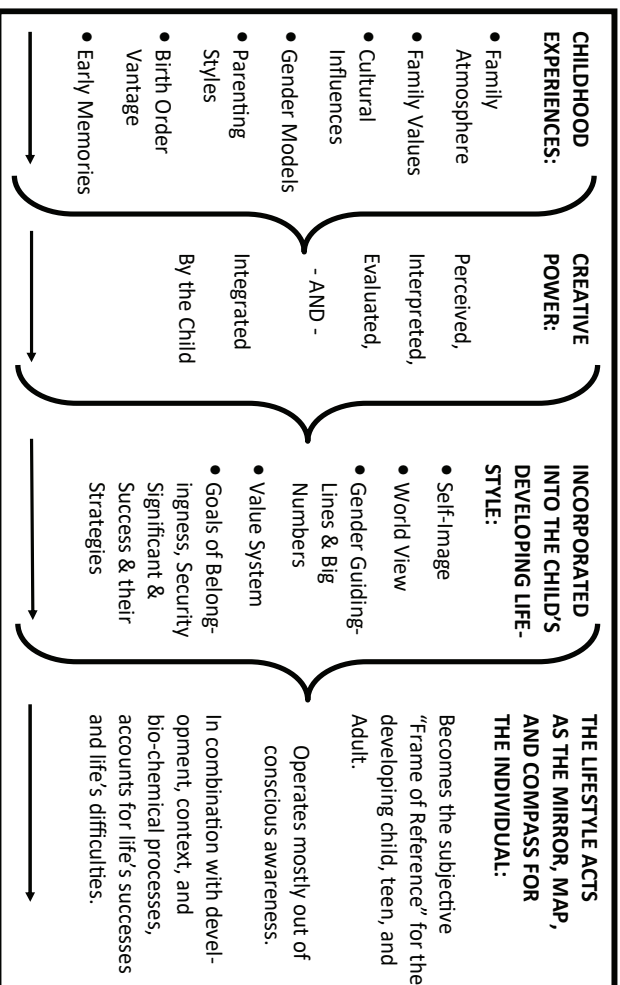
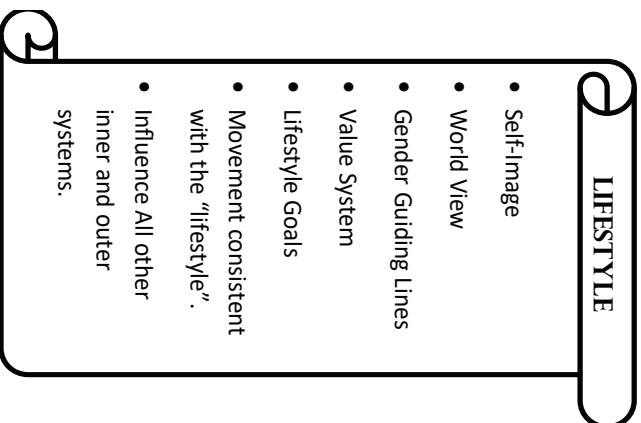
Horizontal Striving

- "Community Feeling"
- "Social Interest"
- "Gemeinschaftsgefühl"
- Contribution vs. Status Seeking



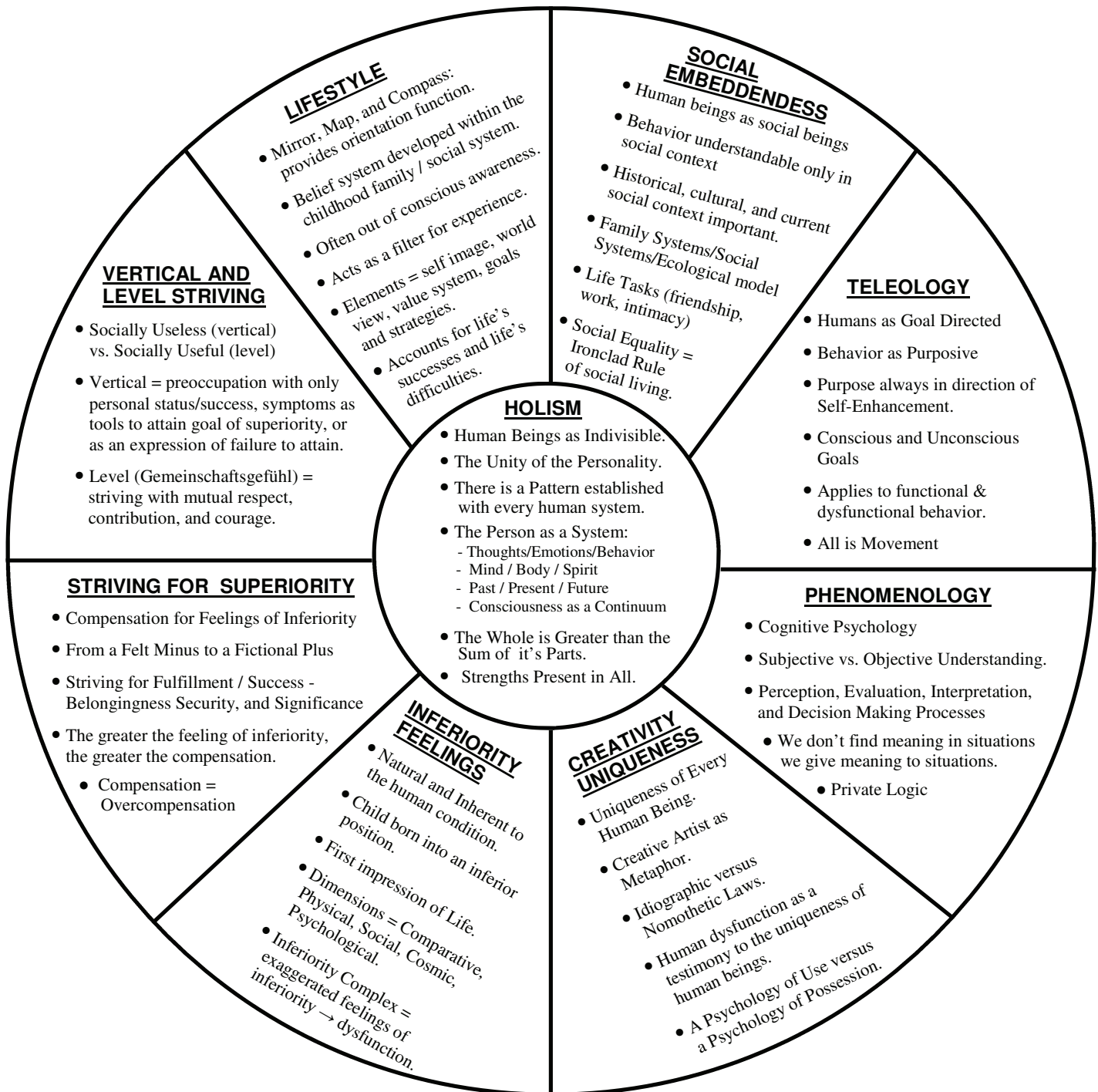
- The Fully Functioning Person**
- Belongingness
  - Mutual Respect
  - Valuing Self and Self-Care
  - Sees Others as having Equal Value
  - Empathy and Understanding
  - Courage
  - Meeting the Needs of the Situation

**LIFESTYLE DEVELOPMENT**



# Adlerian Psychology Theory Of Human Behavior

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Steven A. Maybell, Ph.D.



Theory in Brief: The Indivisible Person, Indivisible from the Social World,  
Strives for Goals of Security, Belongingness, Significance, and Success, based on a Self-Created Philosophy of Life.

Adlerian Psychology is simultaneously a Holistic, Psychodynamic, Family Systems, Cognitive-Behavioral, Humanistic/Existential and Strength-Based approach to therapeutic practice.

Adlerian Psychology has pioneering theoretical connections to such diverse models as Client-Centered, Humanistic-Existential, Family Systems, the Ecological Model, Psychodynamic, Feminist Therapy, Narrative Therapy, Solution-Focused Therapy, Reality Therapy/Choice Theory, Gestalt Therapy, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Reprocessing Therapies (EMDR & Lifespan Integration), and the Strengths Based/Empowerment Model.

## SYMPTOMS AS GOAL-RELATED - AN ADLERIAN PERSPECTIVE

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(1) "Dysfunction" can also manifest itself physically, emotionally or behaviorally, whenever an individual's lifestyle does not permit she/he to voice something important when up against a challenge. In these cases the body (including a variety of symptoms) may provide the "voice" referred to as "**organ jargon**" by Adler. This may take the form of actual physical ailments, e.g. stomach aches, "can't stomach it" or back aches "I am carrying the burden on my back" or other intense emotional or behavioral symptomatic expressions. (2) When an individual has experienced a small "t" or large "T" **trauma**, and that trauma has not been processed, remaining in **present (implicit) memory**, until that trauma is processed, the individual will often experience all three dynamics and related symptoms described in the three boxes to the right.

### **Symptoms that reflect the emotional, behavioral, & social consequences of attempting to Maintain an Exaggerated Goal (s)**

Common symptoms = stress, anxiety, hyper-vigilance, fatigue, alienation, distrust, conflict.



Fictional Plus



### **Symptoms as a Compensatory Tool in order to Attain an Unconscious and often Exaggerated Goal.**

Any and all symptoms can be manifested in this area. Common goals = (1) attention, (2) service, (3) power, (4) revenge, (5) avoidance and self protection, (6) reaching for or fighting against a gender guiding line expectation, (7) demonstrating significance and superiority with respect to sibling psychological competition.



Felt Minus



### **Symptoms Reflecting Discouragement that comes with perceiving oneself as Falling Short or Failing to Meet Essential Goals (subjectively speaking), as well as the emotional distress that comes with loss, or having ones "psychological safety" threatened.**

Common symptoms = sadness, depression, inadequacy, anxiety, fear.



# INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY REPORTER

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## Essay

### ANGER – The Misunderstood Emotion

By Steven A. Maybell

[the following essay, reprinted by permission of THE VISTA (CA) PRESS, was one of a series by members of the author's community mental health agency. More inquiries were received in response to it than had been stimulated by any previous article.]

Anger is a very misunderstood emotion.

How many times have you heard someone say, "He made me angry"; or, "I have a short fuse"; or "I lost my temper"?

What all of these familiar statements have in common is a way of looking at anger that makes us appear to be innocent victims of it, and certainly not responsible for our expression of it. After all, *he made me angry*, and if I have a short fuse sudden explosions are inevitable, and if my temper is lost how can I be responsible for it?

There is another way of understanding anger that is not so easy for some of us to accept. This view sees anger as something only we can create for ourselves. And, it maintains, we create it for a purpose.

What purpose could possibly be served by anger, you ask? The answer is really quite simple. We create anger to fortify our ability to more effectively dominate, defeat, or intimidate others. In other words, to be more effective at fighting those people we perceive as threatening, or in the way of what we want to accomplish. What is the purpose of fighting? To win, of course, no one ever fought to lose.

Anger (and other emotions, for that matter) is much like the fuel in our automobile. We put the fuel in our automobile to help us to move, and we choose the direction that the automobile travels, toward our desired destination.

The problem with anger in this context is that it inevitably leads us to further conflict, violating the principle of mutual respect, the key ingredient in all healthy relationships. When we generate anger, we are consumed with winning, which means someone else has to lose. Instead of solving problems, we are creating problems.

To be human is to experience anger. However, it is important that we understand our anger and realize that we have a choice of what to do with it. When we address another person in anger, the outcome is predictably consistent: opposition, conflict, and alienation. In most all cases it is best to wait until we are feeling more calm and receptive, and then engage the other person in a respectful dialogue with a view toward solving the problem.

Many also find that by pausing and reflecting, we can become more aware of what we're up to when we are angry - what our true goal is in the situation and how anger supports it. We can then decide if we want to support the goal of domination, or consider the more effective goal of solving the problem.

