

## Personal Application: The Lifestyle Assessment

The lifestyle assessment is typically done at the initial phase of therapy as a way to obtain information about the client's family constellation, early recollections, dreams, and strengths as a person. This information is then summarized and interpreted, especially in light of the client's faulty assumptions about life (or "basic mistakes"). From the results of this assessment procedure, counselors make tentative interpretations about the client's lifestyle.

Although there are a number of formats for the lifestyle questionnaire, counselors may develop their own variation by focusing on information deemed most valuable for exploration in therapy. What follows is an example of a lifestyle questionnaire that has been modified and adapted from various sources, but especially from Mosak and Shulman's *Life Style Inventory* (1988). To give you an experiential sense of the process of thinking and responding to this early life-history material, take the following questionnaire and apply it to yourself. As much as possible, try to give your initial responses,

without worrying about what you can and cannot remember or about any "correct" responses. I strongly encourage you to fill in the blanks and to make brief summaries after each section. Assume that you are interested in being a *client* in Adlerian therapy. Based on the outcomes of this questionnaire, what areas of your life would you most like to explore? How much help is this questionnaire in getting you focused on what you might want from a therapeutic relationship?

**FAMILY CONSTELLATION: BIRTH ORDER AND SIBLING DESCRIPTION**

1. List the siblings from oldest to youngest. Give a brief description of each (including yourself). What most stands out for each sibling?

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2. Do a rating of each of the siblings, from the highest to the lowest, on each of the following personality dimensions. Include your own position in relationship to your siblings.

*Most to Least*

*Most to Least*

intelligent \_\_\_\_\_

feminine \_\_\_\_\_

achievement-oriented \_\_\_\_\_

masculine \_\_\_\_\_

hardworking \_\_\_\_\_

easygoing \_\_\_\_\_

pleasing \_\_\_\_\_

daring \_\_\_\_\_

assertive \_\_\_\_\_

responsible \_\_\_\_\_

charming \_\_\_\_\_

idealistic \_\_\_\_\_

conforming \_\_\_\_\_

materialistic \_\_\_\_\_

methodical \_\_\_\_\_

fun-loving \_\_\_\_\_

athletic \_\_\_\_\_

demanding \_\_\_\_\_

rebellious \_\_\_\_\_

critical of self \_\_\_\_\_

spoiled \_\_\_\_\_

withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

critical of others \_\_\_\_\_

sensitive \_\_\_\_\_

bossy \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which sibling(s) is(are) the most different from you, and how? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Which is most like you, and how? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Which played together? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which fought each other? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who took care of whom? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Were there any unusual achievements by the siblings? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Any accidents or sickness? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What kind of child were you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What was school like for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What childhood fears did you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What were your childhood ambitions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What was your role in your peer group? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Were there any significant events in your physical and sexual development? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Any highlights in your social development? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. What were the most important values in your family? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. What stands out the most for you about your family life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY CONSTELLATION: PARENTAL FIGURES AND RELATIONSHIPS

1. Your father's current age. \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's age. \_\_\_\_\_
2. His occupation. \_\_\_\_\_ Her occupation. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What kind of person is he? \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of person is she? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. His ambitions for the children. \_\_\_\_\_ Her ambitions for the children. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Your childhood view of your father. \_\_\_\_\_ Your childhood view of your mother. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. His favorite child, and why? \_\_\_\_\_ Her favorite child, and why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Relationship to children. \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to children. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Sibling most like father. In what ways? \_\_\_\_\_ Sibling most like mother. In what ways? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Describe your parents' relationship with each other. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. In general, how did each of the siblings view and react to your parents? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. In general, what was your parents' relationship to the children? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Besides your mother and father, were there any other parental figures in your life? Who were they? How did they affect you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS AND DREAMS

1. What is your earliest single and specific memory? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are some other early recollections? Be as detailed as possible. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What feelings are associated with any of the above early memories? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Can you recall any childhood dreams? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have any recurring dreams? \_\_\_\_\_

LIFESTYLE SUMMARY

1. Give a summary of your family constellation. (What stands out most about your role in your family? Are there any themes in your family history?) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Summarize your early recollections. (Are there any themes running through your early memories? Do you see any meaning in your early recollections?) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. List your mistaken self-defeating perceptions. (What do you see as your "basic mistakes"?) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you consider to be your strengths as a person. (What are your assets?) \_\_\_\_\_

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Now that you are finished with this lifestyle questionnaire:

- What did you learn from taking it and reviewing it?
- Assuming you will be a client in counseling, what theme(s) do you most want to address?
- Do you see connections between your past and the person you are today? What about any continuity from your past and present to your strivings toward the future?
- Do you see any patterns in your life? Are there any themes running through from childhood to the present?
- Consider bringing the results of your lifestyle summary to class. Form small groups, and exchange with others what you learned from taking this self-assessment questionnaire.