

ADLERIAN GROUP COUNSELING

INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler and Carl Jung collaborated for about eight to ten years studying the human personality. The three parted company because Freud's basic concepts of sexuality and biological determination became unacceptable. A number of psychoanalysts also deviated from Freud's deterministic point of view and toward Adler's antideterministic view of human nature. Another major difference between Freud and Adler involves the populations with which they worked. Freud focused on the individual psychodynamics of a neurotic population, and Freudian psychoanalysis was largely confined to a more affluent people. By contrast, Adler was a politically and socially oriented psychiatrist. Part of his mission was to bring psychotherapy to the working class and to translate psychological concepts into practical methods for helping a varied population meet the challenges of life.

*Because of Adler's basic assumption of all-important **social** nature of human beings, he was interested in working with clients in the group context.*

According to Dinkmeyer, the Adlerian approach places emphasis upon winning the patient's cooperation and helping him anticipate success.

The Adlerian principles are currently being used with a wide population—very young children, older children, adolescents, college students, and adults. It is currently estimated that as many as 20,000 laymen and professionals are employing Adlerian techniques.

KEY CONCEPTS

OVERVIEW OF THE ADLERIAN VIEW OF THE PERSON

Adler's system stresses self determination and consciousness (rather than unconscious) as the center of the personality. Adler's approach is basically a growth model and emphasizes social determinants, rather than biological aspects. Adlerians reject the idea that some individuals are psychologically "sick" and in need of a "cure". They view their work as teaching people better ways to meet the challenges of life tasks, providing direction, and offering encouragement to those who are discouraged.

HOLISM

The Adlerian approach, also known as **individual psychology**, is based on a holistic view of the person. The therapist is oriented toward understanding the client's social situation and the attitudes he/she has about it.

CREATIVITY AND CHOICE

According to Adler, humans have the capacity to influence and create events. What we are born with is not crucial, but how we use our natural endowment. Adlerians practice on the assumption of self-determination. This leaves no room for clients to take the role of passive victim. The therapy is aimed at showing clients that, although they can not directly change the behavior of others, they do have the power to change their own reactions and attitudes toward others.

PHENOMENOLOGY

The study of the development of human consciousness and self-awareness as a preface to philosophy. In Adlerian group counseling, the behavior of the members is understood from the vantage point of their unique striving in life and from a view of the world through their eyes.

TELEOLOGY

The natural process of being directed toward an end or shaped by a purpose. Adlerians look for a continuity in a client's life. Our decisions are based on what we have experienced in the past, our present situation, and our future goals.

SOCIAL INTEREST

An individual's attitudes in dealing with the social world. Adler equated social interest with a sense of identification and empathy with others. Adler believed we had a strong need to feel united with others. Adlerians contend that there are three main tasks that are essential for us to successfully master: our relationships with friends, our work, and our family relations. Adlerians generally equate social interest with mental health. Persons without social interest cannot be healthy, whereas persons with social interest may be healthy. This concept is applied to group counseling by structuring the group so that members can meet some of their needs for affiliation with others.

INFERIORITY-SUPERIORITY

Adler did not view inferiority as a negative force. He felt we attempt to compensate for feelings of inferiority by finding ways that we can control the forces in or live, as opposed to being controlled by them. Our goal striving involves moving from a feeling of inferiority to one of superiority.

LIFE STYLE

Adler saw us as actor, creator and artist of our life. Everything we do is related to the final goal of our life. In striving for goal superiority, some of us develop intellect, others physical being and so on.

BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

Psychological and behavior disorders can be considered as erroneous ways of living, or mistaken assumptions. This can include a faulty life-style, mistaken goal of success, and underdeveloped social interest. Therapy is based on an educational model, not a medical model. Group counseling is a process of teaching clients a better approach so that they can succeed.