Steven A. Maybell, Ph.D. is director of counseling at Lifeline Community Services, Vista, CA. He is also Vice President of the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology, and Director of the Americas Institute of Adlerian Studies – San Diego.

**ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY'S VISION OF MENTAL HEALTH**  
*(Gemeinschaftsgefühl, Community Feeling, Social Interest)*

Central Condition:	Related Concepts:
<b>BELONGINGNESS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling at Home</li> <li>• We are All in This Together</li> <li>• Holding a World View</li> <li>• Finding a Place of Significance</li> <li>• Connection to the Cosmos, Interrelatedness of all Life, Spirituality</li> </ul>
<b>VALUE SELF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worth One Whole Person</li> <li>• Belief in Ones Own Abilities</li> <li>• Self Esteem, Self Confidence, Self Worth, Self Respect</li> <li>• Self Encouragement</li> <li>• Self Awareness</li> <li>• Having Choices and accepting Responsibility for One's Choices</li> <li>• Having a Voice</li> <li>• Differentiation, A Solid Sense of Self</li> <li>• Boundaries, Limits, Responsible Self Protection</li> <li>• Self Development</li> <li>• Self Care</li> </ul>
<b>VALUE OTHERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every Person is Worth One Whole Person</li> <li>• Empathy, Caring, Consideration, Respect</li> <li>• Seeing with the eyes of another, hearing with the ears of another, feeling with the heart of another</li> <li>• People Esteem</li> <li>• Sensitive to Differences</li> <li>• Accepts and Values Differences</li> <li>• Celebrates Differences</li> </ul>
<b>CONTRIBUTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual Respect – Give and Take</li> <li>• Meaning and Purpose in Life</li> <li>• Encouragement and Empowerment</li> <li>• Responding to the Needs of the Situation</li> <li>• Helping to Shape the Community</li> <li>• Protection of Our Shared Natural Resources</li> </ul>
<b>SUCCESSFUL SOLUTION TO THE LIFE TASKS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual Respect in Important Relationships</li> <li>• Fulfillment in the areas of Intimacy, Friendship/Community, Work</li> <li>• Making love, making friends, making a living</li> </ul>
<b>COURAGE/ACTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determined, Brave, having a Voice for what's "Right"</li> <li>• Willingness to move forward in spite of anxiety, and without the guarantee of success</li> <li>• Psychological Muscle</li> <li>• The Law of the Harvest – we reap what we sow</li> </ul>

## Social Embeddedness . . . Social Interest . . . Community Feeling . . . Gemeinschaftsgefühl

James Bender, in his book "How to Talk Well" (1994 by McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc.) relates the story of a farmer who grew award-winning corn. Each year he entered his corn in the state fair where it won a blue ribbon.

One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbours.

'How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbours when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?' the reporter asked.

'Why sir,' said the farmer, 'didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbours grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbours grow good corn.'

He is very much aware of the connectedness of life. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbour's corn also improves.

So it is in other dimensions of our lives.

Those who choose to be at peace, must help their neighbours to be at peace.

Those who choose to live well must help others to live well, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches.

And those who choose to be happy must help others to find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all.

The lesson for each of us is this . . . if we are to grow good corn, we must help our neighbours grow good corn.

*Author Unknown*

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*This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.*

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generations."*

*~ George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) ~*

## LIFESTYLE NOTES

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Steven A. Maybell, Ph.D. (1991)

Roughly equivalent to the term "personality".

Emphasizes the creative - cognitive aspect of the human process.

A phenomenological concept - understanding from the "inside . . . out".

*We enter life disoriented, we must orient to survive, we orient by drawing conclusions, by forming meanings, the early conclusions provide the foundation of the belief system, the early conclusions are naturally mistaken in small or large ways (Maybell, 1989) "the realm of meanings is the realm of mistakes" (Adler).*

Lifestyle provides an orientation function and can be thought of metaphorically as providing a *Mirror, Map, and Compass* (Maybell, 1989).

Prior to choosing the term lifestyle or "style of life", Adler used the following terminology: life plan, lifeline, psychological main axis.

Max Weber - Pioneer sociologist coined the term "lifestyle" to refer to the folkways, traditions, tendencies, and commonalities of all subcultures.

Adler was drawn to the term due to the artistic aspect . . . "style"

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*The foremost task of I.P. is to prove this unity in each individual - in his thinking, feeling, acting, in his conscious and unconscious, in every expression of his personality. This self-consistent unity we call the style of life of the individual. (Adler in Ansbacher, page 175)*

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*The style of life is the concept comprising in addition to the goal, the individuals opinion of himself, and the world and his unique way of striving for the goal in his particular situation (Adler in Ansbacher, page 172).*

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*The style of life commands all forms of expression, the whole commands the parts. (Adler in Ansbacher, page 175)*

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*The lifestyle provides an orientation function for the whole person. Perception, emotion, behavior, and bio-chemical processes all cooperate with its construction and direction (Maybell, 1989).*



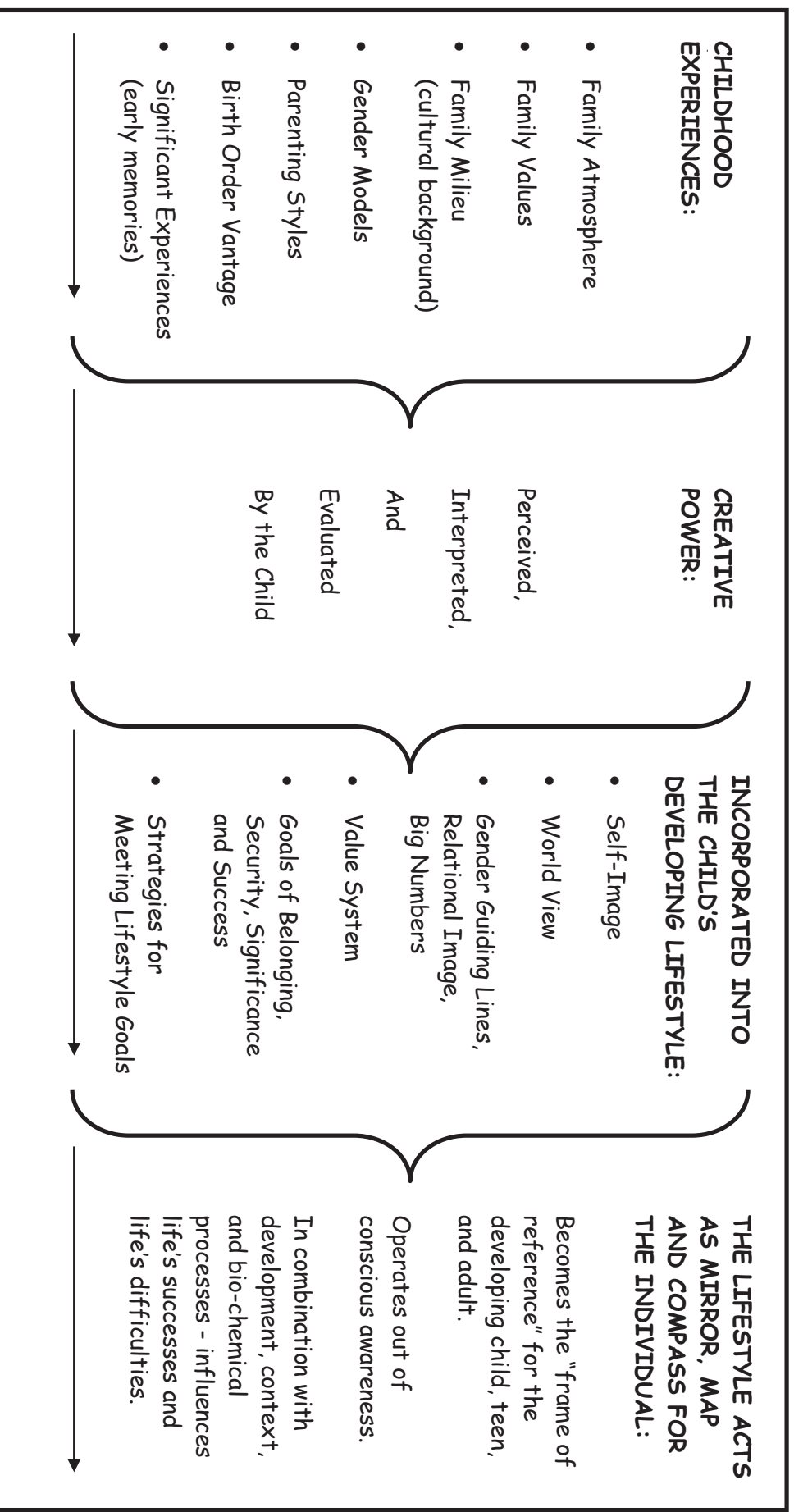
**THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE  
(LIFESTYLE)  
AN ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY VIEW OF PERSONALITY**

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PROMINENT INTERNALIZED BELIEFS:	PRIVATE LOGIC: (OFTEN OUT OF CONSCIOUS AWARENESS)
1) <u>SELF-IMAGE</u>	"I am..."
2) <u>WORLD VIEW</u>	"The world is...life is...others are..."
3) <u>GENDER GUIDING LINES</u>	"Men are...", "Women are...", "As a man or women, I must or must not..."
4) <u>BIG NUMBERS</u>	Unconscious expectations about what is likely to happen at certain times in life, based on my "internal calendar" as it relates to the events and timing of my parent's life or events in my own childhood.
5) <u>RELATIONAL IMAGE</u>	"My view of relationships are that... therefore the relationship I must create or avoid is..."
6) <u>VALUE SYSTEM</u>	"What's important in life is..."
7) <u>GOALS AND METHODS</u>	"What I must do to achieve security, belongingness, significance, and success is..."

# LIFESTYLE DEVELOPMENT

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## FAMILY ATMOSPHERE AND FAMILY VALUES

### Family Atmosphere

Family atmosphere is set by the relationship between the parents. It may be understood as the "climate" of the household. The evaluation by the child of the atmosphere of the household is retained in judgments about social interaction, and is the basis for the child's sense of what interpersonal exchanges demand and allow.

Therefore, these evaluations form a part of the child's basic convictions upon which his or her expectations of life, self, and others are based.

To uncover the family atmosphere, the counselor may use climate-related terms, such as "sunny," "stormy," "cold," "threatening," etc. Atmosphere may be revealed through a drawing.

The participation of each parent in the creation of the atmosphere is an important aspect of the "gender guiding lines" presented by mother and father.

### Family Values

Family values are those values shared by mother and father; that is, values that are perceived by the child as being important to both parents. These values operate as imperatives, setting the family standard. Each of children is obliged to take up a position with respect to them. Any one of the children may, for example, support the value, "ignore" it, or defy it by taking a contrary position.

Values not shared by the parents, but held by only one or the other, take on a different significance. The child experiences these as elements of the gender guiding lines. Unshared values are, therefore, related to what it means to be a man or to be a woman.

To uncover the family values, the counselor may ask the child, "What is important to mother? To father?" Or, he or she may ask the adult, "When you were a young child -- up to age 9 or 10 -- what was important to mother? To father?"

Values may be portrayed through the invention of a "family crest" and "family motto."

## GENDER GUIDING LINES

(Ed. 's note: The following article is reprinted from *An Adlerian Lexicon, Fifty-nine Terms Associated with the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*," by Jane Griffith and Robert L. Powers. Chicago: AIAS, 1984.)

