

Practicing the Basic Assumptions of Individual Psychology in a Group

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Summary :

In this paper we introduced a group activity using cards of Adler's and Dreikurs' sayings that we created for the following purposes:

(1) to improve understanding of Individual Psychology,

(2) to help people solve problems in a cooperative manner in a group according to the theory and philosophy of Individual Psychology. Our experiment showed that through this activity, participants could easily understand the basic assumptions of Individual Psychology and how they can be applied to problem solving.

Key words : Adlerian psychology, Individual psychology, Adler-Dreikurs cards, basic assumptions, ICASSI

Purpose

We think that it is important to teach the basic assumptions of the Individual Psychology to help people to gain a clearer understanding of what is going on in their relationships and to be able to more easily apply Individual Psychology's concepts, like community feeling, horizontal relationships and encouragement, in their daily lives. We developed this method of teaching through a group activity. Our experiment showed that through this activity, participants could easily understand the basic assumptions of Individual Psychology and how they can be applied to problem solving.

We think that Japanese Adlerians have a good understanding of the philosophical aspects of Individual Psychology, such as "not ruling others" and "horizontal relationship" because over the years we have stressed the importance of the philosophical aspects of Individual Psychology in our basic Adlerian courses. We also think that the techniques of Individual psychology, such as using encouragement and questions, are also well understood. One of the main reasons for this is because many Adlerians in Japan have taken the Japanese parenting education course called PASSAGE which draws largely on Jane Nelsen's Positive Discipline. We think that the people also have a good understanding of the basic assumptions of Individual psychology because these are also taught in the basic courses of Individual Psychology.

However, we feel need to teach people how to analyze problems of everyday life theoretically using the basic assumptions of Individual Psychology before they begin to use encouragement techniques. Adlerians use many kinds of card these days. For example, tarot cards to solve spiritual tasks and "Positive Discipline Parenting Tools" cards to learn encouragement techniques. However,

there are few cards to learn Adlerian theory.

In this paper we will introduce a group activity using cards of Adler's and Dreikurs' sayings that we created for the following purposes:

- (1) to improve understanding of Individual Psychology,
- (2) to help people solve problems in a cooperative manner a group according to the theory and philosophy of Individual Psychology.

Method

This is what we did first. We made a set of cards using Alfred Adler's words. When we made these cards, we referred to the Passage cards developed by the Encourage-Kurayoshi group. To make these cards, five members (Takezaki, Iwatani, Kawamoto, Yamamoto and Nakajima) of the Chugoku chapter of JSAP choose quotes by Adler which are related to the basic assumptions, philosophical aspects and techniques of IP, from the book Japanese translations of "Alfred Adler: As we remember him." We selected the quotes which were chosen most by our five members from the book.

Top 6 of the quotes we choose are;

5/5 : "Yes," he said quietly, "it has always been my function in life to bring people together."

4/5: Adler answered, "There is no general meaning of life; the meaning of life is that which you give to your own life."

4/5 : "Try to see with a child's eyes," Dr. Adler suggested, "hear with child's ears and feel with a child's heart."

3/5: "No matter how egocentric a person might be or what may be his motive for personal aggrandizement, if he is on the useful side of life, he cannot help but to make contributions."

3/5 : One day I was telling Dr. Adler about a discussion I had with an associate, and when I concluded, I added, "... and I'm right." I recall vividly Dr. Adler saying, "Sydney, sometimes the worst thing you can do is be right!"

3/5: "Do not let your vanity get in the way; do your best and let the chips fall where they may."

Because there were not many quotes which referred to theoretical aspects in "Alfred Adler: As we remember him.", we decided to choose theoretical quotes from the booklet "Dreikurs Sayings". This booklet have been published by ICASSI. I want to give ICASSI credit.

Quotes chosen from Dreikurs Sayings are;

*Nobody does anything he does not want to do.

*All our problems are social problems, because a man is a social being.

*Emotions are our tools with which we are able to follow our personal convictions. They are not our masters.

*We become free if we stop being concerned with our failures and successes.

*All human behavior is positive.

*If we have a benefit in being sick, we stay sick.

*We use our minds and our bodies, our thoughts and our emotions, every part of our being, for the purposes that we have set for ourselves.

*There are no absolutes. Everything is how we see it.

Adler-Dreikurs cards

We sent the quotes that we chose to the Encourage-Kurayoshi group (Adler:16 cards, Dreikurs: 14 cards) . They added illustrations of Adler and Dreikurs and made the cards.

Using these cards the group activity proceeds as follows (first version):

Warm-up:

- (1) One person shuffles the warm-up cards and takes a card.
- (2) He/she reads the card.
- (3) He/she talks about content of the card, and about an everyday event related to the card.
- (4) If he/she does not get any hint from the card then he/she takes another card.
- (5) When the person has decided on an episode that seems usable, he/she talks about it in a little more detail
- (6) The other group members ask questions (especially open-ended questions) to help the speaker expand on the episode so the group can get a better understanding of the episode and the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the person.

Main subject:

- (1) He/she then shares the problem in more detail with the group.
- (2) He/she picks one card from the set.
- (3) He/she then reads the card aloud to the group and confirms whether the saying on the card can help solve the problem.
- (4) If the card seems helpful in solving the problem, the person shares that with the group.
- (5) If the saying on the card does not seem helpful in solving the problem, the person picks another card until helpful in solving.
- (6) If the member is not able to solve the problem using the cards, the reasons are discussed within the group.

