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NASAP Newsletter

January/February 2015

Jamie Stone O'Brien,
Editor

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear NASAP Family,

Happy New Year! I trust that each of you holds a special memory from the holidays in your heart. It is a very special time for me as I celebrate traditions shaped by my great-grandparents. Stories and tales of long ago are told, including this lovely one from my Irish grandmother. There were 7 in her family, including 4 sisters. Money was tight, so gift giving was at a minimum. However, she and her sisters would find something special

of theirs to give to the other. Gram also mentioned that she and her 4 sisters were always so delighted when they would find oranges in their stockings on Christmas morning. You might guess what my response was when hearing this story through a child's ears - "What?! Are you kidding me?!" However, in time, I came to treasure these stories. If our Christmases were a bit more like hers, I trust our world would be a lot happier. I hope that the holidays brought a special sparkle to your soul!

In the last newsletters I mentioned my presidential goals including: (a) calling the entire membership to take part in Missionary Efforts; (b) evoking a sense of Personal Responsibility particularly among younger Adlerians; and (c) working towards Increasing Visibility of Individual Psychology within the current mental health system (i.e., counseling agencies) and schools. I want to gently remind the entire membership to recruit at least one new member (or previous) prior to our NASAP conference.

So many of us have been inspired and mentored by many wise and

Next submission due date is April 1st, 2015.

Please send submissions, questions, and/or comments to
NASAPnews@gmail.com

lovely Adlerians. These Adlerians have taught us to be better clinicians, educators, teachers, parents and people. They have been our greatest advocates in the Adlerian work we do. And they have encouraged us to take a step out of their shadows (which I realize keeps us safe and comfortable). Young and Quiet Adlerians, where are you now? How have you begun to practice and experience Adlerian Psychology outside the shadows of your greatest mentors? NASAP needs to hear your voice. The community at large needs to feel and witness your presence.

I want to personally call younger (and quieter) Adlerians to begin and/or continue sharing their knowledge and experiences of Adlerian Psychology through the form of presentations (at NASAP, other professional conferences); in the community (providing brief workshops at your place of employment); and/or in publication format (NASAP newsletter, other professional newsletter). If you incorporated everything you learned from your Adlerian mentors and began to move from their shadow, what would your message of Adlerian Psychology be? And to whom would it be?

Warmly,

Jill Duba Sauerheber, Ph.D., LPCC, NASAP President
Phone: 270/996.7396 Email: jillduba.sauerheber@wku.edu
Be Socially Interested, Touch a Life this Week.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



We are now halfway to spring and it seems like it's still a long way off. The Board met in January and several grant applications were approved through the Clonick Publications Grant for a total of \$12,500.00.

One was from Marina Bluvshstein and Nikki Marchand of the Adler Graduate School, titled 'Found in Translation.' This translation project will provide a window into moral debate, professional debates and

general intellectual discourse surrounding the development of Adlerian psychology in 1910-1914 and then in 1929-1935, as reflected in Russian language journal Психотерапия (Psychotherapy) and the German language publication Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie (International Journal of Individual Psychology) for 1929-1935. The physical copies of the German-language journals were part of a donation by the Alfred Adler Institute of New York and the digital copies of the Russian journal are from the private library of

Marina Bluvshstein. The results will be available digitally and in print with the first volume to be issued a year from now and samples available in a poster session at this year's 2015 Conference.

A second grant that was approved by the Board was one titled 'Adlerian Ethics' from Dagmar Markova and Daniela Cechova. The goal of the project is to publish a new monograph in Slovak and in English. Dagmar Markova has previously published *Etika v adlerovskej teórii* (Ethics in Adlerian Theory) in the Slovak language and has invited Daniela Cechova to collaborate on the new monograph, which is an extension of the original. The monograph will focus on an analysis of Adlerian theory from a highly specific ethical perspective. The monograph seeks, primarily, to promote the knowledge and principles of Adlerian Ethics, which are not being promulgated in Slovakia and Central Europe. Despite its indisputable scientific contribution, not only within psychology but also philosophy and ethics, Adlerian ethics is marginalized in scientific circles in Slovakia and its practical benefits are under-recognized.