Rudolf Dreikurs made use of Adler's concept of "guiding lines" to explore a person's ideas about masculine and feminine and what it means to the individual to be a man or a woman. He formalized this investigation in the *Life-Style Assessment* process. To uncover what he called the "masculine and female guiding lines," Dreikurs asked the client to tell him about father and mother in the childhood years, up to about ages nine or ten, posing the questions, "What kind of a man was father?" and "What kind of a woman was mother?" By means of these questions he learned what there was about the parents which impressed the client. From this material, Dreikurs wrote a summary statement of the client's unexamined attitudes about what was required of him or of her to be a man or a woman. Powers and Griffith have further developed the therapeutic application of the concept of gender guiding lines," defining the relevant issues as follows:

1. A person's report of his or her childhood opinions of mother and father establish the *norms* for what it means to be a man or to be a woman. The child believes that all men are either like my father or different from my father, and that all women are either like my mother or different from my mother. (The image here is of the bell curve of standard distribution.)
2. Those who deviate from these norms either fall short of or go beyond, in varying degrees, what a man or a woman is *expected* to be.
3. The gender guiding lines feel like a *destiny* to the child, who operates *as if* the following were true: "Since I am a boy who will grow up to be a man, when I grow up I will be more or less like my father - *unless* I do something about it (i.e., safeguard against it or go beyond it)." Or, "Since I am a girl who will grow up to be a woman, when I grow up I will be more or less like my mother - *unless* I do something about it."
4. The gender guiding lines and the conclusions the child draws concerning them form a part of the *un-understood Private Logic* of the person; and are not (usually) in the person's conscious awareness.
5. "Role models" are to be distinguished from gender guiding lines as follows:
  - a. the individual is *consciously aware* of role models (including both positive and negative role models);
  - b. role models are *freely chosen* by the individual as positive or negative exemplars, about whom the child thinks, "I'd like to be like that," or, "I don't want to be like that."
6. The child may choose father or mother as a role model (either positive or negative); if so, the child does this freely and in awareness.
7. If the child chooses as a positive role model the parent of the *same sex*, the guiding line and role model are *consonant*, and the child will probably enjoy clear gender identity and a successful gender adaptation.in adulthood, providing the child operates generally on the useful side of life.
8. If the child chooses as a positive role model the *cross-sex* parent, the guiding line and the role model are *dissonant*, and the child's gender identity may be confused, conflicted, or generally unclear. He or she may, in this case, feel uneasiness in relation to adult sexual functioning as there may be some sense that "I'm not truly masculine," or I'm not truly feminine."
9. For those children who see their *same-sex* parents as *negative* role models, there will be a calculated determination to be unlike that parent, and a consequent struggle to resist the "destiny" of the gender guiding line as described in (3), above. The child will think, "Whatever else happens, I don't want to be like my father (mother)," a thought which would be unnecessary *unless* the child's conviction were that "This is my destiny." Rejecting the same-sex parent as a positive role model (like choosing the parent of the *other* sex as a positive role model) leaves the child feeling uneasy as to gender and what it means to be a man or a woman. Unless and until the gender guiding lines, role models, and their dynamics are open to examination and understanding, the person may experience troublesome, even heartbreaking, concern about gender identity.
10. Often, a positive role model of the same sex is presented to the child in the person of a grandparent. This model is recommended by the parent of the *other* sex: "Don't be like *your* father, be like *my* father," says (or implies) mother to her little boy; or, "Don't be like *your* mother, be like *my* mother," says (or implies) father to his little girl. In these cases, the child may feel a pressure and an obligation to strive toward the "fictional plus" as presented by the exemplary grandparent, at the same time experiencing the "felt minus" of the pull of his or her "destiny" to be like the parent of the same sex, a situation which may lead to discouragement expressed through a reluctance to grow up and to take his or her place as a man or a woman.

ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY  
PSYCHOLOGICAL BIRTH ORDER VANTAGE

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Steven A. Maybell, Ph.D.

Alfred Adler, M.D.

*It is a common fallacy to imagine that children of the same family are formed in the same environment. Of course there is much which is the same for all children of the same home, however the psychological situation of each child is unique and differs from the others, due to their unique birth order vantage.*

*We must insist again that the situation is never the same for two children in a family; and each child will show in his style of life the results of his attempts to adapt himself to his own particular circumstances.*

*There has been some misunderstanding of my custom of understanding according to position in the family. It is not of course the child's number in the order of successive births which influence his character, but the total situation into which he is born and lives, and the way in which he interprets it.*

Rudolf Dreikurs, M.D.

*Upon closer examination, it is found that each child has an essentially different position in the family and must see all the circumstances of his childhood in an entirely different light.*

*The only fundamental law governing the developing child's character is that he trains those qualities by which he hopes to achieve significance or even a degree of power and superiority in the family constellation.*

Robert L. Powers

*No two children are born into the same family.*

*The psychological value of considering the birth order position is that it reveals the vantage from which the child perceives and evaluated self, others, and the world, and from which the child forms convictions about what is required of him or of her to make a place, given the heredity endowment and the environmental opportunities in the given situation.*

- 1) Always consider *psychological position vs. ordinal position*. A therapist can always rely upon the client, e.g. for a client who had two older siblings, “Did it feel more like you were a youngest of two, or an only child.”
- 2) *Psychological Competition* is a primary dynamic when considering birth order vantage dynamics. When a second child comes along, she/he in an effort to find a unique place of significance seeks to:
  - Avoid those areas where the older sibling is most prominent or capable.
  - Develop in those areas where the older sibling is less prominent or capable.

This in turns “cements” the orientation of the older sibling, who wishes also to be unique, by being different than the younger sibling.

The other dynamic of psychological competition occurs when the younger child decides to compete directly in the same “field of activity” as the older brother or sister with an effort to surpass the older sibling. This is referred to as the “Avis” child - “I’m #2 but I try harder”.

- 3) The *greatest psychological competition* exists between children of the same gender and who are close in age.
- 4) *Psychological competition can play out through the life cycle*, e.g. a first-born, suddenly depressed and discouraged at age 35 and did not know why. Exploration revealed that his younger sibling recently graduated with his doctoral degree . . .
- 5) Take *age differences* into consideration. Where there are gaps of three or more years, it is common for the birth order to begin anew, creating *birth order sub-groups*.
- 6) *Blended or step-families* go through a period of disorientation and competition for “place” as there is typically two first-borns, two youngest, etc.
- 7) Look always for the dynamic of *dethronement*, for the next oldest sibling when a new sibling comes along. This tends to be temporary.
- 8) When *displacement* occurs, meaning the younger sibling overtakes the older with respect to accomplishments, this is much more devastating in the long run.
- 9) The way in which *gender* is defined by the parents in a family has strong impact on psychological birth order. Boys and girls may be assigned a very different value and very different roles in the family. A firstborn daughter, for example, whatever her ordinal position may have significant domestic and care-taking responsibilities. The firstborn son may be given heightened value and privilege even though he is not born first.

- 10) *Health/Mental Health problems* have impact. A developmentally disabled child, for example, can remain in the “baby” position regardless of ordinal position. This in turn impacts the psychological position of the other children.
- 11) *Adopted Children*, are in a unique place in a family. Parents may be so thankful for the child that they are overindulgent. At the same time the child may be plagued by not being wanted by the biological parents. If the adopted child is in a family with biological siblings, the adopted child may feel different and alienated from the rest of the family.
- 12) *When a child dies in the family*, this can have an effect on the position of the other children. Dynamics may include the over-indulgence of the remaining children, or the deceased child being so idealized in the family, as to present an impossible image to live up to.
- 13) *Twins* know, as do the rest of the family, who was born first and who was not . . .
- 14) Adler pointed out that in his experience the *extreme positions* tend to experience the extreme problems. I have found this also to be true.
- 15) *In all modalities of treatment*: individual, couple, and family therapy, uncovering psychological birth order dynamics can be most useful and at times key to understanding the case. It can be a most illuminating process to look at birth order combinations between parents and their kids, and between members of a couple.
- 16) In some cases, *birth order dynamics are primary* in their impact on lifestyle or relationship dynamics. In other cases the impact of *birth order is secondary* to other more prominent issues and dynamics, e.g. family atmosphere, parenting styles, gender guiding lines, memorable or traumatic experiences.

## AN OVERVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGICAL BIRTH ORDER POSSIBILITIES

Steven A. Maybell, Ph.D.

*(This is a broad simplification of birth order dynamics and Adler's theory)*

POSITION	FAMILY SITUATION	CHILD'S CHARACTERISTICS
<b>ONLY</b>	Her/his birth is a miracle. Parents have no previous experience. No sibling rivals, retains full attention from both parents. Has less opportunity to learn cooperative behavior. May carry the burden of expectations for the family. Can be over-protected and spoiled.	Likes being the center of adult attention. Often has difficulty sharing with siblings and peers. May be solitary and self-sufficient. Prefers adult company and uses adult language. May be burdened by carrying parental expectations.
<b>OLDEST</b>	Initially is an only child and is the center of attention. Dethroned by next child. Parent expectations are usually very high. Often given responsibility and expected to set an example.	May initially "regress" to compete with second born. Learns that the advantage is that she/he can do things better, and has more power. May therefore become perfectionistic. May become controlling or bossy. May assume nurturing/care-taking role.
<b>SECOND</b>	He has a pacemaker, someone who is always ahead developmentally. Never has parents undivided attention.	In an effort to find significance in the family is usually in psychological competition with the older child by seeking a unique territory. May seek to surpass the older child in the same territory. May feel discouraged and retreat if perceives self as never measuring up.
<b>MIDDLE</b>	Has a unique perspective of being in the middle. Is "sandwiched" in. May feel squeezed out of a position of privilege and significance. Possesses neither the advantages of the oldest or the youngest.	May be a mediator and from the middle position, seek to hold things together. May feel neglected, insignificant, and discouraged. Fairness and justice are common themes.
<b>YOUNGEST</b>	Has many caretakers: parents and siblings. Never dethroned. May be considered special, is seldom in a position of caring for others. All other family members are more capable, and is usually considered the least capable.	May take advantage of the "baby position" - all the attention and service, and emphasize charm and helplessness. May feel entitled to special treatment. May compensate for smallness and strive to be big and capable.



## PARENTING STYLES (based upon the Adlerian Psychology perspective)

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PARENTING STYLE	FOCUS/TACTICS	IMPLIED MESSAGE	RESULTS
<p><u>COERCIVE</u></p> <p><u>CONTROLLING</u> <u>PUNITIVE</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imposing Rules</li> <li>• Threats and Punishments</li> <li>• Rewards</li> <li>• Self Righteous - Always the Child's Fault</li> </ul>	<p>"It is obvious you are not able to do it well enough on your own, so I will make you"</p>	<p>Anger, conflict, power struggles and revenge.</p> <p>Parent gets the opposite behavior that they are after, or exactly what they are trying to prevent.</p> <p>Irresponsible or high risk behaviors via rebellion.</p> <p>Irony: In the parent's effort to control their child's behavior, they lose all control.</p>
<p><u>PAMPERING</u></p> <p><u>OVER-INDULGENT</u></p> <p><u>OVER-INVOLVED</u></p> <p><u>OVER-PROTECTIVE</u></p>	<p>Do for a child on a regular basis what the child can do for her/himself.</p> <p>Parent over-identifies with child and makes the child the focal point of her/his life....a "we" orientation.</p> <p>Gives Special Service.</p>	<p>"It is obvious you are not able to do it well enough on your own, so I will do it for you."</p>	<p>Exaggerated sense of ones own self-importance and diminished sense of ones own ability.</p> <p>Dependency, Self-Centeredness, Vindictiveness, Stalled Development, Serious self-indulgent behavior, e.g. drugs.</p> <p>Serious dysfunction to justify dependency or due to avoid growing responsibilities.</p> <p>Irony: In the parent's effort to make their child happy, they make their child miserable.</p>
<p><u>RESPECTFUL</u> <u>LEADERSHIP</u></p>	<p>Mutual Respect, Differentiation (child and parent have their own life) Encouragement, Gives Responsibility, Level Communication, Mutual Problem Solving, Family Meetings, Choices and Consequences</p>	<p>"I see you as a valuable and separate person. I believe in you and your ability to develop and learn from your own mistakes. I respect and value your contributions."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self Esteem &amp; People Esteem</li> <li>• Greater Responsibility</li> <li>• Greater Cooperation &amp; Respect</li> <li>• "Psychological Muscle"</li> </ul>

## *ADLER ON THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COUNSELING AND THERAPY PROFESSION*

*The honest therapist cannot become so focused on micro problems so as to shut their eyes from seeing social conditions which prevent children from becoming a part of the community and from feeling at home in the world, and which allow children to grow up as if they lived in an enemy country. Thus the counselor must work against nationalism when it is so poorly understood that it harms humankind as a whole, against wars of conquest, revenge, and prestige; against poverty and unemployment which plunges people into hopelessness; against bigotry and social injustice which polarize the community and keep people from realizing their value and true potential; and against all other obstacles which interfere with the spreading of community feeling in the family, the school, and society at large.*

*Alfred Adler (1920)*

**Alfred Adler:  
'His Ideas Are Everywhere'**

**By Maggie Scarf**

"Do you think," Alfred Adler once demanded of Freud, "that it is such a great pleasure for me to stand in your shadow for the whole of my life?" If Adler were alive today, he might well reiterate the question: it is chiefly as one of the great early Freudians that he is remembered. And yet he always insisted that he was not a disciple; he had never been psychoanalyzed by Freud nor attended his lectures. Indeed, Adler became so radically opposed to the basic tenets of Freudian theory that the two men severed all connections in 1911 and remained bitter enemies for the rest of their lives.

