

# Handbook on Parent Education

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## Chapter 3

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### **Dreikurs and the Search for Equality**

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#### **Background: The Adlerian Influence**

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Alfred Adler (1870-1937) were contemporaries in Vienna just after the turn of the century. Both Freud and Adler were practicing physicians prior to each developing an interest in psychology. Although they lived during the same period of time and in the same place, their positions could hardly have been more dissimilar. During their lifetimes Freud's psychoanalysis was rapidly accepted and Adler's individual psychology was overshadowed. However, Freud's theories have since been modified, largely by his followers, and numerous new schools of psychology have been developed whose tenets are increasingly compatible with Adler's original views.

In 1902, Freud invited Adler to join a small discussion group, which became the illustrious Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. Adler accepted the invitation and became an active member but never considered himself Freud's pupil or disciple. Adler actually joined Freud in the Vienna discussion group as a co-equal, contrary to most Psychology 1-A textbooks, which indicate that Adler was a student of Freud. As time passed, Adler's position diverged more and more from that of Freud and he resigned from Freud's circle in 1911 to formulate and found his own school.

In 1919, Adler established a child guidance center in Vienna and also (Page 53) became a lecturer at the Pedagogical Institute. He was probably the first psychiatrist to apply mental hygiene principles in the schools. In the child guidance centers he established, Adler developed his innovative counseling approach for restricted audiences and dealt with parents and teachers as well as children. His was perhaps the first official use of "family therapy" and "community psychiatry" on record (Ansbacher, 1973, p. 53). Adler believed that the goal of psychology, psychiatry, and guidance was to educate the whole community toward more effective social living. He said, "During all my life it was my endeavor to bring people together [Rom, 1976, p. 5]." And he emphatically stated: "The study of human nature cannot be pursued with the sole purpose of developing occasional experts; only the understanding of human nature by every human being can be its proper goal [Adler, 1927a, p. 15]." Thus, Adler was not only concerned with helping children, but also with conveying knowledge and skills to others; Adler would discuss with the child, in a hypothetical problem-solving fashion, the child's situation and his or her mistaken goals (Adler, 1930). Most important, Adler explored with the child useful, alternative behaviors. Adler discovered unexpected benefits of counseling the child before a group:

I found that treating the child as part of his group was very effective. It made the child realize that "no man liveth unto himself alone," and that the mistakes of every individual affect many lives and are of public concern. The boys and girls could be brought to see themselves as social beings, not as isolated units

[Adler, 1927b, p. 491].

Adler's dream was to generate a true community of committed parents, teachers, and other adults who would work together to foster courage and social responsibility in children and youth. Before long the enthusiasm of the teachers infected the parents, especially through parent associations, and as a result, a number of child guidance centers were opened to the general community for parents and other interested parties (Turner & Pew, 1978).

By 1927, there were 22 child guidance centers in Vienna plus 20 in the rest of Europe (Adler, 1978). In 1931, the Individual Psychological Experimental School was founded. This school was a secondary school for boys aged 10-14 where Adler's psychological and educational principles could be comprehensively applied (Turner & Pew, 1978). Unfortunately, the school and the centers in Vienna, which by that time numbered over 30, were closed by the Austrian fascists in 1934. The German centers had already been closed or taken over by the Nazis a year earlier when Hitler came to power (Adler, 1978). (Page 54)

### **The Impact of Rudolf Dreikurs**

During the last 11 years of Adler's life he spent most of his time in the United States, eventually making his home here. Due to the course of events in Europe before World War II, Adler decided to promote his ideas in America. However, the person who largely made Adler a household word in many families in the United States was Rudolf Dreikurs of Chicago. Dreikurs' impact on childrearing practices and his contribution to individual psychology was recently acknowledged by Paul Rom, a prominent Adlerian (Rom, 1976).

Among the most important developments in Adlerian Psychology has been the establishment of family counseling centers and family education study groups, dedicated to helping families develop a democratic life style guided by the principles of social equality and social interest. Much of the inspiration for this movement came from the writings and personal enthusiasm of Rudolf Dreikurs [p. 11).

Dreikurs was one of Adler's early students and colleagues who participated in the child guidance centers in Vienna. He was very well known throughout Europe before the fascists gained power. In 1939, he fled to the United States by way of Brazil and eventually established a practice in Chicago. In the years between his arrival in the United States in 1939 and his death in 1972, Dr. Dreikurs made a profound impact upon parent education, marriage and family counseling, the field of education, and the practice of psychotherapy, not only in the United States, but throughout the world. While his extensions and expansions of Adlerian theory and practice were profound, he resolutely opposed those of his students who would rename the Adlerian movement as Dreikurian or in any way detract from the originator, Alfred Adler. For the rest of his life "following his move to America his goal was to see Adler's psychology restored as a viable, actively practical, and dynamic school of thought [Turner & Pew, 1978, p. 374]."