And the third grant that was approved also involves Marina Bluvshstein and Nikki Marchand. The proposed project, 'History of Individual Psychology in the 1960s and 1970s from the Pew Archive,' will provide access to an archive of materials written and collected by noted figures in Adlerian Psychology. These materials, created and collected by Dr. William Pew and his contemporaries, will provide the Adlerian and broader psychological community with previously unshared details regarding the continued development of Adlerian Psychology in the 1960s and 1970s, as reflected in materials in the Pew Archive. The archive contains correspondence between "Tee" Dreikurs and Mim and Bill Pew, a letter from Rowena Ansbacher to Coster-Lucas, correspondence between Bill Pew and Edith Dewey, and correspondence between Bill Pew and Raymond Corsini. Topics include social equality, childhood power struggle with authority, Adler's impact in America, and Adlerian family therapy. Upon completion, digitized content will be available for researchers, per request. Some initial findings will also be presented in May 2015 at the Philadelphia NASAP Conference in the form of a poster session.

The Board also experimented with the new Adobe Connect system for conducting meetings and we learned how inept we can be at times in the face of new technology. We will continue to work on this to make it an effective medium for meetings and training.

Jon Sperry has agreed to help us with our Facebook page. Our official Facebook page is simply NASAP (North American Society of Adlerian Psychology). Be sure to Like Us and Follow Us if you are on Facebook.

John F. Newbauer, Ed.D., DNASAP

CONFERENCE CORNER



AUTHORS PLEASE NOTE
THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A
RETAIL BOOKSTORE
AT NASAP's 2015
CONFERENCE: PLEASE SEE
THE NASHOP OPTION
BELOW

It has been increasingly
difficult for the local
conference committees to
find a retail book store (large
or small) to sell books at our
conference. This is due to the
fact that there are fewer

stores available, competition by online bookstores and e-books, etc. Additionally, local bookstores have not found it worth their time and effort based on the low sales and their difficulty (and often inability) to return unsold books. Therefore, the local conference group has decided not to engage a retail bookstore, but we are excited that they will continue to operate NASHOP (see below).

If you would like to PROMOTE your publications, please feel free to make flyers that you will be able to place on tables in the NASHOP and distribute in your sessions.

If you would like to SELL your publications (and other Adlerian materials), we invite you to sell your items in the NASHOP.

INVITATION TO AUTHORS TO SELL ITEMS AT NASHOP

You are invited to sell your Adlerian-related books and materials at NASHOP. This is a great opportunity for you to make your Adlerian publications available to others and, in turn, for conference participants to have many resources at their fingertips. No merchandise may be sold in the presentation rooms. To take advantage of this opportunity, you must adhere to the following procedures:

1. Either hand-carry or send your merchandise (addressed to yourself) to the conference site. (See sending instructions below.)
2. If you hand-carry your merchandise, take it to the NASHOP bookstore location and check in your materials beginning Thursday.
3. If you send your materials in advance, please note that you will be responsible for the receiving and holding fee that the hotel charges. You will want to call the hotel at to get specifics. Upon your arrival, pick up your materials and take them to the bookstore (in conjunction with the bookstore hours). The hotel phone number is 215-893-1600.
4. When you initially take your materials to the NASHOP bookstore,

make arrangements to pick up remaining materials at the close of the book sales (making sure to find out the closing time, which will be late Saturday afternoon) as all unclaimed materials will be donated to the local group. If you are not attending the conference, you will need to make arrangements for a friend to be responsible for your materials since the local group will not be sending back any materials.

5. Please note that 20% of the proceeds will be donated to NASAP for providing this service.

6. Please note that you may be asked to claim merchandise for sale on your customs forms when crossing borders and when sending merchandise.

7. Mark each individual book, DVD, etc. with the purchase price.

8. Enclose a packing list enumerating each title, number of each and price.

9. Because storage at the conference site is very limited, make arrangements with a shipper to have your materials arrive no sooner than 5 days prior to the conference. Again, note that you will be charged a holding fee per day that your materials arrive before you.

10. Address packages as follow:

Double Tree by Hilton Philadelphia Center City

237 S. Broad St.

Philadelphia, PA 19107 USA

Attention: Guest for the NASAP May 28-31 Conference,
(and then include your name).

11. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me, Becky LaFountain, Conference Planner at rmlafo@comcast.net.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

The Conference hotel is within walking distance of most of Philadelphia's theaters and lots of restaurants. If anyone has 'visiting every major baseball stadium' on a bucket list, you should know that the Phillies are in town that weekend (215-463-1000 for tickets). Why not extend your weekend to see more of the Philadelphia area, like The Brandywine Museum (home of Andrew Wyeth's art), Longwood Gardens (one of the country's largest indoor botanical gardens), and Valley Forge (another part of the area's historical sites)? Of course the major attraction is the annual conference of NASAP with workshops and sessions to expand your knowledge of Adlerian Psychology in many directions. We are looking forward to welcoming you to Philadelphia.

The NASAP 2015 Conference Committee

SOMETHING OLD IS SOMETHING NEW



Adlerian Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy

Recently, Jim Bitter suggested that we address some of the common ground between Adlerian therapy and solution-focused brief therapy in this column. I thought it was an excellent idea. Jim provided some thoughts about when the “Miracle Question” was originally just “The Question.” Before we look at the question about “The Question,” however, I’d like to briefly address some additional areas of common

ground between Adlerian therapy and solution-focused brief therapy. Adlerian theory and practice, like both solution-focused counseling and positive psychology, emphasizes prevention, optimism and hope, resilience and growth, competence, creativity and resourcefulness, social consciousness, and finding meaning and a sense of community in relationships (Watts, 2012; Watts & Pietrzak, 2000).

Both Adlerian and solution-focused counseling approaches disdain the “medical model” orientation to maladjustment and embrace a nonpathological perspective. Clients are not sick (as in having a disease). Because Adlerians believe a growth model of personality makes more sense than a sickness model, they see clients as discouraged rather than sick. Thus, Adlerians are not about “curing” anything; therapy is a process of encouragement. Hoyt (1994) identified three clinical-practical characteristics that constructive approaches, including solution-focused counseling, share: (a) an emphasis on a strong client-counselor relationship; (b) an emphasis on clients’ strengths, resources, and abilities; and (c) a present-future orientation. These three characteristics mirror what Adlerians have historically called encouragement (Adler, 1956; Carlson, Watts, & Maniacci, 2006; Dreikurs, 1967; LaFountain, 1996; Watts & Pietrzak, 2000).

Jim Bitter (personal correspondence, October, 25, 2014) noted that sometime prior to 1918, Adler introduced what he would later call “The Question” (Adler, 1918/1956). Adler asked his clients, “What would you do if you were completely well?” (p. 332). Dreikurs (1967) would later ask, “How would your life be different if you did not have this [problem]?” (p. 56). It is not hard to see how similar this is to the

“Miracle Question” from solution-focused brief therapy: “Suppose that one night, while you were asleep, there was a miracle and this problem was solved. How would you know? What would be different?” (de Shazer, 1988, p. 5). According to Bitter, the real difference is what the two models do with the answers. The solution-focused therapists start to encourage people to enact the life they say they would prefer if the problem were not present—which predictably often leads to resistance on the part of the person, exhibited in language that starts with the words “Yes, but . . .” Adler and Dreikurs, however, realized that the answer someone gave was often exactly what the person wanted to avoid; that is, the problem or symptom had a purpose that almost always represented a retreat from one of the life tasks. “I would do better at work if I were not depressed” suggested that the person did not feel that she or he would be able to achieve at work, so the depression, in part, was an excuse for not acting. Sometimes, Dreikurs (1973) noted, a person would say that nothing would be different if the problem or symptom were gone. In these cases, Dreikurs believed that there was probably an organic cause to the problem or symptom, and he would refer them to family practitioner or internist (Jim Bitter, personal correspondence, October, 25, 2014).

Richard E. Watts, Ph.D.

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AFFILIATE NEWS: Alfred Adler Western Canada Society (“AAWCS”)

The Alfred Adler Western Canada Society (“AAWCS”) was incorporated under the Society Act in British Columbia on June 17th, 2013. The Society was formed by a group of dedicated Adlerians who were aware of the growing need to provide a vital resource for Adlerian practitioners, students, alumni, parents and others. We have dedicated our efforts to keeping Adlerian ideas, theory and the practical and useful implementation of those ideas and theory alive.