Adler's school was the first major deviation from the psychoanalytical movement. The name he gave it – "Individual Psychology" – was meant to imply that man's mind is not, as Freud had suggested, locked in a struggle between conscious and unconscious forces, but that each individual represents a unified and self-consistent whole, striving toward a goal which floats before him. No man, Adler believed, could be understood without reference to his (usually unconscious) goal, much as a drama could be understood only in the light of its finale. The goal a person shaped for himself, and the characteristic ways he struggled to reach it were what Adler termed his "style of life."

This month marks the close of Alfred Adler's centennial year, and a flurry of articles and tributes has not only reawakened interest in him but evoked a certain astonished recognition. For Adler's fate has been paradoxical: while his personal fame has declined, his ideas are everywhere. His early book on organ inferiorities, with its insistence on the unity of body and mind, was a precursor of psychosomatic medicine; many of his concepts, such as the "inferiority complex," "compensation", "overcompensation" and the

significance of the child's birth order in the family, are now crucial to the thinking of most psychotherapists. Individual Psychology, with its stress upon the creative power of the individual – who is seen as the "novelist" of his own character – anticipated today's self-realization personality theorists; the late Abraham Maslow remarked, "For me Alfred Adler becomes more correct year by year." Similarly, the movement of existential psychiatry toward viewing a person as the sum of his choices, or what Sartre calls his "projections" (projected goals), is much the same as seeing him in terms of his "style of life." And, as Freud predicted they might, Adler's ideas have had great impact upon psychoanalysis.

Adler believed that neurosis sprang from the individual's attempts to adapt to the environment – which in human terms is always the social environment. Freud, who thought neurosis was caused by warring demands within the personality itself, denounced Adler's approach as oversimplified: "...it concerns surface phenomena, that is, ego psychology." The subsequent movement of psychoanalytic theory has, however, been toward an emphasis on the needs of the ego. Indeed, the very phrase "ego psychology," which Freud used so scathingly, has lost its unpleasant connotations and become the dominant trend in modern psychoanalysis.

Nevertheless, Adler himself has received curiously little credit. As Henri Ellenberger points out in his massive history of dynamic psychiatry, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*: "It would not be easy to find another author from whom much has been borrowed from all sides without acknowledgment as Alfred Adler. His teaching has become, to use a French idiom, an 'open quarry'. . . that is, a place where anyone may

come and draw anything without compunction.”

Adler was born in the Viennese suburb of Penzing on February 7, 1870. Like Freud, he was the son of a middleclass Jewish merchant; but, while Freud was raised in the ghetto-like section called Leopoldstadt and remained forever conscious of his membership in a minority group, Adler took his background lightly. There were few other Jewish children in the area where he grew up, and his accent and general outlook remained more Viennese than Jewish. Nowhere in his writings was he ever to refer to anti-Semitism; Freud did so frequently.

There were other differences between these two men of similar class and stock: Freud was the darling eldest son of an adoring young mother; Alfred was his mother's second son – and she was rather cold in personality, and seems to have preferred her eldest. Adler's childhood was unhappy, embittered by jealousy of his older brother, despite the fact that four younger children were born to the family.

There were other differences between these two men of similar class and stock: Freud was the darling eldest son of an adoring young mother; Alfred was his mother's second son – and she was rather cold in personality, and seems to have preferred her eldest. Adler's childhood was unhappy, embittered by jealousy of his older brother, despite the fact that four younger children were born to the family. “One of my earliest recollections,” he once reminisced, “is of sitting on a bench, bandaged up on account of rickets, with my healthy brother sitting opposite me. He could run, jump and move about quite effortlessly, while for me movement of any sort was a strain and an effort. Adler placed this early memory of disadvantage at somewhere around age

two. As he grew older, his health improved, but not his ease in the family: “I did not enjoy staying at home.” Whenever at all possible, he ran to play on the large grassy lot next to his house, where the local children gathered every day. Here the young Alfred, short, stocky and not particularly good-looking, was a popular figure: lively, and always in good spirits, he gained among his companions the sense of equality and self-esteem which he had not found at home. The hours spent playing on this field were one day to flower into Adler's notions of human inter-relatedness, that vision of a shared community of feelings and values which he called *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, social interest.

During the period of Adler's growth into manhood Vienna was a rich, enlightened city, at the height of her Habsburg power. When, at 18, Alfred entered the University of Vienna, it was one of the great European medical centers –and around it surged the life of the theater, of music and of the yeasty Socialist opinion which earned the city her nickname, Red Vienna. During his student years, Adler took part in it all; at one of the Socialist meetings he regularly attended he met the girl he was to marry. In 1895 he graduated, and began practice as an ophthalmologist in a rundown section of the city. He then shifted to general medicine, then to neurology; and by the time he became associated with Freud, had already found his career in psychiatry.

It was in the fall of 1902 that Freud sent Adler a postcard asking him to join a small group that was to meet Wednesdays “to discuss problems of neurosis.” No one is now sure what prompted this invitation: the two men had never met. One legend has it that a nasty review of Freud's “The Interpretation of

Dreams" appeared in Vienna's powerful daily Neue Freie Presse, and that Adler sent in a letter defending the book. But recent researches have turned up the fact that Freud's work (which sold barely 100 copies when it was published) was never even reviewed in that newspaper. Whatever event did lead him to seek out Adler remains mysterious.

At any rate, Freud's card initiated a nine-year working relationship which, though never intimate, was at first fruitful, then painful, and ultimately impossible. It was during Adler's time within the Freudian circle that his first major work appeared: a slim book about the effects of "organ inferiorities" – that is, congenitally weak or poorly functioning organs – on personality development.

There was, of course, nothing novel in the idea that the organism tries to repair its own weaknesses: clinicians had long been aware that where one kidney, for example, functioned poorly the other would become overdeveloped and attempt to do the work of two. But Adler's suggestion was that this process of compensation could also proceed in the psychological sphere; in that case the individual experienced powerful mental urges toward repairing his weakness, and concentrated his entire attention on the weak organ. If, for instance, the person had weak eyesight, he would lavish intensive care upon the whole process of seeing. The result, claimed Adler, was that often by psychological means an overcompensation was brought about; the function of the organ became not just adequate but superior. Where the adaptive struggle was successful, it could lead to striking accomplishments: Beethoven, who suffered from congenital ear disease; numerous sculptors and painters with defective eyesight; Demosthenes, a childhood stutterer who became one of the greatest

orators. On the other hand, where nature failed to produce a correction, pathological processes might be set in motion: "Inability, neurosis, psychological disease ... may appear in this event." The discouraged individual might withdraw from the demands of life to seek the greater security of isolation.

Freud approved of the "Study of Organ Inferiority and its Psychological Compensation." It was a maverick work to be sure, but though independent of psychoanalytic theory in its approach, it could stand beside it quite comfortably. The following year, however, Adler advanced a theory which Freud found outrageous: he suggested that there was in man an innate instinctive aggressivity which spurred him onward. Fighting, wrestling, beating, biting and cruelties show the aggression drive in its pure form," wrote Adler. "Its refinement and specialization lead to sports, competition, dueling, thirst for dominance, and religious, social, national and race struggles... When the aggression drive turns [back] upon the subject, we find traits of humility, submission and devotion, flagellantism and masochism... the extreme is suicide."

Adler suggested that people with strong aggressive instincts were attracted to certain professions. These included – aside from the obvious examples of the revolutionary hero and the criminal – those of the judge, policeman, teacher, minister and physician. "Charity, sympathy, altruism and sensitive interest in misery represent new satisfactions on which the drive, which originally tended toward cruelty, feeds. If this seems strange, it is nevertheless easy to recognize that a real understanding for suffering and pain can only come from an original interest in the world of torment."

Freud indignantly denied that there was such a thing as a special aggressive instinct which stood alongside "the familiar instincts of self-preservation and sex, and on an equal footing with them." Like all great innovators, he took a defiantly protective attitude toward his newborn system; the idea that behavior might be motivated by aggressive as well as libidinal force threatened the very integrity of his model. Nevertheless some 14 years later, Freud reversed himself on this issue. He conceded that he was now "obliged to assert the existence of an aggressive instinct, but it is different from Adler's. I prefer to call it the 'destructive' or 'death instinct.'"

In formulating the death instinct, Freud borrowed from biology the notion that there is in all living things a tendency to revert to the inorganic state – that is, to die. He suggested that there was in human nature a trend or drive toward return to the inanimate, the so called "death wish." Thus, a person's aggressive, destructive strivings (which existed alongside his life-enhancing libidinal strivings) represented his instinctual desire to reach a state of nonfeeling, the absolute zero of death. Curiously enough, Adler, too, reversed his position: he later came to believe that man had no instinctual tendencies toward aggression at all. "I enriched psychoanalysis by the aggressive drive," he once remarked. "I gladly make them a present of it."

By 1910, Adler and Freud had been associated for some eight years. During that busy period the new discipline which Freud called "psycho-analysis" although still the joke of Vienna, began achieving some international recognition. His "small group" had grown from 5 members to 35; it was now the "Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society" and far too large to

continue meeting in the waiting room of his office. That year, Adler was president of the society, coeditor of the *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* – and an increasingly noisy critic of Freudian psychoanalysis.

"I am having an atrocious time with Adler..." Freud complained in a letter written that fall. "I have been hoping that it would come to a clean separation, but it drags on and despite my opinion that nothing is to be done."

Adler had never subscribed to Freud's belief that it was sexual material, repressed into the unconscious during early childhood, that lay at the core of neurosis. According to Freud, sexual libido was the great dynamic force in psychic life: now Adler made the shocking move of suggesting an entirely different motive force, which he called the "masculine protest". This was – in a society which valued masculinity and devalued the feminine – the child's striving to become big, to take power, to dominate others; in short, "to be a real man" The masculine protest, which could be present in both men and women, was a strategy adopted in early childhood as a means of compensating for subjective feelings of weakness and disadvantage. The child who failed to adapt to his environment thus became the neurotic who sought to dominate it. Seen from this vantage, the neurotic symptom represented not an unresolvable sexual dilemma but a misguided attempt at compensating for feelings of inferiority.

