

Applying Adlerian Therapy with Clients in Recovery From Addiction

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About Adam

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- Specializing in helping people strengthen their recovery from addiction, helping people improve their emotional intelligence, and helping athletes improve their mental health and performance
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Goals of Presentation

- Explain the therapeutic skill of encouragement.
- Explain 3 core philosophical concepts of Adlerian therapy.
- Explain the 4 phases of Adlerian therapy.
- Explain how Adlerian therapy can be effectively applied with clients who are in recovery from addiction.

Adlerian Therapy

- Adlerian therapy is strengths-based and optimistic.
- Strength transfer: applying our strengths to areas of struggle
- Encouragement is the foundational skill of Adlerian therapy.
- “Encouragement literally means ‘to build courage’. Encouragement is a process of increasing the courage needed for a person to face difficulties in life. Courage develops when people become aware of their strengths, when they feel they belong and are not alone, and when they have a sense of hope and can see new possibilities for themselves and their daily living” (Corey, 2013, p. 114).

Encouragement

- “Regardless of one’s theoretical orientation, however, the encouragement process is one of many aspects of Adlerian therapy that may be usefully integrated in a counselor’s approach to counseling. The assumptions, characteristics, and methods of encouragement help to create an optimistic, empowering, and growth-enhancing environment for clients; a place where they feel ‘en-abled’ rather than ‘dis-abled’” (Watts & Pietrzak, 2000, p. 445).

Examples of Encouragement Skills

- “Encouragement skills include demonstrating concern for clients through active listening and empathy, communicating respect for, and confidence in, clients; focusing on clients’ strengths, assets, and resources; helping clients generate perceptual alternatives for discouraging fictional beliefs; focusing on efforts and progress; and helping clients see the humor in life experiences” (as cited in Watts & Pietrzak, 2000, p. 442-443).
- Therapy can be similar to the process of helping clients improve their ability to practice “updating the map of [their] territory” (Cozolino, 2015).

Helping Clients Build Belief in Themselves

- “The therapist believes in the client so the client can learn how to believe in him- or herself. The therapist should also be personally humble, as a core therapist task is showing the client how to have the courage to be imperfect” (Carlson & Englar-Carlson, 2017, p. 60).
- The Adlerian therapist must practice in his or her own life what is being conveyed to the client – primarily courage, congruence, positive self-concept, and resiliency. Therapists should make sure their everyday habits are representative of their life purpose. Carlson and Englar-Carlson (2017) say that “it is clear that Adlerian therapists are a somewhat select bunch of individuals who are able to convey encouragement in their interpersonal relationships” (p. 60).

All Actions Are Purposeful

- Adlerian therapy focuses especially on the therapist and client coming to an understanding of the purpose of the client's behavior, even problematic behaviors.
- The protective purpose of substance use and other addictive patterns of behavior
- What is the goal of the individual's drug use? How is the drug use helping the individual, or even protecting the individual from psychological pain?

Lifestyle

- Otherwise known as ‘style of life’ or ‘style of living’
- Otherwise conceptualized as a blueprint of facing challenges in life
- Moving from a ‘felt minus’ to a ‘desired plus’
- The felt minus can be the presenting concerns that the client has, and the desired plus is the client reaping the benefits of new insights, new skills, and a fresh perspective on their strengths.
- Assessed through reflecting on the question, What is the client’s blueprint for facing challenges in life?

Lifestyle

- How are the client's core beliefs about themselves, others, and the world around them affecting his or her lifestyle?
- “Paying attention to one's story and behaviors will reveal what they are striving for” (Barclay, 2016, p. 36).
- Ritualistic self-soothing as a pattern in addiction

Phenomenology

- “To Adler, objective reality is less important than subjective reality. It is how an individual interprets reality and the meaning attached to it that creates the person’s experience” (Barclay, 2016, p. 86).
- “Subjective reality is an individual’s interpretation of events and the meaning they ascribe to them” (Barclay, 2016, p. 100).
- “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river, and he is not the same man”. –Heraclitus, ancient Greek philosopher

Phase 1: Establish the Relationship

- Phase 1 consists of “establishing and maintenance of a good relationship in which the client feels understood and accepted” (Barclay, 2016, p. 94).
- Rapport-building continues throughout the therapeutic relationship.
- A strong counselor-client relationship in Adlerian therapy is similar to Carl Rogers’ person-centered approach and is built upon the same core facilitative conditions of therapeutic change. These conditions are congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding (Watts, 2000).
- Throughout every step of the therapeutic process, these conditions are relied upon to make progress and to keep the client motivated (Carlson & Englar-Carlson, 2017). The relationship is also built upon mutual respect, cooperation, and shared responsibility (Emerson, Gintner, & West, 1991).
- Helpful to explain clearly to clients the shared responsibility in the therapeutic relationship.

Phase 2: Assessing the Individual's Psychological Dynamics

- Phase 2 focuses on “identification and clarification of client beliefs, feelings, motivations, and goals that direct their lifestyle” (Barclay, 2016, p. 94).
- Understanding the client's lifestyle, which includes ways of facing challenges in the past, psycho-education, normalizing, explaining patterns and themes seen.
- Helping clients understand their patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting
- How is the past showing up in the present?

Phase 3: Encourage Self-Understanding and Insight

- “When Adlerians speak of insight, they are referring to an understanding of the motivations that operate in a client’s life. Self-understanding is only possible when hidden purposes and goals of behavior are made conscious. Adlerians consider insight as a special form of awareness that facilitates a meaningful understanding within the therapeutic relationship and acts as a foundation for change. Insight without action is not enough. Insight is a means to an end, and not an end in itself. People can make rapid and significant changes without much insight” (Corey, 2013, p. 113).
- Part of the therapist’s role is to help clients consider what changes and decisions might be best for clients’ well-being and flourishing. In other words, what are other options the client has for how they think, feel, and act?

Phase 3: Encourage Self-Understanding and Insight

- Interpretations are made in hunches or guesses through open-ended questions (Corey, 2013).
- “Interpretation deals with client’s underlying motives for behaving the way they do in the here and now. Adlerian disclosures and interpretations are concerned with creating awareness of one’s direction in life, one’s goals and purposes, one’s private logic and how it works, and one’s current behavior” (Corey, 2013, p. 113).
- Interpretations are presented in a curious manner of a possibility of what is happening in the client’s mind and life, rather than as if the counselor is stating a fact about the client, which helps the counselor and client remember that they are working together for the client’s progress and benefit.

Phase 4: Reorientation and Reeducation

- Phase 4 is “an action phase where insight is created but also requires the [client] to act differently and in a manner to create desired outcomes” (Barclay, 2016, p. 100).
- Psychoeducation and applying insights to the client’s life
- Viewing life and life’s challenges from an encouraged perspective
- ‘Waking up’ process in recovery from addiction
- Reflecting with the client on progress made and specific discussions and insights that have helped the client.

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- ‘Thank you and goodbye’
- All actions are purposeful, and addictive behaviors often serve a protective purpose.
- Identifying when ritualistic self-soothing is taking place, the therapist facilitates the ‘waking up’ process, but cannot force the process to take place.
- Helping clients ‘wake up’ to their patterns of self-soothing and helping them find effective perceptual alternative beliefs to how they view themselves, others, and the world around them.

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- Encouragement as helping clients identify their strengths, and identifying how they can transfer their strengths to the areas where they struggle
- Confront only as much as you've supported.
- Therapeutic personality change
- “The golden rule of [Adlerian therapy] is that everything can be different” (as cited in Barclay, 2016, p. 102).

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