

Robinsons on Parallel
Early Memories and Addictions
By Jane Lawther

Counselors and therapists who make use of the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler (Adlerian Psychology) effectively use childhood memories before the age of 5, 6, or 7 as an information-gathering tool. Jim Holder, South Carolina Licensed Professional and Masters Addiction Counselor, has had clients share their early memories (Early Recollections or ER's) successfully for a number of years.

We human beings remember experiences through the filters in our brains. What we remember from those early childhood ventures may or may not be true. That really doesn't matter; what matters is what we remember and how we figure things out. Jim Holder, in his treatment of clients who have been addicted to drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, texting, or computer use, helps them see the POSITIVE INTENT in their first use of the substance or behavior.

Interestingly enough, each addiction begins with a POSITIVE reason, after that the behavior continues and folks get into trouble. Jim Holder's research and training has become extremely useful to fellow counselors as they work to encourage, support and discover the private logic of the clients they help. It does not matter if the behavior is cutting, bulimia, anorexia; it is still valuable to look at the positive intent.

With adolescents as with all clients, very comfortable relations between counselor and client (called rapport), is essential.

Human beings come into this world balanced. As we go through life an event happens, and we pick up a line of conduct. No matter what line of conduct/behavior we pick, we always give up something.

Jim has devised a number of VALUABLE QUESTIONS to ask clients as they share their earliest memories (ER's):

Some of his helpful questions are these:

- Is there a problem? Is it solved?
- Does the person in the memory move away from something or toward something?
- Is there rebellion or conformity?
- Are there other people involved?
- Is father or mother mentioned in the memory?

THESE QUESTIONS ARE HELPFUL IN WORKING WITH ER'S AND ADDICTIONS:

- Is there a substance being used in the memory?
- Does the memory involve working?
- Is the kitchen, office, or the bedroom in the memory?

- Are there substances being consumed that would lead to other compulsive/addictive behaviors? (Food, nicotine, caffeine, “uppers,” such as cocaine or “downers,” such as sedatives)?
- Are there behaviors that could lead to other compulsive/addictive behaviors? (Shopping, computer use, pornography, gambling: texting/phone, sexual behavior?)
- Is there positive content but negative feelings?

These questions provide answers that are very informative to the counselor and the client. As the answers are shared, the counselor can begin to fill in the blanks to the following sentences:

Men are _____; therefore I should_____.

Women are _____; therefore I should_____.

Life is _____; therefore I should_____.

The world is _____; therefore I should_____.

Others are _____; therefore I should_____.

As the counselor and the client talk together about early memories and attitudes, the client’s view of life, self, and others becomes more and more clear. The positive intentions of the behavior begin to “make sense” in the private logic of the client.

In the addictions class Jim taught at the International Summer Institute (known as ICASSI), he would have the client in his demonstration REWRITE the early memory to change it to a different scenario. Often the rewrite is very helpful to the client and counselor. Using the counselor’s creativity is essential to the teamwork between counselors and clients.

Jim reminded us that clients have choices in the way they look at things.

- How would you change this memory? And then
- Visualize the new memory.
- Anything you would like to add?
- Anything you would like to take away?

Sometimes Jim has his clients rewrite or change the memory one or two times. The purpose, of course, is to find a way for the addicted client to meet the same goal/positive intention in a different way, a more healthy way.

It is very encouraging to know that we, clients, counselors, all of us have the power of choice and can change our behavior each day, each hour, each minute. We are not bound to continue on the path we are on; we can move another direction, rethink our intentions and be positive, healthy and act in our own and others’ best interest.

Holder, J. A. “The Use of Early Recollections in Adlerian Psychology”, Copyrighted, 2013, Available from the author at roseh66@aol.com.