Such views could not be tolerated within the Freudian orbit. In January of 1911, Adler was asked to present before the society a comprehensive report on his own evolving theories. A storm of protests followed. For Adler described sexuality as merely an expression of personality, not its fundamental motivator; while sexual maladjustment was

often present in neurosis, he insisted that it was not its cause. The important biological fact, in Adler's terms, was not the child's instinctive sexual behavior but his smallness and helplessness in relation to the "giants" surrounding him. In his early adaptive attempts the child might settle upon faulty methods of gaining significance and self-esteem; he might see "success" in terms of wielding power over others. Adler pointed to the curious "social returns" of neurosis – the ability to screen oneself from the demands of life, and to dominate others by exploiting one's own symptoms and weaknesses. The neurotic's tyranny over his close circle was a theme to which Adler returned continually: "I have taken 40 years to make my psychology simple," he often remarked later in his life. "I might have made it more simple by saying, 'All neurosis is vanity' – but this might not be understood."

Adler's January talks, his postulation of the masculine protest, following on the heels of the aggression drive, all led to his final explosive break with Freud early in 1911. That same year, Hans Vaihinger's celebrated book, "The Philosophy of 'As If'" appeared; it had a profound effect upon Adler. The theme of Vaihinger's book was that man, in order to avoid drowning in a sea of facts, creates systems or ways of looking at things which he then assumes are "true." The fixing of the zero point would be an example; we determine the zero on a Fahrenheit scale and then behave "as if" it actually existed. We draw meridians and parallels on the face of the globe, and then proceed "as if" these lines had a counterpart in reality. While they do not, said Vaihinger, they are useful fictions – our lives, to say nothing of our sanity, often depend upon our behaving as if our fictions were true.

Adler found in Vaihinger's theories a conceptual framework for his own ideas. In his most important book, "The Neurotic Constitution," Adler suggested that all human behavior, thought and feeling proceeds along the lines of "as if." In other words in earliest childhood each person – as part of his striving to adapt to the environment and overcome his weaknesses – creates for himself an idealized goal of perfect adaptation, and then struggles toward it as if this goal alone represented success, security and happiness. "The human mind," wrote Adler, "shows an urge to capture into fixed forms . . . that is, fictions, that which is chaotic, always in flux and incomprehensible. Serving this urge, the child quite generally uses a schema in order to act and find his way..." In developing the schema, the child projects before him his goal, his unique vision of that thing which would overcome all obstacles and bring him perfect security. With the ideal in front, a line of direction is established: from then on, everything the individual chooses to see, and the ways he feels about those things, falls into place accordingly. Adler believed that the child's schema was fixed by the age of 4 or 5 (i.e., that his personality was more or less programmed); this was the prototype which became the individual's "style of life."

According to Adler, the key to a man's behavior is that hidden purpose toward which all his strivings are directed: "Causes, powers . . . and the like cannot serve as explanatory principles. The final goal alone can. Experiences, traumata, sexual development mechanisms cannot yield an explanation; but the perspective in which these are regarded, the individual way of seeing them . . . can do so." In explaining this, he remarked: "It has the same effect on me whether a poisonous snake is actually approaching my foot or whether I merely believe that it is a poisonous snake."

Similarly, if a man believed that his mother had been a monster and blamed all his later failures on that fact, it mattered little whether she was objectively monstrous or not – the effect was the same, for in that individual's schema, she was.

Adler's central idea was that life is always essentially a movement toward better adaptation to the environment, and that in man – the first animal in nature with the ability to form goals and purposes – adaptation assumes a psychological aspect. That is, by struggling forward to achieve our imaginary goals, we lift ourselves, as Adler said, "by our own bootstraps." He believed the great force motivating all human acts to be "a striving from a felt minus toward a felt plus situation, from a feeling of inferiority toward superiority, perfection, totality."

Neurosis was, in Adler's view, a species of maladaptation. The great issue in neurotic illness, he maintained, was not what had happened in the past to cause it, but where it was heading – what particular goal the patient was achieving with his symptoms. "The most important question of the healthy and diseased mental life is not 'Whence' but 'Whither'" he declared. "In this 'Whither' the cause is contained."

**"T**he Neurotic Constitution was published in 1912. "With this book", wrote Adler to a friend, "I have founded the school of individual Psychology." He submitted the book to the Vienna Medical School as a thesis and applied for a position as lecturer.

He had to wait three years for a reply; and when it arrived, it came as an affront which rankled for the rest of his life. His candidature had been refused unanimously. (Recently, the report on Adler's work which was submitted to the medical faculty has come to light. Its

author complains that, while Adler's ideas were often "ingenious", they are far too speculative, and are even occasionally as "grotesque as those of Freud.") Meanwhile, World War I had broken out, and there were other worries. Adler's wife, Raissa, had gone with their four children to visit her family's home in Russia. When the assassination at Sarajevo took place, Adler telegraphed her to return immediately. "Shall wait" replied Raissa tartly – and then was caught there by the war for the better part of a year.

The Adler marriage does not seem to have been happy (the children all vastly preferred their ebullient, outgoing father to their sternly political mother). Raissa Adler was a radical and a feminist when she married, and Alfred's subsequent lack of interest in Socialist politics deeply disappointed her. Adler was, however, a sympathetic supporter of the feminist cause. Unlike Freud, who considered women's inferior social role to stem from her innate physical and psychological inferiority, Adler felt that women were depreciated by a male-oriented culture. He believed that only resentment and resistance could result from their being forced to subordinate themselves to their husbands – or to man in society – and predicted that women would one day rebel. Still, as one of Adler's biographers noted dryly... "... fighting for the emancipation of women and living with an emancipated woman are two wholly different things."

At the close of World War 1, Adler was 48 years old. He had served for several years as a physician and psychiatrist with the Austrian Army. The peace and the fragmentation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire brought a period of utmost suffering to Vienna. Food supplies were low, and there was virtually no fuel in the city. Nevertheless, in the midst of this general deprivation, the



new Social Democratic Government asked Adler to organize a program of psychological counseling for problem children. It was in these unpromising circumstances that the famous Vienna child-guidance clinics were launched.

Adler's clinics were a pioneer effort in the direction of what is now called community psychiatry. All were attached to the public school system, any child who behaved in a disturbed way in the classroom could be brought to the nearest guidance center for help and treatment. Although they were successful from the very start and grew rapidly in number, the clinics came in for a certain amount of criticism – especially from the psychoanalysts.

The Freudians were particularly scornful of the public therapy sessions which Adler, as part of his program, held every fortnight. To these sessions he invited audiences of schoolteachers, for he wanted to “teach the teacher” – one of his favorite phrases – concepts of mental hygiene.

Each session began with the teacher of the “problem child” reading out his notes on the pupil. Adler then discussed these case notes with both teacher and audience, after which the child was invited to come in. This was always a moment of high drama: Adler had away of predicting, merely from hearing the notes and without having set eyes on the child, what his physical habits and appearance would be – even down to the most startling details. Thus, the child's entrance enchanted the audience, like the conclusion of a successful conjuring trick.

Adler wanted the teachers to notice particularly the child's physical behavior as he entered: whether he went to lean against something or stood alone, if he held out his

hand or shrank back, whether he met the therapist's eye or scowled and hung his head. For these were what Adler called “organ jargon”, modes of communicating without the use of words.

Adler himself, a short, sturdy man with a black mustache and piercing eyes, always shook hands warmly with the patient and treated him as a contemporary and an equal. His first question usually aimed straight for the core of the problem: “Do you help your mother very much?” he might ask a child whose problems centered around his being spoiled, self-centered and anxiously demanding. The opening remark was generally followed by a long, absolutely silent pause, which Adler never interrupted; a friend once described him as a “past master in the art of the pause.”

Adler's second daughter, Alexandra, now a well-known New York psychiatrist, recalls these clinic sessions well: “Children really loved my father and wanted to talk to him because he was absolutely nonaggressive. Once, when I was helping out at a demonstration, a child refused to speak or even look at him. To establish rapport, my father softly asked him, “What do you think, how old am I?” The child turned to my father right away and answered.”

Adler's method of therapy was essentially a gentle manipulation of both the patient and his environment. First, he would engage the child in a friendly, engaging conversation. Its aim was to guide the child subtly toward an understanding the real goal of his behavior and toward discovering how that goal determined his painful attitudes and thoughts. As the English novel is Phyllis Bottome, Adler's patient and biographer, has written: “... Every child reacted differently to the treatment, [but] I never once saw a child

either distressed or bored by it. The invariable effect... seemed to be relief and interest."

After his initial talk with the child, Adler generally asked the parents, and sometimes other family members, into the lecture hall to join the discussion the patient's teacher and members of the audience would also participate. Together, the group consulted on ways both child and family might "try something a little different" to see what affect alternative approaches might have on everyone concerned. Adler's methods, pragmatic and eminently workable, won him the affection and respect of the city's school teachers; to this day, his reputation remains highest among professionals "on the firing line," such as teachers, counselors and social workers.

Viewed with hindsight, the Vienna clinics stand out as a remarkable early attempt to treat the individual within a group setting and is a functioning part of his social milieu. The notions that not only the doctor but lay people could aid in the healing process, and that the patient must be seen in the context of his family group are, of course, both current in today's milieu therapy and in the entire therapeutic community approach.

**A**dler was the only member of depth psychology's "first triumvirate" (Freud, Adler, Jung) to spend a considerable time in the United States. He first visited here in 1926, and after that, sojourned for longer and longer periods of teaching, lecturing and practice; soon he was spending only his summers in Vienna. With the rise of Hitler, he foresaw a coming catastrophe and believed that if his psychology were to survive anywhere it would be in America. There were no individual psychology groups all over the world, including Germany. (Adler, when invited to

speak to the Berlin society and offered protection during his stay, ask the messenger to "tell them I laughed.") In 1934 the Fascist Government in Austria suppressed the child-guidance clinics. Shortly afterward, Adler managed to sell his family's home and left Vienna for good.

He had already excepted the chair of medical psychology have Long Island College of Medicine and was becoming a widely known popular lecturer. "Once," recalls his daughter Alexandra, "I arrived with him at a building where he was to give a talk, but the place was so crowded that they wouldn't admit us. My father tried to tell them he was the lecturer, but the ushers said others had already tried that silly trick on them. It took quite a bit of talking until we were finally allowed to go in."

Adler always spoke without written notes; he felt that in this way he reached his listeners more directly. He had a style that was at once informal, serious and personal, and he had the born lecturer's knack for dealing easily with the unexpected. Once, at the meeting of a medical society in England, the chairman introduced him with some remarks that were so hostile that the audience sat staring in amazement. Adler, saying nothing, rose to his feet with a benevolent smile. Before starting his talk he walked over and patted the chairman gently on the shoulder. The entire group burst into applause.

Adler's teaching and thought were moving increasingly in a direction that had far-ranging appeal: they were becoming a curious blend of psychology, sociology and ethics. His ever-growing emphasis on *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, social feeling, gave to Individual Psychology a quasi-religious air; his critics said sourly that Adler was no longer teaching but preaching. Fellow professionals

looked askance at his habit of becoming friendly with his patients (something Freud carefully avoided) and then expecting them to become missionaries of his psychology. His carelessly organized writings were simply dismissed by many as mere "surface psychology" – a psychology, as one detractor remarked, for traveling salesman.

Adler's new emphasis on social feeling was only half understood by many and often considered a mere mouthing of platitudes about "adjustment." He had, in fact, become convinced that each individual must be seen as part of his larger social whole – that life is first and foremost social life. "No psychologist," he insisted, "is able to determine the meaning of any experience if he fails to consider it in its... relation to society."