Dreikurs' major contributions were not only to refine the open-centered family counseling concepts first demonstrated by Adler in Vienna prior to World War I, but also to demonstrate the multiple therapist concept long before it was presented in the general psychological literature, as well as various aspects of group counseling for which he received relatively little credit. He also

developed a system of democratic conflict resolution to be used in the family, in the school, in industry, or in any other situation where people live and interact with each other (Dreikurs, 1970, 1972a, 1972b).

Dreikurs first established a parent counseling center at the Abraham Lincoln Center in Chicago in 1939. The history of the early years in (Page 55) Chicago is indeed an intriguing one and demonstrates the tremendous resistance that Dreikurs had to overcome, including active opposition by the psychoanalytic community (Turner & Pew, 1978). Dreikurs considered his early breakthrough in teacher education to be the result of a summer session appointment to the faculty of the College of Education at the University of Oregon in 1957. Dr. Dreikurs went to Oregon at the invitation of Dr. Raymond Lowe, and it was there that many of his active followers had their first exposure to the Adlerian model. Dr. Lowe established a Parent Teacher Education Center at the University of Oregon in the winter of 1958, which has remained in operation ever since (Lowe, 1974). *Adlerian Family Counseling: A Manual for Counseling Centers* was published in 1959 and has served as the basic format for establishing centers elsewhere (Dreikurs, Corsini, Lowe, & Sonstegard, 1959).

### **Dreikurs' View of the Child and Parent-Child Relationships**

Dreikurs' work gave a great deal of emphasis to the importance of the socialization process that takes place in the family.

One can understand a person's style of life when one recognizes his relationship with the other members of the family in his particular family constellation. The family constellation does not force a child to behave in a certain manner; it merely indicates how he arrived at his conviction. He's not the victim of the other, since he very early participates in shaping his relationships with them. The most important person in the development of his personality is the sibling who is most different from him [Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1964, p. 45].

The family atmosphere -- the attitudes, values, and relationships within the immediate family . . . provides the initial, critical medium through which the child's personality takes shape. From his experience of it, the child creates a picture of himself, of others, and of the world at large. It shapes his values and provides the testing ground for actions that will give him a sense of belonging and significance [Turner & Pew, 1978, p. 5].

By and large, all children are influenced by the family atmosphere, which is established by father and mother. Through their parents, children are exposed to cultural and social influences. Racial, religious, economic, educational, and other social factors are perceived by children through experiences with their parents. The similarity of siblings expresses their common experience at home, the values to which they were exposed, and the patterns of behavior in which they were trained. It is within this social unit that the child learns to adapt (Dreikurs, 1955). (Page 56)

The child who endlessly strives for better security, better orientation, better adaptation, must and will formulate for himself ideals, concepts, however vague, or an ideal goal of absolute security, or perfect orientation, of total and complete adaptation. Such a goal becomes a necessity for him as a guiding light for which to direct all his strivings for better adaptations. As this goal becomes fixed, then the goal will direct all the strivings and will determine, therefore, how he sees reality, what he feels about reality, and how he should act to come closer to his ideal goal. This ideal goal also contains his idealized self-image, the way he should be, the way he should act, the way he should feel in order to reach his ideal goal or come closer to it [Adler, 1977, pp. 21-22].

Adlerian concepts have supported the family unit as the primary group wherein the child first formulates ideals and goals and where vital behavior patterns are first learned. In particular, Dreikurs emphasized the educational nature of counseling and developed methods to help families learn to foster an environment leading to the selection of constructive life goals and interactional skills.

The assumption that underlies Adlerian parent education is that assisting parents is an educational endeavor rather than a medical procedure. The model alluded to here is essentially an educational one, which makes the assumption that the lack of knowledge, information, or experience, rather than illness, is the basis of maladaptive behavior. Whereas counselors, and indeed schools, are poorly equipped to cure illness, they are well designed to provide information, experiences, or education: It is assumed that people, if provided with new or pertinent information, are capable of applying the new information to their situation in order to make the corrections necessary to bring about change (Christensen, 1969).

While recognizing the risk of overgeneralization, it is relatively accurate to state that, by and large, parents today are confused about how to rear their young. This phenomenon is novel inasmuch as this is the first generation of parents for whom the traditional childrearing methods have proven less than effective. To understand the breakdown in child-rearing methods, it is helpful to trace the changes that have taken place in our society that have rendered the traditional approaches ineffective. It is safe to say that most of our childrearing approaches were brought to this country from middle Europe and represent almost exclusively autocratic methods. These childrearing traditions were developed originally in a feudalistic system that produced an atmosphere of superior-inferior interpersonal relationships. An essential component of any autocratic social system is that some people are always better than other people. Within such a system children would be taught "to know their place" and to learn to show deference to "their betters," inasmuch as (Page 57) they would be expected to play a similar role in adult life. The superior-inferior relationship between adults and children was politically endorsed and also sanctified by religion.

With the emergence of the democratic social system and the striving for social equality, evident in the human rights movement, the concept of equality has permeated our entire social structure to the extent that the last minority group to demand equal status has been children. In brief, children today see themselves as being social equals to adults, and for this reason, autocratic training methods are doomed to failure.