Our Affiliate Society was launched during a successful Strawberry Tea held in the memory of Moya Jack and Edna Nash in June, 2013. It was Edna’s spirit of encouragement and drive and Moya’s enthusiasm and dedication that inspired us to create the AAWCS to continue the education, training, application and mentoring of Adlerian Theory.

We have hosted a number of diverse presentations and workshops over the past year. These workshops have included Marion Balla’s workshop on couple’s counseling, ‘The Dance of Couple’s Therapy,’ Dr. Bob Armstrong’s presentation on ‘Understanding Early Memories, Understanding Lifestyle, and Adler and Neuro-science,’ Dr. Bea McKay’s workshop on ‘two chair/two you, Working with the Self in Conflict: Gestalt and Integration with Adlerian Theory,’ Dr. Gloria McCarter’s presentation on ‘Spirituality,’ Candace Platter’s and Cait Saul’s workshop on ‘Loving an Addict, Loving Yourself’ and an upcoming presentation on ‘Psychopaths’ by Teal Maedel. The society has also formed a book club to study classical Adlerian Psychology with the foundation of Henry Stein’s books, which is mentored by Dr. Bob Armstrong.

We are grateful to the presenters for their time and to Adler University, Vancouver Campus, which has generously donated space at the school for us to hold the workshops. In addition, we have applied and received Continuing Education credits from the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology (NASAP) for some of these events. These presentations are being recorded by two of our student members, Shoshanna Campbell and Devon Christian. Shoshanna is also an emerging leader in NASAP.

We advertise upcoming workshops/events on the NASAP website, so please look for upcoming events at this location. Our affiliate is also excited to be hosting the annual NASAP conference in Vancouver in 2017!

Susan Burak

Founding member WCAAS, past board member NASAP

YOUNG ADLERIANS SUBMISSION: Reflections on the Second Annual Bowling Green, Kentucky Adlerian “Living Room Chat”

Introduction

On January 7, 2015, NASAP President Jill Duba Sauerheber hosted an Adlerian Living Room Chat for a group of former and current students at her home in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Those invited to the event have specifically expressed an interest in learning more about Adlerian Psychology. This retreat marked the second annual meeting for the budding Adlerians from Western Kentucky University’s counseling department. Attendees of last year’s retreat have become new professionals, putting Adler into practice, and sharing their new experience with current students. The students in attendance are at different points in the program; some are just starting, others are in internship. During this get together, an Adlerian brief therapy role play was demonstrated, using theory in practice was discussed, and questions about presenting were also discussed. A few attendees wanted to share their experience with fellow Adlerians in the hope that others may be inspired to come together in an informal setting to connect with Adler and each other:

Attendee Reflections

Our annual Adlerian Living Room Chat was particularly welcome for me as a recent graduate and new professional. It provided an opportunity to connect with old friends, as well as meet new ones. I appreciate having a place to share ideas with new students that I had not had a chance to know in class. Adler advocates social interest, so what better way to come together to discuss theory than with a social retreat? In this group setting, questions can be answered on the spot by those with a range of Adlerian-specific knowledge. Discussions like this are difficult to do in agencies working with different theories so it is important to have a welcoming place to discuss Adlerian concepts with others in between conferences. By Emily Asposito

Alfred Adler understood the importance of being encouraged through social connections and sharing with others the things that excite us. The 2015, Adlerian Living Room Chat served to connect me with others who have a passion and enthusiasm for the field of Individual Psychology. I was able to talk to recent graduates about their experiences as Adlerian counselors at their place of employment, and I was comforted to discover that most employers support the use of Adlerian counseling. We discussed ways to advance the field of Individual Psychology and the works of Alfred Adler in our current and future places of employment. Our chat was informational and inspirational, and I am grateful to be connected to such a sincere group of individuals. By Sarah L. Hagan

The 2015 Adlerian Living Room Chat appeared to be an encouraging experience for all present and so, for Adlerians, that made it a success. It was encouraging to see how friends are exploring various theoretical orientations because they know they need to be grounded to be effective. I was inspired to see how all of these different people have chosen roads that echo the importance of social interest. Also, I was encouraged to see a consensus in believing that effective counseling must view the client holistically. It was beneficial to see, through a role play exercise, the value in helping clients recognize that behavior is purposeful. Regardless of where each person is on the journey of self-discovery, the retreat provided a climate of acceptance and meaningful connection. By Dan C. Melear