In Adler's view, true contact with others counteracted a person's tendency to form the kind of irrational fictitious goal which would lead to his isolation and estrangement. The neurotic, in his fruitless striving for self-esteem, mistakenly exploited those around him. The therapist's role, maintained Adler, was to perform what is rightly the function of the mother: to give the patient experience of a loving contact with another person, and then help him to transfer this awakened social feeling to others. The prime effort was to bring the patient's private goal into agreement with general human interests - for when a man operated on "private logic" he became ill and useless. "All failures in life - neurotics, psychotics, criminals, drunkards, problem children, suicides, perverts and prostitutes are failures because they are lacking in social interest. They approach the problems of occupation, friendship and sex without the confidence that they can be solved by cooperation. The meaning they give to life is a

private meaning... their interest stops short at their own person."

Adler's system of psychotherapy stressed - as Individual Psychological treatment continues to do - the importance of early recollections. Adler believed the memory was biased and that an individual retained only that which was central to his main problems and preoccupations. He also worked with the patient's dream material - but an Adlerian dream interpretation was far different from a Freudian one. For instance, in a dream of flying up and then suddenly falling, a psychoanalyst would probably see sexual symbolism related to impotence; an Adlerian would view the same dream as related to a fear of failure in any one of a variety of daily activities, such as work, social relations or, indeed, sexuality. Adler saw no universal sexual symbolism in the dream: he thought each dream a unique creation which had to be interpreted in the light of the patient's line of movement, and often as a signpost pointing the direction he unconsciously was preparing to take.

As Dr. Kurt Adler, Adler's son and a leader in the current individual Psychological movement, explains: "Our methods of therapy revolve around, first, helping the patient to understand his mistaken life style and the real nature of his goal by slowly elaborating upon these topics and gently elevating them into conscious knowledge. Then, in helping him to use this insight in his everyday life; we do this by discussing with him his successes and failures. But the crucial part of the process is his learning to relate to the therapist, and subsequently becoming able to extend that feeling outwards, to increase his feeling of belonging, of his humanity... so that he's able to begin to cooperate.

"What I'm speaking of is essentially a process of socialization that the patient goes

through during therapy. It's something he has failed to learn sufficiently during his development; he's held on so anxiously to his self-protective devices. What the patient must learn is to give, to share, and eventually - a point my father considered vital - he must come to see that his self-interest is really best served if his behavior benefits others as well as himself."

In 1937 Adler, whose personal appearances were in growing demand, embarked on a heavy speaking tour in Europe. Just as he was leaving he learned that the eldest of his four children, Valentina, who had fled the Nazis and gone to Russia with her husband, had been arrested by the Russian authorities.\* He began making frantic attempts to get news of her and to send a message. In Holland, he suffered a minor heart attack. He continued on to England, and then to Scotland. On the fourth day of his tour, he collapsed on a sidewalk and died on the way to the hospital.

Shortly after the funeral, which took place in Edinburgh, Freud received a letter from the German writer Arnold Zweig. Zweig mentioned how moved and saddened he had been by the news of Adler's sudden death. But the enmity of almost 30 years persisted, and Freud replied coldly, "I don't understand your sympathy for Adler. For a Jewish boy out of a Viennese suburb a death in Aberdeen is an unheard-of career in itself and a proof of how far he had got on. The world really rewarded him richly for his service in having contradicted psychoanalysis."

Eventually, the family learned, through the intercession of their friend Albert Einstein, that Valentina had died in a Soviet concentration camp sometime during the war.

## **Comeback**

Adler's reputation sagged after his death. A number of Adlerian clinics closed down, The International Journal of Individual Psychology was discontinued, as were the activities of most of his European followers. Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs, now a prominent Chicago psychiatrist, recalls how in the late 1930's he was warned against revealing his identity as an Adlerian "for fear of professional discrimination."

Nevertheless, in the years just after the war, Individual Psychology began a steady return to life: new societies were formed; tired old groups experienced a spurt in growth; new periodicals were started and training centers established. Now, according to Dreikurs, the movement is growing at an astonishing rate, especially in the U.S. "To gauge its influence is utterly impossible," he says. "Any statement made at one moment is outdated in the next."

There are now Individual Psychological associations all over the world, including places as unlikely as Crete and Cyprus. In New York, the Alfred Adler Mental Hygiene Clinic is directed by a daughter, Dr. Alexandra Adler, with the assistance of Dr. Kurt Adler, a son. There are some 250 Adlerian psychiatrists in the city, including the well-known Dr. Danica Deutsch and Drs. Ernst and Helene Papanek.

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# Adler's Original Contributions to Psychology

Jane Griffith and Steven A. Maybell

## Abstract

Alfred Adler (1870–1937) introduced a number of significant concepts and methodologies to psychology, many of which are well known, having been adapted by others in the field, and, in some cases, known by the general public. The authors set forth and discuss Adler's prominent innovations.

*Keywords:* holism, lifestyle, community feeling, social interest, purpose, teleology, inferiority feeling and superiority striving, early recollections

Henri F. Ellenberger, in his magisterial 1970 study *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* captures the essence of Adler's work in this statement:

Adler is concerned with the field of *Menschenkenntnis*, that is, the concrete practical knowledge of man. The interest of individual psychology is that it is the first recorded, unified, complete system of *Menschenkenntnis*, a system vast enough to encompass also the realm of neurosis, psychosis, and behavior. (p. 581)

## Holism

Holism is among Adler's important contributions to psychology. He taught that individual human beings function as a whole, a unified and unique organism in all its aspects, stating: "Every individual represents both a unity of personality and the individual fashioning of the unity. The individual is thus both the picture and the artist" (Adler, 1956, p. 177). He avoided thinking in terms of typologies, focusing instead on the *unique individual variant*. Contrary to Sigmund Freud's tripartite concept of humankind (id, ego, superego), which was widely accepted in the early 1900s and beyond, Adler understood human beings as totalities, as wholes; indeed, he named his approach "Individual" Psychology—individual means "indivisible," or that which cannot be divided. He understood any aspect of personality to be expressive of the total person. In practical work, counselors trained in this psychology see the interlocking dynamics of past, present, and future, as well as of thought, emotion, and behavior. Through this holistic lens, mind

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and body are interconnected and the human being is understood as socially embedded, meaning that we can understand a person only in the context of her or his social development and social environment. Adler was supported in his holistic approach by the polymath Jan Smuts in his 1926 book, *Holism and Evolution*; individuals now understand holism as scientifically valid.

### Lifestyle

*Lifestyle* is a term Adler borrowed from sociology to represent behavior of the total individual. Lifestyle exists mostly out of conscious awareness and encompasses the individual's internal and external behaviors, conscious and unconscious, expressed in thought, feeling, and action. When one's lifestyle works successfully, the style exhibits a sufficient respect for oneself and others and a sense of partnership in the community, allowing for courage, cooperation, and contribution, and it is consistent and predictable over the life span.

Lifestyle can lead to innumerable patterns of living. Because each person is unique, no two lifestyles will be identical—the variables of circumstances and interpretations are infinite. Adler (1931) taught that the lifestyle begins to develop in early childhood when children first begin to make sense of the world and the people around them. Since young children have limited experience to draw on, the meanings they create are mistaken in small or large ways. These earliest meanings form the foundation of the lifestyle, becoming the lens through which they see the world. When these are distorted and interfere with views of self, others, and their definitions of success, patterns of behavior may emerge that conflict with others and with life's requirements. Discouragement, emotional distress, and symptomology may result. As Adler (1931) so rightly stated, "The realm of meanings is the realm of mistakes" (p. 4). When the lifestyle fails to work to a person's satisfaction, psychological intervention may reveal one or more faulty fundamental beliefs that the person needs to address, and modify or change in order to achieve success.

**Fictions** The notion of fictions in Hans Vaihinger's (1968) *The Philosophy of "As If": A System of the Theoretical, Practical, and Religious Fictions of Mankind* was useful to Adler, both philosophically and practically. He understood that individuals unknowingly generate fictional goals, including the fictional final goal of the personality, the *Persönlichkeitsideal*, which, without conscious awareness, governs each individual's "law of movement." For Adler,

“The law of movement in the mental life of a person is the decisive factor for his individuality” (Adler, 1956, p. 195). Once established, individuals live “as if” these fictions are true. Adler, seeing the part fictions play in behavior, especially in goal striving, set the example for how to uncover and explain troublesome fictions and their role in a patient’s life. Once recognized, patients may then change or rid themselves of such fictions to comply more readily with the demands of reality, which are always social in nature.

### **Siblings and Birth Order**

Adler was the first psychologist to emphasize the priority of an individual’s place in the sibling array in studying individual development, downplaying (but not overlooking) the significance of parental influence. In this psychology birth order is not seen as having a deterministic influence (e.g., all firstborns are bossy). Instead, one’s birth-order position is understood in the context of the family’s constellation and as the vantage point from which individuals perceive and interpret themselves and the world. By studying birth order, sources of individuals’ practiced attitudes and behaviors can be uncovered, helping them gain clarity and rehabilitation.

### **Inferiority Feelings, Compensation, and Superiority Striving**

In Adler’s Individual Psychology, inferiority feelings are understood to be universal and constant. This term, along with the inferiority complex (overdriven inferiority feelings), though not in general use among physicians and psychologists, was acclaimed by the public at large, both in the United States and abroad, contributing to Adler’s fame in the 1920s and 1930s (for an account of Adler’s celebrity, see Bottome, 1939). Inferiority feelings are understood to function as spurs to achievement, providing the impetus for human striving—away from feelings of inferiority, in movement toward a perceived position of superiority. The psychological dynamic that bridges the two is *compensation*. For example, just as a weak organ may compensate through the superior functioning of another organ, so too the feeling of inferiority is compensated for through a private, unspoken (and possibly unknown) goal of personal mastery or success (Adler, 1917). Adler (1956) pointed out that the greater and more urgent the inferiority feeling, the greater the compensation must be, leading to overcompensation—an exaggerated goal of personal superiority or success. “Psychological compensation is linked to increased activity and brings about striking, often superior and novel psychological phenomenon[a]” (p. 98). The basic dynamic of Individual Psychology is movement in pursuit of goals, from below to

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above, from a felt inferiority toward a fictional superiority. As Adler put it in an arresting phrase, “The origin of humanity and the ever-repeated beginning of infant life impresses with every psychological act: ‘Achieve! Arise! Conquer!’” (Adler, 1956, p. 103).

### **Teleology and Purpose**

Adler asserted this:

The science of Individual Psychology developed out of the effort to understand that mysterious creative power of life which expresses itself in the desire to develop, to strive, to achieve, and even to compensate for defeats in one direction by striving for success in another. This power is *teleological*, it expresses itself in the striving after a goal, and, in this striving, every bodily and psychological movement is made to cooperate. (Adler, 1956, p. 92)

This concept is especially useful and applicable to the counseling role, as it illuminates the dynamic action of both functional and dysfunctional behavior. By observing the movement of the client’s problematic or symptomatic behavior, a counselor trained in this psychology can readily discern the purpose it serves, help the client see it as well, and support a more accurate and functional orientation. Taking a teleological view of human activity set Adler apart from both psychology and medicine. The notion of purpose in human affairs was unacceptable at the time (it was labeled “unscientific”)-even today, some professionals hang back from full-throated support of Adler’s teleological view of life.

### **Community Feeling and Social Interest**

Adler eschewed common notions of normal and abnormal. Instead, he used as an indicator of mental health the extent of a person’s community feeling (*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*). This became clear to him following his experience as an army physician during World War I. Witnessing the horrific effects of war, of human conflict and devastation, to Adler, Hoffman (1994) writes:

It now seemed indisputable that what civilization needed was not more individualism but more *social feeling*: compassion, altruism, and selflessness. Such qualities, of course, were deemed ethical; but they were ultimately psychologically rooted, Adler was sure. Drawing upon his earlier work, he became convinced that so many people lack this vital cluster of traits because they feel inferior and inadequate. In contrast, emotionally healthy people possess social feeling in strong measure and are able to encourage it in others. (p. 101)



Adler emphasized the significance of community feeling, stating, "Social interest [community feeling] is the true and inevitable compensation for all the natural weaknesses of individual human beings" (Adler, 1956, p. 154).