The age-honored disciplinary techniques of reward and punishment are no longer effective, primarily because children view reward and punishment from the position of equality rather than inferiority. From the child's perspective, reward is a right, and punishment necessitates

retaliation. Communication patterns are viewed by the child in much the same way. Parents continue speaking to children from a position of authority and superiority without realizing that children are listening from a position of equality. "Talking down" to children results in children who in turn talk down to parents. This kind of interactional pattern can be seen in family after family, in varying degrees of intensity.

The purpose of parent education is to assist parents and children to discover more appropriate patterns of interaction based on an assumption of equality between adults and children. But here again confusion reigns, for the most frequent misconception of social equality is when equality is believed to be an expression of "sameness": To be equal means to be the same.

It is no wonder that adults are threatened by the idea of the equality of children and endorse a return to "the good old days" and "get tough" policies for home and school. Children are not as well educated as adults, do not have as much information or experience, and are not as big as adults. Certainly children are not as old as adults, but they *are equal* -- if social equality, rather than implying sameness, *implies equality in terms of value or worth*. If the concept of equal value rather than sameness is accepted, then differences can exist in an equal social setting. Different roles for parent and child, for teacher and pupil, are possible as long as the interaction is based on an assumption of equal value and mutual respect. The parent education approach is designed primarily to teach methods of parenting to parents, as well as to other adults, that are consistent with the concept of equality. For example, rather than employing punishment as a disciplinary measure, which implies superiority of one person over another, parents are taught other (Page 58) corrective procedures. The development of logical consequences, adequately described by Dreikurs and Grey (1968), is one such technique.

The use of encouragement (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963) is another approach designed to develop positive behavior in youngsters. The critical point here is that whatever training methods are employed, they must be consistent with the concept of mutual respect and equal treatment inherent in a democratic setting. The concept of equality is frequently misinterpreted as "permissiveness." However it is defined, permissive childrearing is not an expression of democracy; it is in fact an expression of anarchy. While autocracy may be defined as *order without freedom*, anarchy may be defined as *freedom without order*. Democracy is best characterized as *freedom with order*. For this reason children are educated toward democracy, which implies limits within which they experience freedom. Their right to choose, for example, is limited to those areas of life where age, experience, and readiness permit them to be at least minimally successful in making responsible choices. Therefore, it is essential to provide parents with a frame of reference to utilize to generate learning experiences for children within a margin of safety and responsible parenting.

An additional consideration is the need to provide parents with understanding of behavior in terms of dynamics rather than the traditional causal notions. Labeling behavior as "cute," "nasty," "mean," "bad," and "good" are considered impediments to understanding and change. Only in a society of equals are methods of understanding, encouraging, or motivating appropriate behavior a necessity. In the traditional autocratic family, one simply did as he or she was told. In a family of equals, motivation is important. Since autocracy implies external controls, no understanding is necessary. In the democratic family, where the goal of childrearing is internal control, attention must be paid to motivation if the child is to be trained toward self-control and self-sufficiency.

## The Basis for Understanding Children's Behavior

In order to understand as well as effectively relate to and guide children, we have to become aware of their private logic -- what they think of themselves, others, and life -- the goals they set for themselves. We also have to observe them living according to this logic, regardless of how little they may be aware that they are doing so. It is in this (Page 159) connection that we find the four goals of misbehavior: (a) attention or service; (b) power or defiance; (c) revenge or retaliation; and (d) inadequacy or deficiency (Dreikurs, 1967).

Dreikurs first cited his discovery of the four goals of misbehavior in 1940. In the years that followed, he developed and elaborated his findings and formulated a detailed explanation of how these goals operated and could be corrected (Turner & Pew, 1978). Dreikurs often stated that he never met a "youngster" -- a preadolescent -- whose faulty behavior could not be conceptualized in one of these four mistaken goal patterns, although the particular behavior might be displayed in some slightly different variation (Dreikurs, 1947). When questioned about the universality of his findings or asked if there were not goals of misbehavior other than those he listed, Dreikurs stated, "I have no scientific proof, but I have found it empirically true in all my clinical work. If someone can ever demonstrate a fifth or sixth goal, I will be happy to incorporate it into my system [in Turner & Pew, 1978, p. 15]." Dreikurs also pointed out that these four goals could be found in Adler's writings about children (e.g., Adler, 1930) and that he merely identified and formulated them into a systematic scheme.

The concept of the four goals is based on the Adlerian assumption that human beings are social creatures whose behavior is purposeful and whose basic desire is to belong. Starting with this assumption, it logically follows that the primary goal of all human beings is to establish a place of belonging and a sense of social acceptance and usefulness. This goal is formulated in infancy as children seek a place in the family circle of adults and siblings, then it is directed to peer relationships outside the family unit during the school years, and it finally embraces the community at large when the growing child enters adolescence and then adulthood. Dreikurs (Dreikurs et al., 1964) described the development of this goal as follows:

In his formative years within the family, each child develops, by trial and error, certain ideas about himself, about others and about the possibility of finding a place for himself, first in his family and then in life in general. Very definite convictions are usually established within the first three to four years of the child's life. Neither he nor the people around him are aware of the means he has chosen to put them into practice. All his actions and attitudes are only facets of his general style of life, based on his central evaluation of himself and his abilities. Generally, dangers and disappointments play an important part in the formation of the life style that includes a scheme of action by which the child hopes to avoid future humiliation, setting up a fictitious goal of assumed security. The goals are fictitious because it is not true that only under specific conditions can he be worthwhile and have a place. It is our neurotic culture which denies anyone the feeling of being worthwhile and belong- (Page 60) ing as he is, regardless of his failures or achievements; this insecurity drives people to set up a fictitious goal of assumed security [p. 44].

