

Robinsons on Parallel Life Style: Discovering Something New About Oneself

Yvonne Schurer, one of the highly respected and most effective teachers at the International Adlerian Summer School (ICASSI), demonstrated for us practitioners how to discover a client's life style. Many folks do not understand themselves. They say: "I wonder why I do what I do." What is this so-called "life style?" How does it develop? Does it help to know how I see other people, the world, and myself? How can I get the insight I need to move forward in an effective way so that I don't hurt others and myself? How can I make a contribution to family, friends, community, and society?

In the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler, there are many paths to the insight a body needs to become a healthy, happy, contributing human being. Some of these paths include:

- Early Recollections (ER's)
- Family Constellation (place in the family)
- Dreams

Yvonne Schurer pointed out that skilled professional Adlerian therapists can define lifestyle if they have 2 points and draw the line between them: the current problem and Early Recollections. In ER's, together the client and the therapist figure out the mistakes a client continues to make based on seeing the world as he or she did as a child.

Once the client has the opportunity to see the mistaken notions, the client and the therapist together rethink the mistaken ideas and correct them. The therapist will then ask the client to practice behaving in a different way, based on the new insight. Often the client is resistant to trying new behaviors, taking responsibility for making changes in his/her fortune.

This is the time in the therapy that the therapist uses encouragement. In the demonstration in Hitzkirch, Switzerland, the audience of hundreds of therapists was asked to **be alert to the resources** of the client who had agreed to work on her lifestyle. Even in negative memories of childhood, one can find strengths to acknowledge and movement to encourage.

Examples of **mistaken beliefs** are often like these:

“Life is only worthwhile when _____.”

“I want powerand I want everyone to agree with it.”

“Life must be just the way I want it.”

“I do not have what it takes to help myself. Someone else must always help me.”

“Other people decide about my happiness or freedom.”

“I have to have a goal to make me superior to everyone else.” (In truth, no one has to strive for equality, because we are all equal.)

EQUAL, you say?!? In Adlerian Psychology, all persons are equal in terms of dignity and respect. Every human being deserves to be treated decently and kindly. Human beings all have their strengths and their weaknesses. We are all a part of humanity and the greater community of family, friends, state, country, and world. We are all equal before the law. When one of us chooses to climb up the ladder of success in the backs of the rest of us, trouble brews.

Rudolf Dreikurs, who taught us how to put Adlerian psychology to use in practical ways, pointed out the difference between pity and compassion. Compassion is when we feel concern for another human being. It is acceptable and predictable. However, pity is feeling sorry for another and it is bad, even if it is the only thing we can do, we don't leave space for the pitied person to grow. When we feel sorry for others, we think they are inferior to us, and are the object of our pity; therefore they feel belittled. There is, of

course, a fine line between pity and compassion, but feeling sorry is very discouraging to another.

The journey of discovery in Adlerian therapy is very revealing and healing. Seeing the world as a child and behaving on those ideas versus seeing the world and others in a positive contributing way is the turn around point for clients. It is very liberating and insightful, giving one the courage to make progress amid the challenges that surround us all.

Yvonne Schurer, herself, ready to laugh and include others in the therapy, served as an inspirational lecture and teacher to the folks from many countries who learned from her that day.