

Robinsons on Parallel Some Basics of Adlerian Psychology

Eva Dreikurs Ferguson (Daughter of Rudolf Dreikurs), has facilitated the Adlerian Psychology Summer Institutes, known as ICASSI for 47 years. She is best known for her ability to provide clear introductory explorations into some of the basics Adlerian principles in this timeless valuable and useful theory of psychology. We participants and Dr. Ferguson were gathered at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England, in the summer of 2014.

It is through her intellectual efforts that ICASSI has provided fresh ideas, novel applications, and updated course materials to this international community, which welcomes learners from around the world from nearly 30 countries that are represented at this cultured summer institute.

This educational experience affords each participant the opportunity to learn along-side some of the world's leading professional counselors, college educators, parents, and public school teachers from many nations. Practical skills are emphasized, taught and demonstrated. The relevance of Adlerian Psychology in its focus on cooperation, equality, and mutual respect among individuals and groups is extremely valuable in today's challenging world.

The continued Adlerian investigations continue to find ways to help others and ourselves find healthy ways to build on strength filled lives in this complex and every changing society. ICASSI does just that. The summer school brings together curious students, professional educators, and personal experiences to weave together life changing insights and adventures.

Basic precepts of this useful Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler include holism. Holism states that human beings are unified packages, which include physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual elements. As thinking, doing, feeling humans, we are one entity, unlike the divided personality as portrayed by Sigmund Freud.

Freud, as the father of psychology, described humans as divided into three separate parts: Id, Ego, and Super Ego. When Adler and Freud and other revered historical psychiatrists discussed the minds and behaviors of human beings, it did not take long for Adler to part ways on this very issue of holism versus divided personality.

“How can so many parts be one whole personality?” you may ask. The force that unites each of us into one being is our striving for goals. Each of us has goals we are striving for, and our whole self strives for these goals. It is possible to have goals without even knowing what they are.

Many goals are related to the fact that humans are social creatures. We function in a social way. Everything we do in our lives has a social aspect. Who we are is a result of our social learning, right from the first connection to our mother, father, and family. To be human is to be social. All we know and believe we learned in a social community. “Stand up straight; use your fork; chew with your mouth closed, etc.” all are social skills we learn from others.

We are whole human beings, striving for goals (known or unknown), learning from our social community. How we see these tasks and how we move into the world is determined by our private logic. As therapists, once we determine a client’s private logic, we can better understand what s/he is up to. If we understand the private logic of our partners, children, and parents we can understand and effectively relate to them. It is to our advantage to understand how they behave and how we behave.

Rudolf Dreikurs, whose idea it was to begin the training in Adlerian Psychology, stated this in reference to private logic: “If we want to live among others effectively, remember to neither fight nor give in—we are not inferior—we do not strive to be inferior.” This is the ironclad logic of social living: not to fight; not to give in. If human beings are to live together in a stable way, we need to function as equals.

This theoretical framework set the stage for a fortnight of learning experiences based on the Adlerian way of living, which would serve all of us participants well. We were able to return to our home countries with new and practical knowledge to share with our families, colleagues, and friends.

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