The four goals of misbehavior are mistaken approaches by which children, regardless of how varied their personality or background, attempt to find and secure a place of belonging, security, and acceptance within the family or group. These goals are mistaken because, although children can keenly, accurately, and carefully observe what goes on around them, they often misinterpret these events, draw mistaken conclusions, and make faulty decisions and generalizations. Thus, children who conclude that they do not belong or cannot make a significant contribution, develop the first mistaken goal and decide that they *only* have a secure place as long as they can *get attention or service* from others. So, as a result of this mistaken interpretation, they demand undue attention or service, in active or passive, useful or useless ways, and disturb in order to keep others busy with them. Their behavior is designed to get the attention or service that they prefer in a pleasant way, but they do not mind experiencing negative consequences if that is the only way that they can be noticed.

When pressure from others becomes so strong that the children do more for themselves and stop soliciting or demanding undue attention or service, or if adults become more forceful in thwarting these efforts, they may switch to the second mistaken goal of *power or defiance*, where they mistakenly conclude that they have a place only if they can do as they please. If asked to do something, they refuse to do it; if asked not to do something, they do it. These children try to show their parents and teachers, "I won't give in -- I won't be bossed around -- I'm the boss," which is equivalent to an invitation for a power contest. "I'll show you I can do what I want, and you can't stop me!" Most adults do not know how to respond to power struggles with children and intensify such conflicts in their best efforts to correct the situation.

When children no longer believe that they can get attention or display power, they seek the third mistaken goal of *revenge or retaliation* after deciding that the only way they can belong and feel significant is if they can hurt others as they feel hurt by others. Revenge is literally *vengeance* for perceived lack of significance and is the most vicious of the four goals. Finally, when children are unable to get attention, power, or revenge, they are likely to arrive at the fourth mistaken goal of *inadequacy or deficiency*, where they display real or imagined disabilities, give up in discouragement, and withdraw from social interaction or responsibility after concluding that this is the *only* way that they can (Page 61) have a place. "If you don't test me, you won't know how inadequate I really am -- that I'm really no good." These are the four mistaken goals (Dreikurs, 1967, p. 138).

The four goals of attention, power, revenge, and inadequacy are *immediate goals* and are to be distinguished from *intermediate goals* (referred to as personality priorities in the Adlerian literature), such as psychological and physical comfort, pleasing others, controlling others, superiority to others, and meaningfulness in life (Pew, 1976), and *long-range goals or final fictional goals* (the life-style), such as trying always to be good, trying to be in control or the center of attention in all situations (Shulman, 1973). All of these goals are attempts to establish a place. But despite longer range goals, children respond to their immediate situation with shorter range, immediate goals in an attempt to find a place of security, adaptation, and orientation.

If children are sure of their place and feel they belong, they do not seek a place, but *have* it. As long as children have a feeling of belonging, security, and acceptance within the group, they behave in line with the requirements of the situation. But if they become discouraged, are not sure of their place, doubt their adequacy, or do not believe that they can have a place through what *they* can do, they are likely to develop one or more of the four goals in an attempt to establish their place through what *we* -- the adults -- can do (provide attention, service, etc.). When children become discouraged and do not believe they can find a place through useful

cooperation and contribution, they almost inevitably try to feel significant or important by either demanding undue attention, trying to get their own way, attempting to get even, or displaying deficiency in order to be left alone (Dreikurs, 1967).

However, as Dreikurs has pointed out, even children who misbehave and defy the requirements, demands, and necessities of the situation still believe that their behavior will provide social status. They may attempt to get attention, prove their power, seek revenge, or display deficiency. Whichever of these four goals they adopt, their actions are based on the conviction that *only* in this way can they belong within the group. Their goals may occasionally change with the circumstances; they may attempt to attract attention at one moment, assert power, seek revenge, or display inadequacy at another (Dreikurs, 1950). Therefore, when children misbehave we should not label them as immature, lazy, aggressive, or whatever, which is descriptive rather than explanatory, but we should attempt to understand the purpose of their behavior and find one or more of the four goals (Dreikurs, 1967).

