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**Module 1.**

**The Principles of Adlerian Psychology**

**You are a client of an Adlerian counselor.**

What is an Adlerian?

Alfred Adler, a psychiatrist in Vienna in the late 1800’s, was a member of Freud’s Vienna circle until he and several other members of the group left because of irreconcilable differences of opinion. Adler created his own theory, “Individual psychology”.  While in English individual means one or single, in Adler’s native German, the word conveys a sense of an indivisible and undivided person.

Adler was one of the first persons to provide family counseling, group counseling, and public education to teach psychological concepts to the general public as a way of improving the human condition.  He emphasized the importance of nurturing feelings of belonging in everyone.

Equality, civil rights, mutual respect and the advancement of democracy are values shared by Adlerians everywhere. Social interest, a combination of a feeling of belonging and contribution to the welfare of humanity, became one of his essential ingredients for mental health.  The German word for social interest is “Gemeinschaftsgefühl”.

His ideas are continuing to be validated by scientific research and are often referred to as “positive psychology.” Adler’s theory is a holistic psychology that focuses on the goals and purposes of human behavior.  Holism suggests that a person is working toward the same goal on all levels of his or her experience. It also views the behavior of a person as being socially embedded. Nothing happens in isolation. As a holistic psychology, Adlerians focus on the unity of behavior.  All behavior is seen as goal directed and moves from a “felt minus” to a “perceived plus.” Goals come in all dimensions: short term, long term, and at various points in between.

Think of why you went to school, why you are in my Program, why you did almost anything, and you will find a goal involved.

Adlerians think of goals as being an important part of motivation and the cause of behavior. Certainly our past has a role in exposing us to possibilities and learning opportunities but our choice to move in a particular direction reflects our goals and our ability to direct our own lives.

“Feelings of inferiority” is another basic Adlerian idea. We all have feelings of inferiority that become a motivating factor for us to develop skills, talents, and ways of overcoming our sense of inadequacy. Feelings of inferiority can give rise to genius. Unfortunately, they can also give rise to neuroses and problems in daily living when they are overwhelming or when we attempt to hide them rather than face them courageously. Adler believed that courage was the answer to many of the problems of living. Adlerians promote encouragement in the family, the school, the workplace, and in our communities.

So what is an Adlerian? An Adlerian is a person who applies the ideas and principles of Adler in his or her work. That work might be a doctor, a nurse, a counselor, a teacher, a principal, a business consultant, a politician, a social worker, or any other occupation. Adler applied his ideas in his practice as a psychiatrist. But he also went outside his office to the schools of Vienna and to the public.

He started over 20 clinics in Viennese schools for teachers, parents, and children to learn how to solve their problems together. He spoke frequently to the public, explaining psychological concepts that could help them in their daily lives. He wrote over 300 books and articles in an attempt to share his insights with others so that they may all live and work more cooperatively.  That’s what Adlerians do. They also work in schools, clinics, businesses and communities.

Adlerians counsel and encourage people who are most in need of encouragement. They create learning environments where children thrive because they feel a sense of belonging, and know that they are respected and challenged at the same time. They write books, training manuals, and programs that help people learn how to live together, learn together, and work together in cooperation and mutual respect.

**The Principles of Adlerian Psychology, also called Individual Psychology:**

1. People are social beings. They need to belong and to contribute.
2. People are whole beings; all aspects of life are interrelated.
3. Work, friendship, and intimacy are lifelong tasks
4. Every person is equally deserving of dignity and respect.
5. All behavior has a purpose.
6. Positive change comes from encouragement, which focuses on strengths.
7. Children make meaning of their early experiences and act within this framework throughout their lives.
8. Personal freedoms exist together with social responsibility.

                      Source: Ontario Society of Adlerian Psychology