

## Robinsons on Parallel Roads to Joy—the Adlerian Map

Dr. Paul Rasmussen, who recently moved from SC to Chicago to lend a hand at the Adler School of Psychology, started the second week at ICASSI, the International Adlerian Summer School in Switzerland with JOY! He described it; he demonstrated it; he had us dancing in the aisles in the lecture hall. It was great fun to see him pick up the hand of Doris Voss, our talented interpreter, and begin to dance around the stage with her. Then they invited us all to join hands and dance for joy, which many of us did. It wasn't walking the talk; it was dancing the talk.

Here is how Paul led us to the dance by posing a number of questions:

- What do you want?
- Why do you want it?
- What will you get out of it?
- What will others have to do for you to reach that goal?
- How dependent are you on others for your joy?
- What challenges must you overcome to meet that goal?
- What are you doing to bring that about?
- Are you actively engaged OR are you just sitting hopefully?

Sometimes we lose sight of what we are seeking, which is often the feelings that tell us we belong. We are loved; we have worth among others. We may **think** we belong, but until we **feel** we belong we do not experience the joy. There is an incomparable joy and contentment that comes from the sense of belonging.

How would life be for you if you were overwhelmed by feelings of joy? The Adlerians use what is known as a cognitive triad: It looks like this

- I am \_\_\_\_\_.
- Others are \_\_\_\_\_.

➤ The world is \_\_\_\_\_.

Suppose for yourself you could fill in these thoughts:

I am **loveable**.

Others are **good, valuable**.

The world is **safe, available**.

When we believe the above positive triad, life is to be celebrated. It is when the triad gets skewed; the opportunities for joy are lessened. This is the time when the Adlerian map can come into play. “If I develop a map,” Paul says, “I need to know where I want to go, then I can enjoy the journey and celebrate the arrival.”

What are we striving for? For most of us it is to face responsibilities; to find joy, relaxation, growth, celebration. What is joy anyway? A feeling of enhancement that is signified by such states as

- ✓ Happiness
- ✓ Compassion
- ✓ Pride (for an accomplishment)
- ✓ Contentment (satisfaction with the state of life)
- ✓ Forgiveness (which allows us to move forward after hurt)
- ✓ Awe (connection with something greater than self)
- ✓ Excitement (active, joyful engagement in life)
- ✓ Love (joy from loving and being loved)

We often spend too much thinking about the bumps in the road or traveling in a vehicle we are not satisfied with (I’m too tall, too fat, too old). We actually forget where we are going.

Here are some thoughts that are bumps in the road (also known as burdens or obstacles):

- ❖ Everyone must love me.
- ❖ No one can ever reject me.
- ❖ No one can ever be mean to me.
- ❖ No one should know more than I know.
- ❖ I must be thought of as the best.
- ❖ I should never have to do what I don't want to do.
- ❖ I must be pretty, athletic, funny, popular.

We feel these must be true for us to be happy but are they realistic? Logically, we know that no one will put his/her needs aside for me all the time. Discouragement comes when we forget what we are ultimately after. We then feel one or more of the following:

- Anxiety: I may lose or not get something that I want.
- Frustration: Things should go better for me.
- Anger: I am entitled to what I want when I want it.
- Anguish: I'm overwhelmed by helplessness, intense anxiety,
- Despair. I'll never obtain the joy I seek.
- Depression: I give up
- Eating disorder/Compulsion/Substance Abuse

All of us human beings are equal in our seeking safety. **When we ask why others are the way they are, we are seeking an opportunity to celebrate their lives with them.** We find ways to be kind, to feed that person. Encouragement is a nutrient—the water that feeds the plant.

Alfred Adler pointed out that each of us has three life tasks: Work, Social, Love. Paul Rasmussen provided some direction for us in each of the life tasks:

WORK

- Do your work—do what you need to do.
- Be prepared to sustain yourself.
- Avoid taking on more than your share.
- Ask for help when you need it.

## SOCIAL

- Cooperate.
- Be a friend first.
- Model graciousness.
- Encourage cooperation.
- Hold up your end.
- Always model gracious cooperation.

## LOVE

- Respect self and others
- Base sexual intimacy on respect.
- Failure to maintain self-respect leads to being taken advantage of. Absence of respect leads to exploitation.
- Validate your partner (as well as yourself).

Paul Rasmussen reminded us to nurture our relationships:

- Think less about what you receive and more about what you give.
- Don't expect more than others can provide.
- Complain only when REALLY necessary.
- Remember rudeness is a weak imitation of strength.
- In any relationship you can only influence NEVER control.
- Be patient with others, they are still growing.
- Be conjunctive: invite relationships.
- Defensiveness reveals insecurity.
- Be encouraging.

He also reminded us to nurture ourselves

- Be patient—you are still a work in progress.

- **Talk to yourself as you might talk to a stranger when you want something.**
- Accept your choices and their consequences. (Remember there are bumps and bruises along the way.)
- Accept your selfishness, but remember you are part of a whole.
- Care for yourself IS care for others.
- Be where the joy is as much as possible.
- Create the world you want to live in.

Then Paul Rasmussen turned on the loud dancing music and the joy began. He danced; we danced; all laughed! It was joyful! What a great way to start the second week of ICASSI with a conglomeration of parents, students, therapists, counselors, and children!!