In helping people understand and put these concepts into practice, (Page 62) Dreikurs made some important distinctions between children, adolescents, and adults. According to Dreikurs, the four mistaken goals can be easily recognized in children up to the age of 10. During this period, as hard as it may be for parents and teachers to admit, children's misbehavior is mostly directed toward or against them. This is because children's status in early childhood largely depends on the impression they make on adults. Later in adolescence they may develop many different goals in addition to the four faulty goals, such as constantly seeking excitement, entertainment, and fun in order to achieve social significance in their peer group. In adulthood, the additional mistaken goals of seeking money, power, and many others are found. As Dreikurs stated, "These original four goals can still be observed in people of every age and period of life; only then, they are not all-inclusive [Dreikurs *et al.*, 1971, p. 18]" Unfortunately, status and prestige can more frequently and easily be attained through useless, destructive behavior than through useful, constructive behavior.

Even though adults' goals are more complicated than those of children and adolescents, what really distinguishes adults from children and adolescents is merely that adults have learned to hide more effectively what they really think and feel -- which may be considered beneficial because it helps them mask their antisocial attitudes and feelings. However, since adults are not really much different in their basic personalities from what they were as children, they often attempt to give the outward appearance of being something better than children, and then define themselves as "mature." And at a time when adults are becoming more and more threatened by children and know less and less about what to do with them, it is naturally easier and easier for adults to try to build up their own egos by looking down on children and defining them as "immature" (Dreikurs, 1967). Indeed, adults basically have the same attitudes as adults that they had as children; but during adolescence they learned, for appearance's sake, to subordinate these attitudes to the demands and expectations of society. Successfully covering up one's real motives and intentions then becomes a sign of "maturity." Children or adolescents who have not yet reached this level of "maturity" openly display their attitudes, and their goals are quite obvious; therefore, it is possible to easily recognize their goals by mere observation (Dreikurs, 1947).

In addition to observation, however, children's mistaken goals can be recognized by the effects these goals have on others -- the immediate, impulsive, reaction of other people. Whatever one is inclined to do in response to children's behavior is generally consistent with their goals (Page 63) and expectations. Giving undue attention, engaging in power struggles, seeking retaliation, or giving up in despair, are adult reactions that correspond to and reflect

children's goals. This insight reveals, in the many transactions between adults and children, how and when the children's faulty behavior is reinforced by the adults' reactions (Turner & Pew, 1978).

The concept of utilizing one's own reaction to determine another person's goal is based on the innerconnectedness of interpersonal behavior and the Adlerian assumption that human beings are active, evaluating, interpreting, and decision-making social beings. For all practical purposes, it is assumed that no individual's behavior occurs in isolation, but takes place in relation to other people. We act, react, and interact with one another, and we think about those actions, reactions, and interactions. However, we tend to underestimate the influence we have on others and mostly think in terms of the influence others have on us. This is simply because we can more easily observe what others do and how we are affected by their behavior than what we do and how others are affected by our behavior. We are often oblivious of the fact that we elicit or evoke certain behaviors from other people and that the behavior we get from others has as much as or more to do with our own personal characteristics and provocations than those of the persons from whom we elicit the response. Competitive people, for example, are often totally unaware of their own contribution to their experience of the competitiveness of others but tend to conclude that the world is just that way; they expect competitiveness from others and that is what they get (Carson, in press).

As Willard and Marguerite Beecher (1966) stated, "The person who sees life as a competition and the world as a competitive place is astonished when anyone suggests that the world is not a competitive place, but that there are many competitive people who make it appear that way to those who are themselves competitive. Reality is what it is and in itself is neither competitive nor noncompetitive [p. 41]." Another example is that of people who anticipate punishment, become overly appealing, and elicit abuse by their apologies. We can also observe that people who fear rejection tend to get rejected; defensive and suspicious people tend to evoke aggressive, retaliatory behavior; submissive people tend to elicit domineering, arrogant behavior; domineering people tend to elicit submissive or passive resistant behavior, etc. (Carson, in press). We subtly, and not so subtly, communicate to others what we expect -- what we want, fear, etc. -- and that is often what we get in return. As Dreikurs stated, "We are moving ourselves in line with what we anticipate [in Soltz, 1975, p. 101]." (Page 64)

## **The Social Context of Behavior**

Each individual's behavior may vary greatly across different situations and social settings, depending on the expectations of the individual and the expectations inherent in the situation. Therefore, if we are truly to understand and appropriately modify faulty human behavior, we must view it in terms of the social context in which it occurs -- the context in which we live and function. We must also learn to observe the behavioral sequence in which social interactions take place and become aware of how we prompt, draw out, elicit, evoke, provoke, or solicit specific responses from others and how they evoke such responses from us. We must become aware of how we carry out our self-fulfilling prophecies -- how we get from others and life what we expect from and attribute to them-- and how we help others carry out their prophecies. We can then fully realize that most human problems are basically public and social in nature. And we will be able to take appropriate developmental, preventative, or remedial approaches based on constructive alternative goals, strategies, and interactional patterns rather than on traditional,

moralistic, or medical model approaches. Thus, we can avoid labeling people who display faulty behavior as sick, diseased, crazy, lazy, or bad.