Results

1: Places where the group activity was done:

- (1) 7th annual congress of JSAP,Chugoku-chapter.
- (2) Study group in Kochi (mainly lay people).
- (3) 28th annual congress of JSAP
- (4) Case study at Adler Guild (Adlerian counsellors).
- (5) Okayama University of Science (students of teacher-training course).
- (6) Study group in Osaka-Sayama (mainly mothers who studied Passage).
- (7) Okayama University (students of clinical psychologist-training course).

Participants' impressions

*Understanding about the basic assumptions deepened.

*It was interesting that the right card for my problem was appeared.

*I discussed a lot with the group when the word is rather difficult. As a result, the understanding about the basic assumptions deepened.

*I think it is better to limit the number of cards one can take. I think I can concentrate more when there are only three or four cards.

*This activity is also suitable for people who practice cognitive-behavioral psychology.

* I was glad to get the reaction of "Wow!" from other members of the group when the card seemed to fit my problem.

* I felt that I was solving my problem with the group using the theory of Individual psychology.

* I think Adler and Dreikurs must have been really amazing person.

*I was excited because I got the feeling that I was learning directly from Adler and Dreikurs.

*Some cards seemed to give no hint.

*It is difficult for people who does not have any knowledge of the basic assumptions.

Some points we found through these sessions were:

- (1) The key to success depends upon how well the topic is understand in the group before the cards are used.
- (2) If there is already an atmosphere conducive to the sharing of the topic, a warm-up card is not necessary. In those cases, a basic assumption card (cards we made describing the basic assumptions of IP) can be used instead.
- (3) It is better to limit the number of times a person may choose a card to three.
- (4) Depending on the degree of the understanding of the basic knowledge of the basic assumptions, a device to raise an understanding degree is necessary. Therefore we added some words to explain the basic assumptions the end of an episode.

Some reasons why this group activity was effective;

- (1) The motivation that the problem was going to be solved only by a card became strong because we used words of Adler and Dreikurs.
- (2) The advantage of using a card is that people can change their problem-solving viewpoint merely by following Adler and Dreikurs.
- (3) Using cards made it more like a game and this seemed to help participants understand the content of the card more.
- (4) Using the cards seemed to enable the group to find more effective viewpoints towards the solution of the problem, rather than change cognitive structure.
- (5) By incorporating aspects related to technique and the philosophy of IP, participants' understanding of the association between these aspects and theory seemed to improve.
- (6) Here we have looked at explaining the basic assumptions by using episodes. However, we also need to consider how to explain the theory without using episodes.

Using these cards the group activity (latest version):

Warm-up:

- (1) One person shuffles the basic assumptions cards and takes a card.
- (2) He/she reads the card.
- (3) He/she talks about the content of the card and an everyday event related to the card.
- (4) If he/she does not get any hint from the card, then he/she takes another card.
- (5) When the person decides upon which episode they will use, she/he talks about it in a little more detail.
- (6) The other group members ask questions (especially open-ended questions) to help the speaker expand on the episode so the group can get a better understanding of the episode and the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the person.

Main subject:

- (1) He/she then shares the problem in more detail with the group.
- (2) He/she picks one card from the set.
- (3) He/she then reads the card aloud to the group and confirms whether the saying on the card can help solve the problem.
- (4) If the card seems helpful in solving the problem, the person shares that with the group.
- (5) If the saying on the card does not seem helpful in solving the problem, the person picks another card. The member can pick a total of three cards.
- (6) If the member is not able to solve the problem using the cards, the reasons are discussed within the group.

Case example of Ms. S (Ms. S gave us permission to use her episode)

Episode:

When my mother came back from work, she said "Hi honey. Oh! It's so late. I have to hurry." My mother rushed to begin to prepare the meal. I thought, "This is scary - she's going to get angry" and so I changed clothes and went to a kitchen quickly. I tried to help her prepare the meal, to prevent her from getting angry. But it didn't work. My mother was already in a bad mood. There was nothing else for me to do, so I took out a cake from the refrigerator and began to eat it. She raised her voice and said, "Why are you eating cake when dinner is nearly ready?" I replied, "Even though I know I shouldn't ... I just ate it without thinking." I knew that both my unconscious and the conscious intended to eat it and I ate it. Although I thought I was a bit unfair to responding like that "without thinking" to my mother.

First card:

One day I was telling Dr. Adler about a discussion I had with an associate, and when I concluded, I added, "... and I'm right." I recall vividly Dr. Adler saying, "Sydney, sometimes the worst thing you can do is be right!"

Impression:

I thought the card hit the nail on the head. Because I did not think that I was wrong to eat the cake. I was not wrong because I was trying to help my mother. In addition, I thought that the card had pointed out the idea that I was correct.

Second card:

“Just keep it up for your own pleasure and satisfaction, but don't forget that you are doing a great service too.”

Impression:

I did not get the point because I was not able to think that eating cake was a contribution. I tried to help my mother because I wanted her to not get angry so I didn't understand what the card tried to point out. I decided to take another card.

Third card:

Adversity may become a benefit.

Impression:

I thought it was telling me that when I am experiencing a negative feeling, it is a chance for me to practice of Individual Psychology.

Overall impression:

It was interesting to see how members of my group reacted when I chose a card and wasn't sure whether it was relevant or not - I could see them all nodding in agreement when they thought the card was the one. Because everyone in the group gave questions which helped connect the event with the card, the range of questions and my thinking stayed within a limited range. I felt this helped us head in the direction of a solution to the problem and understand the basic assumptions all in a short time.

References

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