

Robinsons on Parallel
Positive Intentions—Looking at Addictions in a Healthy Way
By Jane Lawther

South Carolina native, Jim Holder, Addictions Counselor and Licensed Professional Counselor, had a powerful impact on the participants at ICASSI. (You recall that ICASSI is the International Adlerian summer Institute that is held in a different country each summer.) Jim has many years of addiction treatment experience and has helped countless folks see the Positive Intentions of their first use of drugs or alcohol. He and his wife, Rosie, live in Effingham, SC, where he writes, researches, and trains other professionals in the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler.

Jim reminded us that all behavior has a purpose. If a body understands how it was addicted, it can recover itself. **NO ONE MAINTAINS A HABIT IF IT LOSES ITS PURPOSE.** The goal of an Adlerian addictions counselor is to help the client find healthy ways to accomplish his/her purpose. Jim wisely points out that the more shame and guilt that gets associated with the addiction, the more difficult it is to overcome.

Interestingly enough, Rudolf Dreikurs, taught, “When we “fight” ourselves, we are deceiving ourselves. We only do what we intend to do.” (This statement rang true for the authors of this column, because we often “fight” with our personal selves, but end up doing what we intend to do. Dreikurs nailed it!)

Determining what the **POSITIVE INTENT** of the beginning of substance use is the key to sorting out the path to healthy living. Perhaps the positive intent is a striving for superiority or to be more outgoing. Having a drink “helps” one become more outgoing. Maybe we become more a part of the group; we find our place in social settings. Sometimes we become the “life of the party.”

An important tool of the Addiction(s) counselor is to have the client share the memory of the very first use of the substance. Understanding those first days of use and the intentions behind it is key to the positive reason for excessive use of the substance. What happens when the substance wears off, the user feels inferior, and may lead to more use and the cycling process begins.

It is very valuable to understand that folks addict themselves in pursuit of a goal. Some goals, for example, might be to be more outgoing, to be accepted, to feel relaxed, to be one of the group, to feel safe, to protect oneself, and so on. Holder would simply ask, “Is there anything wrong with wanting to feel more outgoing? (Or accepted, or relaxed, or being one of the group or feeling safe or protecting oneself?) And the answer is “no.” Then, Jim would think along with the client about ways to accomplish the same goal that are healthier than substance abuse.

Patients can recover themselves through reorientation, rethinking, reviewing with the addictions counselor. Jim pointed out that Alfred Adler knew that **ALL BEHAVIOR HAS A PURPOSE.** It is the identifying of the purpose, and its use, that Adlerian

psychologists employ to help clients reorient and rethink what they are up to.

It is interesting to note that Eva Dreikurs Ferguson pointed out that “A goal or an intention is an idea, but it need not be formed at a level of awareness.” In other words, we don’t always know what our goal is; we don’t always know what we are up to. Finding the goal for early substance use is the secret to this re-thinking, reorientation and **FINDING HEALTHY WAYS TO REACH THE GOAL**. Those positive intentions were the goals for that early substance use.

Jim points out that folks addict themselves in pursuit of a goal. AND they recover themselves through reorientation. Notice how the choice, the power, the movement is all with the client. The therapist asks the questions, the answers point out what the client was up to, and together they determine healthier, non-addictive pathways for the client to pursue their goals.

Watching James A. Holder, with his very relaxed manner, ask questions, listen intently, and share his insights in a number of demonstrations was a professional joy to the participants of ICASSI in Canterbury, UK, in the summer of 2014.

Jim is the author of an incredible book: **Perceptual Adjustment Therapy**.

He has produced a DVD **Sobriety Enhancement**

His instrument **FACE Screening Booklet** may be used by families and physicians to tell who is at extreme risk for addiction.

All of these materials may be purchased by contacting Jim via his email address roseh66@aol.com.