Interpersonal behavior may be more specifically defined as what one person overtly or covertly does in relationship to another person who, in some respect, is the object of the particular behavior (Leary, 1957, p. 4). Interpersonal behavior can be characterized as being complementary or noncomplementary in nature (McLemore & Benjamin, 1979). *Cornplimentary behaviors* are characterized by corresponding, harmonizing, or matching behaviors that tend to elicit, draw out, accompany, or complement each other. Complementary behaviors can be negative or positive, constructive or destructive; they are complementary as long as they tend to go together, as long as they consist of a mutual exchange. Thus, behavioral complementarity basically takes two forms: positive behavioral reciprocity and negative behavioral reciprocity.

*Noncornplimentary behaviors* are characterized by oppositional, antithetical, or diametrical behaviors that tend to elicit the opposite of the behavior at hand, specifically the opposite of the particular behavior's expected complement. Complementary and noncomplementary behaviors can be observed in any human interaction. For example, if children learn to submit to and accept parental power, authority, and control, the relationship can be considered a complementary one based on positive reciprocity -- each person is in agreement in terms of the roles and behaviors expected and responds with positive cooperation accordingly. However, one or the other, most often the child, becomes dissatisfied with this arrangement.

This shift often occurs as children reach adolescence and discover that in order to become autonomous they need to learn to be more independent, to think for themselves more, and to be themselves instead of a reflection of their parents. As a result they often conclude that they must resist parental control if they are to become autonomous. Their behavior is in turn defined and interpreted by their parents -- not as a normal, healthy struggle for autonomy -- but as defiance, disrespect, and a personal affront to the parents' integrity. At this point the parents often exert countermeasures of increased control, which only intensify the child's behavior.

Thus, a shift has been made to complementary behavior based on *negative reciprocity* -- each person is still in agreement in terms of the roles and behaviors expected and responds with negative cooperation accordingly. The interaction is still complementary, but in a negative sense rather than in a positive one -- both parents and children cooperate in maintaining the relationship. In trying to break the dependency bond, the children strive for total independence rather than the more realistic ideal of mutual interdependence appropriate to the human condition and necessary for effective human functioning. The more the parents use counter-control measures, the more the children feel they have to be totally independent. The children say, "You can't make me," and the parents say, "Oh, yes we can," and the war goes on. These behaviors are obviously mutually reinforcing. Both parties to the conflict try to force their definitions of the situation on the other, and no one gets anywhere. The parents have long forgotten the struggle for equality and respect with their own parents. They have also forgotten the sacred vows they made as children never to repeat their parents' mistakes with their own children.

Often underlying the anger, resentment, and hostility of each looms unavowed fear. Children fear losing or not developing an individual identity -- and they fear losing the esteem of their peers for allowing themselves to be dominated by their parents. Parents fear that the worst will happen to their children; they do not trust the parenting job they have done, and fear losing the esteem of other parents and adults for not having more control over their children. Both parents and children define and interpret the behavior of the other personally as a devaluation of

themselves rather than what it really is. This occurs easily when they have too much of their personal worth tied up in the roles they play as parents and children rather than in their intrinsic qualities. Both parents and children are struggling within themselves to define who (Page 66) they are and to safeguard a sense of belonging, security, and self-esteem. In order to change the faulty interactional pattern and develop a new pattern based on a new agreement and a more constructive relationship -- one of mutual equality where children have more room to become autonomous and responsible and where parents feel more secure in relaxing some of their overprotectiveness and over-responsibility -- the pattern of *complementary negative reciprocity* has to be broken.

In order to bring about this change, one or the other or both parties have to make certain changes. For example, this change may take place when children feel secure enough in themselves not to overreact to parental control (which is unlikely to happen) or when parents change their reactions to the children's behavior (give them more room for decision making and for becoming responsible, etc.) or when both parties make changes at the same time. In other words, noncomplementary behaviors are called for -- doing the opposite of what is expected. Doing the unexpected makes it possible to establish a new relationship. Once this can be accomplished, an interaction of *complementary positive reciprocity* can be reached and a more secure and solid foundation for a constructive relationship can be developed. However, it must be added that although these changes are necessary, they are not necessarily sufficient. Other changes also have to be made, but one is well on the road toward a healthy relationship once these basic changes have occurred. The concept of complementary behaviors, doing the opposite, or doing the unexpected, is similar to the concept of "anti-suggestion" (Terner & Pew, 1978), paradoxical intention (Frankl, 1963), or paradoxical communication (Adler, 1978; Fay, 1978; Haley, 1963).

### **Changing Faulty Goals**

Behind every action is a hidden goal of which we are generally unaware. And, as we have seen, the immediate goals of children are based on their attitudes toward their parents, teachers, and society (Dreikurs *et al.*, 1971). Therefore, if the faulty goals of children are to change, adults must take the initiative to modify their own patterns of reacting to those goals. When adults change their responses to provocation, children are stimulated to seek new ways of gaining social recognition. If, at the same time, adults genuinely encourage children, they are on their way to a new, cooperative, and constructive relationship. The adults' reactions to the children's provocative behavior also offers a definite clue for determining which mistaken goal the children are (Page 67) pursuing. Many different faulty behaviors -- underachievement, laziness, bedwetting, lying, stealing -- can be an expression of any one of the four goals. Knowing which goal is operating in conjunction with the particular behavior is important, since it provides immediate insight into the seriousness of the misbehavior and gives clues for how to handle it (Terner & Pew, 1978).