The Adlerian Living Room Chat was very helpful to clarify certain aspects of the theory and how to implement certain techniques. For instance, I found it helpful to learn how to use early recollections with children and how to implement solution-focused techniques with Adlerian counseling. It was refreshing to meet with other like-minded individuals and discuss how to effectively encourage our clients. It was also helpful to have demonstrations and to try Adlerian techniques with people who are experienced using the techniques. By Normanda Lawless

Joining together with other Adlerians presents an excellent way to not only connect on a personal and professional level, but also to live out the Adlerian concepts of social interest and encouragement. I really enjoyed getting together with other Adlerians and hearing about their experiences. As a current graduate student, I was encouraged to hear from new professionals on how they were able to incorporate their Adlerian viewpoints into their current positions. It was also helpful to not only talk about, but to briefly practice, Adlerian techniques. I learned that in order to continue growing as a counselor and to provide the most appropriate services for my clients, I need to be continually engaged in self-reflection, study, and connection with other professionals. I am so thankful to have such a caring, insightful group with which to gain inspiration and understanding! By Chelsey Jenkins

We weren't meant to do life alone. Certainly this concept is well known amongst most Adlerians and a principle that I was reunited with during the living room chat. After recently graduating and going into the "real world" of counseling, I was hungry for encouragement and input. During our get-together I was quickly reminded that I was a part of something larger than myself as I was able to consult with fellow Adlerians and become reenergized for the task of social improvement. Not only were we able to discuss our counseling experiences with one another, we were also able to practice Adlerian techniques and challenge one another in a safe and genuine environment. The Adlerian Living Room Chat is a professional, as well as personal, investment and I am grateful to belong to such a community. By Lauren Early

WELLNESS FOR LIFE: A FEW FEBRUARY NOTABLES



As we take our steps embarking on the month of February, the question is, “What direction shall we take?” There are so many possibilities.

What comes to mind first and foremost for most is that day we are smitten/consumed by the heartfelt thoughts, feelings and actions associated with Valentine’s Day. In your own way, you want to eagerly, yet earnestly, and fueled by deep, wholehearted passion, relay your genuine, honest feelings for someone.

Before revealing some of the ‘behind the scenes’ aspects, let’s momentarily change gears/focus. Are you aware that there is much, much more to this noted month? Not necessarily in this order, it may broaden your sense of knowledge, spirituality and even humor. Got to have that humor!

February does ring forth a sense of patriotism with President’s Day, two Jima Days [landing, 19th & flag raised, 23rd], in addition to Lincoln & Washington’s Birthdays.

For those living in true wintery places, thoughts turn to whether or not the infamous ‘Ground Hog’ will see his shadow determining if warmer weather is in the near future. Directly following on Phil’s heels, are all those fans glued to the TV for Popcorn Day aka Super Bowl Sunday, chipping and dipping in between energetic verbal outbursts of both tension and stress release. I’ll let you fill in the blanks. However, it can be considered also as a time family and/or friends get together. Speaking of football, just prior to the Super Bowl is National Signing Day - “the first Wednesday of the month where a high school senior can first sign a binding National Letter of Intent for college football with a school that is a member of the United States National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA]” (Wikipedia).

Moving right along, how often do we take the time for those who make our lives even a teensy bit better? Well, where would we be without those bills, which come in the mail? Just kidding! Though, even with the latest technology, we are still connected to ‘snail mail’ in one way or another. For most, it is cards and packages. For others, it is receiving medication on a regular basis to keep you going. Their motto was, “Neither rain, nor snow, nor death of night, can keep us from our duty”. One of the more modern versions, “Through rain, or snow, or sleet or hail, we’ll carry the mail. We will not fail”. The wording may be slightly different since ancient times, yet the overall message is the same. Showing a little appreciation goes a long way

→ Thank a Mail Person Day (4th).

Now for a bit of the sublime, this is especially for all those of you in snowy country. As the story goes, on a snowy, possibly blizzard day back in the 1960's, a mom with six children, prompted by feeling both the weather and her two youngest nagging her to entertain them (since it was too cold to do anything) had this brain child idea. She proclaimed the day as, "Ice Cream for Breakfast Day" (first Saturday), whereby they all eat ice cream for breakfast.

