

Adlerian Theory

Adlerian Psychotherapy Theory

The Adlerian psychology {Individual Psychology}, the personality theory and therapeutic system developed by Alfred Adler, views man holistically as a creative, responsible, becoming individual moving toward fictional goals within his phenomenal field. It holds that man's life style is sometimes self-defeating because of inferiority feelings. The individual with "psychopathology" is discouraged rather than sick, and the therapeutic task is to encourage him to activate his social interest, and to develop a new life-style through relationship, analysis and action method.

1. All behavior occurs in a social context. Man is born into an environment with which he must engage in reciprocal relations. The oft-quoted statement by the Gestalt psychologist Kurt Lewin that behavior is a function of person and environment bears a striking parallel to Adler's contention that man cannot be studied in isolation.
2. A Corollary of the first axiom is that Individual Psychology is an interpersonal psychology. How individuals interact with the other other sharing this crust of earth is paramount. Transcending interpersonal transactions is the development of the feeling of being a part of a larger social whole, the feeling of being socially embedded, the willingness to contribute in the communal life.

1. Adlerian psychology rejects reductionism in favor of holism.
2. Conscious and unconscious are both in the service of the individual and he uses them to further.
3. The understanding of the individual requires the understanding of his cognitive organization, the life-style.
4. Behavior may change throughout a person's lifespan in accordance with both the immediate demands of the situation and the long-range goals inherent in the life-style. The life-style remains relatively constant through life unless the convictions change through the mediation of psychotherapy.
5. According to the Adlerian conception, man is not pushed from behind by causes, that is, he is not determined by heredity and environment. Both are giving only the frame and the influences which are answered by the individual in regard to his styled creative power. Man moves toward a self-selected goal, which he feels will give him a place in the world, will provide him with security, and will preserve his self-esteem. The life of the human soul is not a being but a becoming.
6. The central striving of human beings has been variously described as completion, perfection, superiority, self-realization, self-actualization.

1. Moving through life, the individual is confronted with alternatives. Since Adlerian are either nondeterminisms or soft determinists, the conceptualization of a man as a creative, choosing, self-determined decision maker permits him to choose the goals he wants to pursue.
2. The freedom to choose introduces the concepts of value and meaning into psychology, concepts that were anathema at the time that Adler wrote his *What Life Should Mean to You*. And, this is the Adlerian greatest contribution.

Adlerian theory differs from Freudian theory in four distinct

ways:

- Social urges take precedence over sexual urges in personality development.
- Consciousness rather than unconsciousness is the primary source of ideas and values.
- The determinants of behavior consist of more than just one's genetic endowment or early sexual impressions.
- Normal psychological development is the model of choice rather than varying degrees (or lack thereof) of mental illness. (Gilliland & James, 1998)