After discovering children's particular mistaken goals, it is possible to disclose these goals to the children in a hypothetical, nonaccusatory, nonjudgmental manner, at a nonconflict time. When this approach is taken, children often become intrigued to follow along with the line of reasoning in order to become aware of and understand their goals. For example, consider a parent who continually complains about having to intercede in fights between siblings. We might guess from the parent's annoyance that the purpose of the child's behavior is to gain undue

attention through keeping the parent busy getting involved in the fights. Dreikurs would ask such a child, "Could it be that you fight with your brother just to keep your mother busy with you?" The child's immediate reaction is of utmost importance. If the guess is correct, the child will "impulsively say yes or show his affirmation by a curious roguish grin that Dreikurs termed 'the recognition reflex' . . . the child's spontaneous reaction to the sudden feeling of being understood [Terner & Pew, 1978, p. 157]. " If the guess is incorrect, there is no such response from the child, and another guess must be made in order to discover the correct goal of the behavior. The *recognition reflex* is more precisely defined as follows:

The recognition reflex is a peculiar smile and glint in the eyes indicating that the child has suddenly become aware of his goal, and is beginning to understand why he is acting in a certain way [Dreikurs, 1971, p. 42].

In a sense . . . the "recognition reflex" is a gestalt phenomenon -- a sudden insight or solution of a problem by recognition of its unitary pattern [Terner & Pew, 1978, p. 355].

[Heinz] Ansbacher [Dreikurs, 1967] . . . pointed out the significance of the recognition reflex and noted its intrinsic relationship to the "aha!" experience, first described by Karl Buhier. "The recognition reflex," he wrote, embodies the "flashlike expression which accompanies the joyful experience of a sudden insight into, and solution of a problem . . . which is defined by the therapist and which the counselee accepts with astonishment about the excellent fit of the interpretation . . . The recognition reflex shows that Adlerian therapy provides a sudden, insightful learning in accordance with its general kinship to Gestalt psychology" [Terner & Pew, 1978, p. 365].

The recognition reflex and the adult's immediate, impulsive reactions to children's behavior are the best tools for understanding children's (Page 68) goals. However, as indicated previously, this is only strictly true for younger children (Dreikurs *et al.*, 1971). Since adolescents are in the process of adopting the facade of adulthood -- defense mechanisms, safeguarding devices, rationalizations, putting up a front, etc. -- neither they nor adults can be confronted with their underlying goals as directly, easily, or successfully as children (Terner & Pew, 1978). Although each of the four goals are discernible at any age, many other goals lend themselves as a means of finding a place in the peer group during adolescence, some of which are likely to develop in response to adult demands and authority. Teenagers often show their independence, autonomy, and identity by whatever means of dress, language, music, and so on, that adults dislike or find objectionable. More serious behaviors such as drug abuse, delinquency, and drag racing, also become methods of finding anti-adult satisfaction, pleasure, and excitement. In order to understand teenagers, therefore, one cannot rely solely on the four goals as observed in younger children. We have to become familiar with teenagers' private logic and observe the direction of their goals in relationship to their peer group as well as to adults and society in general if we are to guide them effectively (Dreikurs *et al.*, 1971).

The concepts of the four goals and the recognition reflex are two of Dreikurs' most significant contributions for understanding, correcting, and preventing children's faulty behavior. Numerous

therapists, counselors, teachers, and parents have benefited from employing them in their relationship with children (Turner & Pew, 1978).

## Parent Study Groups

Basically there are two components to the Adlerian model of parent education. One is the parent study group movement, which is based on parent leadership, study, and group discussion of Adlerian concepts of childrearing. The other is the Parent-Teacher Education Center movement, which is based on a model for counseling parents, children, and teachers.

At the present time, Adlerian parent study groups are being conducted in almost every section of the United States and Canada. The basic goals of these study groups include clarification of the fundamental requirements of living together as social equals with the democratic family unit; understanding that behavior has purpose and is movement toward a goal; and identifying and encouraging behavior appropriate for the development of responsible and interdependent individuals capable of cooperating and contributing to the family. Parents learn to (Page 69) guide their children, being neither permissive nor autocratic but truly democratic. According to Buckland (1971), the Adlerian approach is one of the parent education models that focuses on the family as an integrated social system and includes the opportunity for each family member to examine his or her interactions with other members of the family.

Parent study groups are based on Adlerian principles essentially as outlined by Dreikurs and Soltz (1964), Dinkmeyer and McKay (1973); Corsini and Painter (1975), or Gould (1977). The Dreikurs model, following *Children: The Challenge* (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964), is the most widely used and also includes a study group leader's guide (Soltz, 1967). A comparable text and leader's guide is also available for teacher study groups (Asselin, Nelson, & Platt, 1975; Dreikurs *et al.*, 1971). Parent study groups are based on the following psychological principles (McKelvie, Elliaton, Dodson, Gilow, & Graftow, 1977, pp. 30-31).