APPLICATION OF ADLERIAN PRINCIPLES TO GROUP WORK

RATIONALE FOR GROUP COUNSELING

- * *Group provides a mirror of person's behavior*
- * *Members benefit from feedback from other members and leader*
- * *Members both receive and give help*
- * *Group provides opportunities for testing reality and trying new behavior*
- * *Group context encourages members to make a commitment to take action to change their life.*
- * *Transactions in the group help members understand how they function at work/at home and reveal how members seek to find their place in society.*
- * *Group is structured so members can meet their need for belonging.*

GOALS OF ADLERIAN COUNSELING

1. *Establishing and maintaining an empathic relationship between client and counselor that is based on mutual trust and respect and in which the client feels understood and accepted by the counselor.*
2. *Providing a therapeutic climate in which clients can come to understand their basic beliefs and feelings about themselves and discover why those beliefs are faulty.*
3. *Helping clients develop insight into their mistaken goals and self-defeating behaviors through a process of confrontation and interpretation.*
4. *Assisting clients in discovering alternatives and encouraging them to make choices - that is, put insights into action.*

PHASES OF THE ADLERIAN GROUP

Phase 1: Establishing and Maintaining the Relationship

In the initial phase, the emphasis is on establishing a good therapeutic relationship based on cooperation and mutual respect. The Adlerian therapeutic relationship is a relationship between equals. Therapist and client work together toward mutually agreed-upon goals.

Phase 2: Analysis and Assessment - Exploring the Individual's Dynamics

The aim of the second phase is twofold: understanding ones' life-style and seeing how the life-style affects one's current functioning in all the tasks of life. The life-style investigation, which includes exploration of family background and one's life story, reveals a pattern of basic mistakes. Mosak lists five basic mistakes; (1) overgeneralization (2) impossible goals (3) misperceptions of life and its demands (4) denial of one's basic worth (5) faulty values.

Phase 3: Insight

The Adlerian view is that insight is only a step toward change and not a necessary prerequisite for it. Mosak defines insight as "understanding translated into constructive action". The group facilitates the process of gaining insight, because, as member experience resistance in themselves, they can also observe resistance in other group members. Interpretation is a technique that facilitates the process of gaining insight into ones life-style.

Phase 4: Reorientation

The reorientation phase deals with considering alternative attitudes, beliefs, goals and behaviors. Encouragement is the basic aspect of this phase. Reorientation is the action phase of a group, when new decisions are made and goals modified. Commitment is an essential ingredient of the reorientation phase.

ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE ADLERIAN COUNSELOR

*The concept of the anonymous counselor is not part of the Adlerian view.
The counselor is an active participant in a collaborative therapeutic effort.
The counselor challenges the client's beliefs and goals and helps them
translate what they have learned in the group process into new beliefs
and behaviors. The counselor also serves as a role model.*

ADLERIAN FAMILY COUNSELING

GOALS OF ADLERIAN FAMILY COUNSELING

*The basic goal of this approach is to facilitate the improvement of
parent/child relationships and to enhance the relationships within the
family.*

RESPONSIBILITY OF FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE COUNSELING PROCESS

*One assumption is that family counseling is undertaken voluntarily.
Family members are expected to attend a series of sessions and also
to become involved in seriously carrying out homework assignments.*

TECHNIQUES OF FAMILY COUNSELING

*Initial Interview - helps counselor diagnose children's goals,
evaluate the parents' methods of child rearing, understand the climate
in the home, and be able to make specific recommendations for change
in the family situation. Role playing and other action-oriented methods are
often used.*

EVALUATION OF ADLERIAN APPROACH TO GROUPS

The Adlerian approach places emphasis on the social forces that motivate behavior and the search for mastery, superiority, power, interest in patterns that people develop, and the notion that we develop a unique life-style as a response to our perceived inferiority.

The commonalities of the Adlerian model and the psychoanalytic model include a focus on critical periods of development, and interest in early recollections and an emphasis on interpretation.

One of the strengths of the Adlerian approach is its eclectic nature. It is a holistic approach that encompasses the full spectrum of human experience, and practitioners have a great deal of freedom in working with clients in ways that are uniquely suited to their own therapeutic style. Practitioners are not bound to follow specific procedure, nor are they limited to using certain techniques. They can use their judgment in applying a wide range of techniques that they think will work best. The basic criterion is that therapeutic techniques fit the theory and the client.

Adler as an existential thinker and a forerunner of the existential movement because of his position that human beings are free to choose and are entirely responsible for what they make of themselves. This view makes Adler a forerunner of the subjective approach to psychology, which focuses on the internal determinants of behavior - values, beliefs, attitudes, goals, interests, personal meanings, subjective perceptions of reality, and striving toward self realization. Adler also had much influence on other systems and approaches to counseling and therapy.