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Plenary Power Point for Presentation at ICASSI July 17th

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ICASSI: Past, Present, Future

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- What are basic Adlerian concepts that are crucial for work based on the teachings of Adler and Dreikurs in all spheres of human life ?
- How can we apply these concepts in our interactions with others?

Basic Adlerian Principles

- Holism – the individual functions as a whole person, not a ‘divided self.’
- This was a crucial break Adler had with Freud’s theory – emphasis on the ‘individuum’ and thus the name Individual Psychology.
- Every person’s functions reflect the whole person – psychologically and biologically. This is now recognized in cellular life (each of our cells reflects the specific genetics of the person).

Motivation is fundamentally social

Whereas Freud emphasized motivation as fundamentally biological (id, libido are biologically based), Adler said we are above all social. We belong to a social species.

The key social characteristics are:

- a. Every human being has a fundamental need to belong. That means, to be valued as an equal among equals.
- b. Every human being fundamentally strives to contribute to the human community to which one belongs, but this striving needs to be trained and stimulated (like language).

Teleology is fundamental – emotions, motivations, actions, cognitions are ***goal directed.***

Whereas Freud emphasized historical determinism (one's past determines one's motivations, emotions, etc.), as seen in his theory of sexual stages of development, Adler emphasized future orientation.

- We strive towards goals – specific goals in a given situation, and a long term goal in our life style.
- To understand a person, one must understand the person's goals.

Private Logic and Goals

What are our goals?

- Most of us are not aware of our ‘private’ goals that deal with our sense of belonging or inferiority feelings.
- Most of us do not know our own or others’ private logic – we know what ‘common sense’ should be, but we do not understand our or other people’s ‘private logic.’
- Without such understanding, we repeat mistakes rather than learning from our past experiences.

Feeling inferior as a person occurs as a function of childhood experiences

- Being abused or neglected as a child – the child comes not to feel equal with others.
- Being pampered or indulged – the child does not experience her or his own strength and thus equality with others.
- Being compared to others in a negative way – the child does not believe she or he is as valued as others.

Encouragement and Social Interest are Crucial to overcome Inferiority Feelings

- Social interest helps the person focus on the community and not on one's own status. It gives courage because one strives to contribute to the community in contrast to being concerned with one's own status.
- Encouragement helps the person build courage to overcome obstacles and to heighten one's own feelings of adequacy. Encouragement builds hope and trust.
- In order to encourage others one must have hope and trust and courage oneself.

Adlerian Principles for Family Dynamics and raising children in the Democratic Style

1. Share in decision making and respect for all members of the family, believing each person has equal value as a vital member of the family.
2. Mutual respect is the only way to have healthy people and healthy relationships.
3. Neither give in nor fight, neither submit nor dominate. Come to an agreement that serves in a good way all members of the family community.
4. Collaboration and cooperation serves everyone best.
5. Share meals, recreation, working together. Feel respected and loved, and show respect and love to all in your family.
6. Respect good ideas, and respect good understanding. Parents are leaders, but children also can be leaders when they have good common sense, knowledge, and understanding.

When Families Do Not Train for Social Interest and Raise their children in Laissez Faire style

- Dr. Leonard Sax has been a family physician and psychologist for 27 years, conducting workshops around the world for parents, teachers, social workers, counselors, school psychologists and juvenile justice professionals.
- He's also a dad, and it's from all those perspectives that he took on his fourth book, an alarm bell of sorts titled "The Collapse of Parenting" (Basic Books).
- Sax, who lives in Exton, Pa., argues that American families are facing a crisis of authority, where the kids are in charge, out of shape emotionally and physically, and suffering because of it. He calls for a reordering of family life in response.

Challenge for Now and the Future: Democracy

- Democracy is more than feeling “entitled” that others ‘owe’ me
- Democracy requires Gemeinschaftsgefühl – Social Interest – for us to be committed to the ‘common good’ and to the welfare of all the community
- Democracy requires Problem Solving Skills, “Neither give in nor fight” and Conflict Resolution Skills
- Democracy requires Mutual Respect – we need to respect each other, to help each of us ‘to belong’
- Democracy requires Each of Us to be Responsible
- Democracy requires Neither of us to be Victim
- Democracy allows each of us to grow and thrive