1. Democratic relations between parents and children are based on mutual respect with an attitude of kindness and firmness. Kindness is expressed respect for the child; firmness is reflected in respect for one's self.
2. The ability to identify the child's mistaken immediate goals and the understanding of the social consequences of these behaviors enables parents to gain psychological understanding of children.
3. Since reward and punishment have no place in a truly democratic society where all are social equals, natural and logical consequences replace the authority of a person with the authority of reality and the social needs of the situation.
4. Encouragement that communicates respect, love, support, and valuing of the child as a person becomes the major tool for helping the child to feel a more positive sense of self-worth. Misbehavior is viewed as indicative of discouragement. Through building on a child's strengths and through parental warmth, acceptance, and love, a cooperative relationship is established. From this friendly relationship the parent is able to influence the child to more constructive and socially useful attitudes and behaviors. Adlerian parent education groups, then, would differ from the behavioral model on this point: the purpose of their child-rearing methods is not simply to modify a child's behavior, but more importantly,

to modify his motivation. Changing behavior is of: secondary importance, for the building of self-esteem, self-sufficiency, responsibility, cooperation, and social interest are the major goals.

Adlerian parent study groups typically consist of 8 to 12 members, ideally couples. These groups usually meet for approximately 2 hours, once each week for 8 to 12 weeks. The group leaders are usually parents who are familiar with the basic principles in *Children: The Challenge* (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964), and have attended a previous study group. The leaders serve as moderators or facilitators, rather than as professional experts. Specific childrearing topics are discussed at each meeting, and time is allotted to discuss individual problems of the participants. A systematic format for leading groups is outlined in *Study Group (Page 70) Leader's Manual for Children: The Challenge* (Soltz, 1967). Handouts and homework assignments are typically used to reinforce the concepts and topics that are covered during the meetings. Other Adlerian books and materials are also suggested for study (e.g., Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972; Dreikurs, Corsini, & Gould, 1975; Dreikurs & Goldman, 1972; Dreikurs & Grey, 1972; Soltz, 1970, 1975). McKelvie and his colleagues also conducted a survey of parent education research that was reported at the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology meeting in Minneapolis in 1977 (McKelvie, 1977). In their review of research to date, they reported that several general types of studies were being conducted. The most numerous were those that attempted to measure attitudinal changes. The most frequent population investigated regarding attitudinal changes was parents, followed by teachers and children. The second most frequently attempted studies dealt with behavior changes, equally divided between parents and children. The least frequently attempted were studies comparing Adlerian models with other theoretical models.

## **Related Research**

In reviewing the outcomes of current studies it would appear that Adlerian study group research has produced rather encouraging but mixed findings, as indicated by the sample of studies that follows.

Studies by Orr (1974), Berrett (1975), and Downing (1971) found that there were significant positive changes in parental attitudes and behavior and increased knowledge of Adlerian childrearing principles. Although Croake and Burness (1976) found no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in parents' perception of their children's disturbing behavior, parents who participated in the study groups reported fewer occurrences of children's bothersome behavior than parents in the control groups (Berrett, 1975).

Fears (1976) reported that the results of her study indicated that parents' attitudes and behavior were effectively changed after four Adlerian study group sessions.

Downing (1971) developed a training program for parents, drawn primarily from Adlerian, Rogerian, and behavioral approaches to human development. The data he collected indicated that parents who participated in the program showed a significant increase in the expression of trust and respect for their children.

Thorn (1974) investigated the long-term effects on parents of the childrearing principles presented in Adlerian parent study groups. His conclusions, based on a 40% return of questionnaires, were that after 2 years: (Page 71)

1. Eighty percent of the participants were still using methods they had learned in the

- study group.
2. Ninety-four percent reported that the study group had helped them resolve problems with their children.
  3. Seventy-six percent were able to list specifically the methods they were still using.

The Thorn study points out the need to further evaluate the continuing influence that Adlerian parent education may have on parents and children (pp. 31-32).

## Summary

The traditional autocratic methods of childrearing are no longer effective in societies that have become increasingly democratic. The emerging ideas about the equality of children demand appropriate methods of child guidance, consistent with self-discipline and individual responsibility.

Rudolf Dreikurs is to be given credit for bringing Alfred Adler's individual psychology to the attention of parents in many parts of the world. The approaches for educating parents in the principles of democratic childrearing presented in this chapter are based on parent study group and open-center family counseling models.

While there is a paucity of controlled experimental research, the descriptive literature abounds (e.g., Croake & Clover, 1977). Perhaps this is appropriate to the state of the art, since the task of reeducating an entire generation of parents has only recently been recognized as a legitimate role for those in the helping professions. This is reflected in the increase in parenting programs that are being offered in communities around the country. In the initial stages of development, it is only natural that the focus would be on technique and practice. For the time being we may have to be satisfied mainly with the research generated by those who are themselves involved in parent education and family counseling.

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