

Robinsons on Parallel Adlerian Psychology and Diversity

At the Summer Institute where we participants learned applications of Adlerian Dreikursian Psychology, each morning we experienced high quality lectures from esteemed and veteran practitioners. The first morning we learned from Eva Dreikurs Ferguson about “Adlerian Psychology and Diversity.” We all gleaned nuggets of value from her presentation.

She described our society in terms of our wealth and self indulgence. She cited obesity as a serious health problem, along with other signs that we are often focused on our own selves and our own welfare.

“Who remembers the stories of the Hatfields and the McCoy's the generations of feuding families from the Appalachian Mountains?” She asked. Many of us did. She pointed out that no one else could tell the difference between a Hatfield or a McCoy, but they could. The story brought Dr. Ferguson to her first point: IF WE WANT TO HATE, WE CAN DO SO FOR THE SMALLEST OF REASONS. We say “look how different they are.” We use any reason we can: intellectual, intelligence, culture, economic. We focus on mistakes. We find it very easy to hate. Then we act in ways that are not likeable.

Rather, we can ask ourselves: “How can I change the world, others, myself?” We are in the habit of looking outside ourselves for motivation, thoughts, courage, etc. It is only when we understand who WE are can we change our own motivations, thoughts, and emotions. We need to understand who the other person is in addition to who we are.

If we are truly clever in times of challenges we can ask ourselves, “What other reaction can I have besides anger?” Not everyone

reacts in the same way to the same cue. “What am I bringing to the circumstance?”

Then Dr. Ferguson discussed Life Style and how sometimes we feel inferior (not functioning in a healthy, normal way). We say to ourselves, “Something is wrong with me.” When we feel inferior, we are comparing ourselves to some standard. The question is where did the standard come from? What a provocative question!!

This led to the second major point of the discussion: IF WE WANT TO FEEL INFERIOR, WE CAN DO THAT. We can all think of our family standards to which we can feel inferior. If we are the younger, we can easily choose to feel inferior. The order of our birth has great influence on our views in life. We can use almost any criteria to choose to feel inferior. On the other hand, just because I can do something better it doesn't mean that I am a better person.

No matter how diverse people are, they have common characteristics like the same place in the family (first born, middle, youngest). Folks who have the courage and choose to will find those common characteristics and move forward together.

To summarize Dr. Dreikurs Ferguson pointed out the following:

1. We bring our past with us to any and all situations—our feelings, attitudes, expectations.
2. If we have a feeling of mutual respect, we can solve problems.
3. If we have a problem, it is a shared problem.
4. If our goal is to contribute and not be special, many more solutions show up.

Diversity is a part of reality. In many ways, diversity is to be celebrated, embraced, and used as we move forward to make a better world.