### Uses of Early Recollections

The analysis of early recollections (ERs) was basic to Adler's practice and continues to be a valuable resource among Adlerian practitioners today. Before Adler's innovative applications, ERs played a role in psychoanalysis; however, in psychoanalysis ERs were considered screen memories, that is, memories unconsciously created by the individual to screen or cover up repressed material (Ellenberger, 1970). Adler's use of ERs is different. He championed the analysis of specific childhood memories. He asked the patient for several or a set of ERs; then, engaged with the client in discussion, he investigated certain elements in each ER, interpreting these as metaphors that reveal the individual's presently held core convictions. Hoffman (1994) explains:

Our earliest memories provide a vital clue to our chief concerns during ongoing adult life. [Hoffman continues, quoting Adler] "We do not, of course, believe that all early recollections are correct records of the facts. Many are even fancied, and most perhaps are changed or distorted at a later time; but this does not always diminish their significance . . . what is altered or imagined is also expressive of the patient's goal [and provides] useful hints as to why his life plan [lifestyle] . . . was elaborated in its own particular form." (p. 239)

### Organ Jargon

*Organ jargon* is Adler's term for the display of physical symptoms as expressions of psychological distress. He was not alone in recognizing this phenomenon: A colleague, Wilhelm Stekel, was also aware of the psychic purpose of symptoms. Adler designated the phenomenon "organ jargon," whereas Stekel used the term "organ language." According to Ellenberger (1970), each man claimed priority, and the issue remained unresolved. While Adler was not alone in the psychological interpretation of physical symptoms, he continued to apply and develop it to the extent that the concept and the term "organ jargon" came to be associated with him. Reflecting Adler's convictions regarding the unity of mind and body, the relatively new field of psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) researches the relationship between the central nervous system and the immune system.

### Masculine Protest

In Adler's Vienna, most presentations in psychiatric clinics were women marked by hysteria (e.g., headaches, fainting spells, vaginismus, paralysis). Adler interpreted their misery as related to their inferior status in society, understanding their behavior as a protest against assumed male superiority and practiced male privilege. He coined the term *masculine protest* in response to their suffering and devoted a part of (what was to be) his final presentation to Freud's psychoanalytic society (of which he had been a founding member eleven years earlier) to the topic of the masculine protest. He was viciously attacked by most of the group (Freud, silent, standing by) who considered it derived from sociology, not psychiatry, and therefore without scientific merit. As a consequence of the unpardonable remarks directed at him by his erstwhile colleagues, Adler, along with his sympathizers, resigned, and in due course they formed their own society. Now, more than one hundred years later, the #MeToo movement, dating from 2006, carries the protest forward, although probably with little knowledge of its predecessor.

### The Tasks of Life

Adler posited three tasks confronting every human being. As he put it: "Three problems are irrevocably set before every individual. These are: the attitude toward one's fellow man, occupation, and love. All three are linked to one another by the first. They are not accidental but [are] inescapable problems" (Adler, 1956, p. 297). According to Individual Psychology, these three tasks encompass all human activity. No one had looked at human beings in this particular way before—that is to say, no one had presented the idea that life itself sets forth certain demands that human beings, socially embedded, are compelled to address. Adler proposed that these tasks encompass the totality of life. They are love, or mating, procreating, caring for the young and elderly; work, or finding work to do that offers adequate support, satisfies, and is worthwhile; and friendship and community, or learning to make friends, finding a place in the larger community, and contributing to the community's success. Hoffman (1994) notes:

To professional as well as popular audiences throughout his lecture tours, Adler would often state, "In life, you can find three fundamental questions: The social question (friendship, comradeship, social behavior), the question of occupation, and the question of love and marriage. Everybody gives his individual answer to these questions by behavior, and this answer is also an expression of his action-line or style of life." (p. 177)

**Education: Live Demonstrations, Child Guidance, and Outreach to Schools**

Adler was a pioneer physician-educator. He taught his medical students by providing live demonstrations of his approach by interviewing a family in front of a class. This typically involved Adler reflecting on the case report, followed by an interview with the child and the parents in which he would provide his insights and recommendations. Often, he would involve the class, asking the medical students to share their observations in ways that would elicit validation, identification, and encouragement. After the family left, Adler processed the experience with the students to enhance educational impact. This innovative approach provided a dynamic learning experience of his ideas and methods, and it is still practiced by Adlerians today in open forum family counseling. "What often stuck out the most to Adler's students who attended was how he was able to establish an immediate friendly rapport. Not only did he teach the importance of presenting a warm, down-to-earth therapeutic style of relating, but he also practiced what he preached" (Hoffman, 1994, p. 218). He expanded his work to other professional groups and to the child guidance programs he championed in schools. He worked directly with teachers, students, and parents, providing useful insights and interventions to overcome difficulties and recommending processes for remediation. This innovation of child (and teen) guidance is now found at all levels in our schools, where we have counselors, social workers, and psychologists, either in-house or on call. Because it was Adler's view that all problems are problems of relationship between individuals and one or more of the life tasks, he focused on and uncovered these problems, and, avoiding blame and shame, emphasized encouragement. For example, he advised parents to be gentle and understanding, not harsh, saying, "At every step of the treatment, we must not deviate from the path of encouragement" (Adler, 1956, p. 342). He also advised teachers not to punish students (severe punishment was habitual in the Austria-Hungary of his day). He believed that only through education could a better community be realized. With the support of the democratic socialist government that rose to political power in Austria after World War I, Adler established child guidance clinics throughout Vienna, staffed by men and women trained in Adler's techniques. (These were closed by the Nazis in the wake of the Anschluss.)

**Adler the Egalitarian**

In closing, we want to remember Adler as an egalitarian, a man who spoke of others as his fellows. As a child he grew up in the formal, hierarchical world of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; as a young man he moved

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forward, joining other progressive thinkers who cheered the equality of women, races, ethnic groups, religions. Here are three of Adler's innovations relating to his modern thinking and their current status.

First, in the consulting room: Should a patient lie down or sit during therapy? Adler was aware that psychoanalysts, following Freud, worked with patients while the patients were lying down, with the interviewer sitting in a chair behind the patient, positioned so as to preclude contact. Why was this? Freud could not allow friendly contact with his patients because he considered himself a researcher who had to maintain a proper distance from his research subjects—he therefore ruled out eye contact and conversation with his patients. Adler saw himself not as a researcher but as the helper of a fellow human being in distress. He abandoned Freud's method. Instead of the couch, Adler provided equal footing for himself and his patient, studiously placing his chair and that of his patient opposite each other so they could easily make eye contact while talking. It was essential that their conversation be friendly, as the discussions probed private matters. Hoffman (1994) quotes Adler:

“The most important element in therapeutics is the disclosure of the neurotic's system or life-plan (life-style). Once the therapist fully comprehends this plan, the goal is then to help the patient become as conscious as possible.” To accomplish this Adler decisively rejected Freud's inviolate technique of requesting the patient to lie down on the couch and “free associate” aloud to an utterly passive, silent, and even unseen therapist. Rather, emphasized Adler, “the uncovering of the [patient's] life-style proceeds apace in [face-to-face] friendly and free conversation, always pointing out his disturbing arrangements and constructions.” (p. 87)

The second of these egalitarian ideas is what Adler characterized as “social medicine,” a concept he pioneered. Although its adoption has been limited in the United States, social medicine is practiced to a large extent in all other industrialized countries. In this regard, recall Adler's first publication (1898), a short monograph titled *Health Book for the Tailor Trade*. Here Adler wanted “to show the relationship of [the] economic situation and disease in a given trade, and the resulting prejudice to public health. This will give evidence that disease can be a product of society” (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 599). In the booklet Adler described the miserable living and working conditions of tailors in small independent tailoring shops (of which there were tens of thousands in the Vienna of his day) and the diseases that commonly arose among them. Citing statistics, he concluded that “disease frequency among tailors is higher than in any other trade and the average life expectancy is the lowest of all trades” (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 600). Adler “deplored the discrepancy between the scientific and social aspects of medicine,” denouncing academic medicine for not addressing the chronic

suffering of workers in the lower classes and calling for a new social medicine to rectify this appalling situation (Ellenberger, 1970, p.601 ).

Finally, Adler (1978) asserted: "Individual Psychology aims at serving the community rather than forging new arms for a caste of scholars....It must hand over all its knowledge and skills to the community" (pp. 253-254). Furthermore, he asserted, "[Psychology] is a science that cannot be pursued with the sole purpose of developing occasional experts. Only the understanding of human nature by every human being can be its proper goal" (Adler, 1927/1957, p.15 ). Adler taught that the task of mental health professionals is, ultimately, to help clients live meaningful lives wherein they sense of their own value by contributing to the lives of others and to the communities in which they live. Likewise, he expected those active in this profession to care not only for clients but for the community and the world as well. In a statement that is a call to action-never more relevant than now-Adler stated:

The honest psychologist cannot shut his eyes to social conditions which pre-vent the child from becoming a part of the community and from feeling at home in the world, and which allow him to grow up as though he lived in enemy country. Thus the psychologist must work against nationalism when it is so poorly understood that it harms mankind as a whole; against wars of conquest, revenge, and prestige; against unemployment, which plunges people into hopelessness; and against all other obstacles which interfere with the spreading of social interest in the family, the school, and society at large. (Adler, 1956, p. 454)

## **Conclusion**

This survey of Adler's innovations demonstrates his awareness of the world around him, his sense of urgency toward effecting change, and his respect and regard for his fellow citizens. We hope that those new to Adler's Individual Psychology will want to investigate further (<https://www.walfredadler.org> ) and that those who already enjoy a professional life in Individual Psychology will be encouraged by this work.

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**Steven A. Maybell**, PhD (stevenm@spu.edu), is director of the Student Counseling Center and a professor in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Seattle Pacific University. Additionally, he has a private practice as clinical supervisor for mental health professionals. Maybell holds the LMFT and LCSW licenses and is a Diplomate in Adlerian Psychology. He studied under Powers and Griffith, completing the program of the Americas Institute of Adlerian Studies (AIAS), and directed and taught the AIAS program in San Diego. Since then he has adapted the material and teaches it through the Idaho Society of Individual Psychology, Seattle Pacific University, and the Puget Sound Adlerian Society. Maybell is coauthor of *Calming the Family Storm* (Impact, 2004) and *Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World* (Prima, 2001), and he has contributed articles to *Journal of Individual Psychology*.

## **RECOMMENDED BOOKS ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY - APPLICATIONS**

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Steven A. Maybell (2018)

### **History / Theory / The Cast of Characters:**

*The Drive for Self – Alfred Adler and the Founding of Individual Psychology* (Hoffman)

*The Courage to be Imperfect – The Life and Work of Rudolf Dreikurs* (Terner and Pew)

### **Theory:**

*What Life Could Mean to You* (Alfred Adler)

(a classic, best representation of Adler's original writing, please consider the book's historical context)

*The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* (Edited by Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher)

(the "purple book", comprehensive representative of Adler's writings and ideas, a great reference, well indexed)

*Social Equality the Challenge of Today* (Rudolf Dreikurs)

*Adlerian Theory: An Introduction* (Eva Dreikurs Ferguson)

*The Lexicon of Adlerian Psychology* (Jane Griffith and Robert L. Powers)

### **Counseling and Therapy:**

*Psychodynamics, Psychotherapy and Counseling: Collected Papers* (Dreikurs)

*Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Sweeney)

*Counseling and Psychotherapy: An Integrated, Individual Psychology Approach*

(Dinkmeyer and Sperry)

*Understanding Lifestyle: The Psychoclarify Process* (1987 1<sup>st</sup> edition) title changed to *The Key to Psychotherapy: Understanding the Self-Created Individual* (2012 revised edition) (Powers & Griffith)

*Adlerian Family Counseling* (Christensen et al)

*Guiding the Family* (Grunwald and McAbee)

*Systems of Family Therapy: An Adlerian Integration* (Sherman and Dinkmeyer)

*Couples Therapy: An Adlerian Perspective* (Oscar Christensen et al)

*Partners in Play: An Adlerian Approach to Play Therapy* (Terry Kottman)

*Metaphor Therapy* (Richard Royal Kopp)

### **Parent / Family / Classroom Education:**

*Children the Challenge* (Dreikurs)

*Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World* (McKay's, Maybell, and Eckstein)

*Calming the Family Storm* (McKay and Maybell)

*Systematic Training for Effective Parenting – S.T.E.P.* (Dinkmeyer, McKay, and other authors)

[various titles for different age groups]

*Positive Discipline* (Jane Nelson et al) [multiple titles for parents of teens, pre-schoolers, etc]

*Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom* (Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper)

### **Holism (indivisible, whole, unity)**

- 1) *The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.* (Alfred Adler)
  - 2) *One can never regard single manifestations of the mental life as separate entities, but one can gain understanding of them only if one understands all manifestations of a mental life as parts of an indivisible whole.* (Alfred Adler)
  - 3) *With every individual we must look for the underlying coherence, for the unity of the personality.* (Alfred Adler)
  - 4) *When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.* (John Muir – Naturalist/Environmentalist/Founder-National Parks)
  - 5) *We believe our understanding has reached a point where we can recommend an ideal treatment for panic disorder. What scientists now understand is the brain's chemical makeup and wiring are intricately tied to our thoughts and our emotions. Most importantly, they know that altering brain chemistry with medication can alter thoughts and emotions, and altering the way we think and feel through psychological therapy can change the chemistry and wiring of our brains. There is no separation between the brain and the mind.* (Alan Leshner, M.D., National Institute of Mental Health)
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### **Social Embeddedness / Social Equality / The Life Tasks**

- 6) *Individual Psychology regards and examines the individual as socially embedded. We refuse to recognize and examine the isolated human being.* (Alfred Adler)
- 7) *We can understand the personality of the individual only when we see him in his context and evaluate him in his particular situation in the world.* (Alfred Adler)
- 8) *Two people cannot live together fruitfully if one wishes to rule and force and the other to obey. In our present conditions many men and, indeed, many women are convinced that it is the man's part to rule and dictate, to play the leading role, to be the master. This is the reason why we have so many unhappy marriages. Nobody can bear a position of inferiority without anger and disgust. Partners must be equal, and when people are equal, they will always find a way to settle their difficulties.* (Alfred Adler)
- 9) *There should be no ruler in the family and every occasion for feelings of inequality should be avoided.* (Alfred Adler)
- 10) *Three problems are irrevocably set before every individual. These are: the attitude toward one's fellow man, occupation, and love. All three are linked to each other by the first.* (Alfred Adler)
- 11) *All the questions of life can be subordinated to the three major problems – the problems of communal life, of work, and of love.* (Alfred Adler)



### **Teleology (the Purposiveness of Behavior)**

- 12) *The mysterious creative power of life is teleological, it expresses itself after a goal, and in this striving every bodily and psychological process is made to cooperate. (Alfred Adler)*
  - 13) *Merely to institute a random movement from moment to moment would never be enough, there must be a goal for the strivings. (Alfred Adler)*
  - 14) *All is Movement. (Alfred Adler)*
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### **Phenomenology (Subjective/Private Meaning)**

- 15) *In a word I am convinced that a person's behavior springs from his ideas. We should not be surprised by this because our senses do not receive actual facts, but merely a subjective interpretation of them. (Alfred Adler)*
  - 16) *It is not the child's experiences which dictate his actions, it is the conclusions he draws from his experiences. (Alfred Adler)*
  - 17) *Meanings are not determined by situations, but we determine ourselves by the meaning we give to situations. (Alfred Adler)*
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### **Creativity / Uniqueness (of every person)**

- 18) *The individual is the both the picture and the artist, he is the artist of his own personality. (Alfred Adler)*
- 19) *Do not forget the most important fact that not heredity and not environment are determining factors. Both are giving only the frame and the influences which are answered by the individual in regard to his styled creative power. (Alfred Adler)*
- 20) *The directed utilization of instincts and drives, as well as impressions from the environment are the artistic work of the child and cannot be understood in the sense of a psychology of possession, but only of a psychology of use. (Alfred Adler)*

## **Inferiority Feelings and Inferiority Complex**

- 21) *To be human means to feel inferior. If we consider that every child is actually inferior in the face of life and could not exist at all without assistance from those close to him, if we focus on the smallness and helplessness of the child which continues for so long and which brings about the impression that we are hardly equal to life, then we must assume that at the beginning of every psychological life there is more or less a deep feeling of inferiority. (Alfred Adler)*
- 22) *It is not the sense of inferiority which matters, but the degree and character of it. (Alfred Adler)*
- 23) *The abnormal feeling of inferiority has acquired the name 'inferiority complex'. (Alfred Adler)*
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## **Compensation (to overcome, rise above, make up for)**

- 24) *It is the child's helplessness, clumsiness, and insecurity which necessitates the exploration of possibilities . . . for the purpose of constructing a bridge into the future where resides greatness, power and satisfaction. The construction of the bridge (the process of compensation) is the most important achievement of the child, because otherwise he would find himself without composure, guidance, or comfort in the midst of overpowering impressions . . . (Alfred Adler)*
- 25) *The whole of human life never proceeds along this great line of action – from below to above, from minus to plus, from defeat to victory. (Alfred Adler)*
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## **Striving for Superiority (for success, for fulfillment)**

- 26) *It is the striving for superiority which is behind every human creation. (Alfred Adler)*
- 27) *I began to see clearly in every psychological phenomenon the striving for superiority (fulfillment). It runs parallel to physical growth and is an intrinsic necessity of life itself. (Alfred Adler)*
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## **Vertical Striving (above others)**

- 28) *Once the goal of superiority is made concrete, there are no mistakes made in the style of life. The habits and symptoms of the individual are precisely right for attaining his concrete goal...Every problem child, neurotic, and addict are making the proper movements to achieve what he takes to be a position of superiority. It is impossible to attack the symptoms by themselves, they are exactly the symptoms he ought to have for such a goal. (Alfred Adler)*

## Level Striving (Social Interest / Community Feeling / Gemeinschaftsgefühl)

- 29) *Superiority striving (striving for fulfillment) can take place in a satisfactory way and lead to a proper feeling of worth only on the useful side, in the developed social interest, where the individual senses himself as valuable. Valuable can mean nothing other than valuable for human society. (Alfred Adler)*
- 30) *Every human being strives for significance, but people will always make mistakes if they do not recognize that their own significance lies in their contribution to the lives of others. (Alfred Adler)*
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## Human Uniqueness vs. Human Classification

- 31) *Life (and all expressions as part of life) moves ever toward overcoming, toward fulfillment, toward success. You cannot train or condition a person for defeat. But what an individual thinks or feels as success, as an acceptable goal, is unique with her. In our experience we have found that each individual has a different meaning given to life, and attitude toward what constitutes success. Therefore, a human being cannot be typified or classified. We believe that the parsimony of thought and language causes many scientists to come to mistaken conclusions, to believe in types. Individual (Adlerian) Psychology recognizes that each individual must be understood in the context of her/his own unique development. To present the individual understandably in words, requires an extensive review of all his facets. Yet too often, psychologists are tempted away from this recognition to take the easier but unfruitful road of classification. This is a temptation to which, in practical work we must never yield. (Alfred Adler)*
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## The Social Responsibility of the Counselor

- 32) *The honest therapist cannot become so focused on micro problems so as to shut their eyes from seeing social conditions which prevent the child from becoming a part of the community and from feeling at home in the world, and which allow the child to grow up as if she lived in an enemy country. Thus the therapist must work against nationalism when it is so poorly understood that it harms humankind as a whole, against wars of conquest, revenge, and prestige; against humanly caused ravages to our environment, against unemployment which plunges people into hopelessness; and against all other obstacles which interfere with the spreading of community feeling in the family, the school, and society at large. (Alfred Adler)*



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## **RESUME**

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- The Institute of Adlerian Counseling and Therapy: Adlerian training and clinical supervision

#### **Past Professional Experience:**

- Director of the Student Counseling Center: Seattle Pacific University (2005-2019)
- Clinical Director: Youth Eastside Services, Bellevue, Washington (1996-2005)
- Director of Counseling Services: Lifeline Community Services, Vista, California (1975-1996)
- Director of Professional Studies/Faculty: The Americas Institute of Adlerian Studies (1983-1996)
- President: The San Diego Society of Adlerian Psychology (1983-1994) - Board Member: (NASAP) 1990-1998
- Faculty: Psychological and Social Services Program- Palomar College, San Marcos, CA (1976-1996)
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- Faculty: The Adler School for Professional Psychology, Vancouver, B.C. (1996 to 2005)
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- Psychotherapist and Family Counselor in Private Practice (1980 to 2005)

#### **Education:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Social Work - California State University Long Beach
- Master's Degree in Social Work - San Diego State University
- Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology - La Jolla University

#### **Specialized Training Received:**

Carl Rogers (Person Centered Therapy), Virginia Satir (Family Therapy), Albert Ellis (Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy), Victor Frankl, Rollo May, and Irving Yalom (Existential Therapy/Group Therapy), William Glasser (Reality Therapy/Choice Theory), David Epston (Narrative Therapy), Scott Miller and Barry Duncan (Narrative Therapy & the Common Factors Model), Daniel Siegel (*Interpersonal Neurobiology/The Mindsight Institute*), Peggy Pace & Cathy Thorpe (Lifespan Integration), Francine Shapiro (EMDR), Kurt Adler, Tee Dreikurs, Robert Powers, Oscar Christensen, James Bitter, Richard Royal Kopp, and Frank Walton (Adlerian Therapy).

#### **Licensure, Certification, and Honors:**

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist - State of Washington
- Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker - State of Washington
- Mental Health Professional / Child Mental Health Specialist - State of Washington
- Clinical Fellow & Approved Supervisor - The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy
- Diplomate in Adlerian Psychology - North American Society of Adlerian Psychology
- Diplomate in Professional Psychotherapy - IABMCP
- Diplomate in Clinical Social Work - National Association of Social Workers
- Certified Clinical Trauma Professional - International Association of Trauma Professionals
- EMDR training (level 2) and Lifespan Integration training (level 2)
- Clinical Supervisor of the Year - Washington Association of Marriage and Family Therapy
- Clinical Supervisor of the Year - University of Washington School of Social Work
- Certificate of Professional Studies in Adlerian Psychology - The Americas Institute of Adlerian Studies
- Who's Who Among Americas Teachers - Biographical Listing

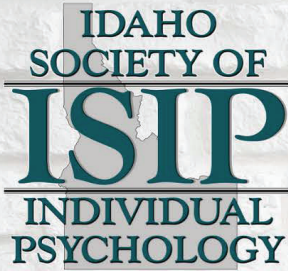
#### **Publications:**

*Calming the Family Storm*, IMPACT, 2004

*Raising Respectful Kids in a Rude World*, PRIMA, 2001

*Journal of Individual Psychology* (various professional articles)

*Parenting a New Tradition*, LIFELINE, 1986



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1. Provide an opportunity for people to share in applying Individual Psychology to education, medicine, business, family, and mental health.

2. Encourage personal and professional growth.

4. Assemble a library relating to Adlerian Psychology for use by the members.

3. Encourage research in and stimulate the further scientific development of individual psychology.