How about something for all those times when life has bestowed upon you those 'lemons'? You know, here you are in public. You just want to reply by way of that 'knee jerk' response consisting of 'locker room language'. It's called 'locker room language' for a reason. Anyhow, there needs to be a way, publicly, to vent frustrations. Let me introduce you to For Pete's Sake Day (26th). At least for a day, use the phrase, "for Pete's Sake" in lieu of, "for Christ's sake" or "for God's sake". It could become habit forming!

There are a number of different stories associated with the origin of Valentine's Day. For efficiency's sake: St. Valentine, Bishop of Rome was jailed for preaching Christianity during Emperor Claudius's reign, a time when Christianity was discriminated against. He had befriended the jailer's daughter. His last letter prior to his execution was signed, "From your Valentine," which led to the naming of the holiday. Whereby the date, February 14th, was at one time thought to be the first day of mating season for birds. Thus triggering an aura, which sparked the 'romantic' tradition of sending valentines to each other.

In all the frivolity, let's not forget to bring our awareness and attention to a couple of items that are noteworthy. There are infinite ways to make a difference in someone's life. As we 'make connections' from day to day routines, feeling the warmth of the sun, smelling the freshness after a rain or going to the movies with friends, we don't stop to think about those who are unable → "shut-in". In essence, they are disconnected from life → feeling sad, alone, etc. This may be emotional, mental or physical in nature or they just don't have anybody in their lives. There is National Shut-In Visitation Day (11th), though an "unofficial" national holiday can be a 'fulfilling' experience for both of you.

Keep in mind: we all can make a difference in another person's life while doing so for ourselves.

Guess that's it for now. Stay well and hydrated.

Warm Fuzzies

THE ADLERIAN VIEW OF DEMOCRACY

Adlerians are democratic and believe that all relationships should be democratic. Whether it is two people in a relationship, a family, a classroom, an organization or even congress. All relationships between individuals or groups should be democratic.

What is democracy? How do people know that they are being democratic? What does democracy look like? Here are some of the principals of democracy.

Equality

In a democracy everyone is everyone else's social equal regardless of race, color, creed, religion, or even age. Social equals are valued and respected. Their opinion is valued even if it is not agreed with. No person or group is above another. One person might be more knowledgeable than another or have more expertise and that is respected, but doesn't make them more superior to others.

Collaboration

In a democracy there is participatory decision making. When decisions are to be made, there is participation by everyone affected by the decision and the decisions are made through peaceful negotiation. There is consideration for the interests and rights of all. All viewpoints are needed to get the full reality of the situation. Those involved are collaborative and supportive in discussing a new idea and its implementation. The decision should be made based on what is best for all concerned. When everyone is treated as an equal and with mutual respect, it is possible to obtain cooperation and reach consensus. The process breaks down when people feel devalued, disrespected or their views are ignored. Adler, amongst others, said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. What he meant was that, when all views are considered, there is a much better outcome than any one person could come up with on their own. Everyone's strengths and talents are recognized and utilized as each person brings to the situation their own special abilities that can be helpful.

The Worthiness of All in Spite of Behavior

Every person is a unique individual that has value and worth just for being. However no one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes. There aren't bad people; there are people who behave badly. It is important to separate behavior from value and worth. One can love the person and hate the behavior. Unfortunately, people often believe that if they behave badly they are and will always be a bad person. Everyone must be open to feedback because feedback done in a respectful way leads to better results and is in no way a criticism of

the person's value.

Responsibility

When decisions or rules are made and are to be executed, each person is expected to be responsible and abide by the rule or decision. They are accountable for irresponsible behavior because to do otherwise is disrespectful to everyone involved. When a person has a responsibility and doesn't do it, it shows a lack of consideration for others. Responsibilities or rules need consequences in order for people to learn and change. Without consequences, bad behavior and irresponsibility do not change. There must be order with freedom. People have the freedom to drive a car but rules are established to maintain order and must be followed. If they are not, there is a consequence.

Building Relationships

Adlerians believe that nothing of value is really accomplished until the relationship is established based on equality and mutual respect. When there is an unequal relationship, problems don't get solved. This can be seen most clearly in countries that are having inner conflict and even in the U.S. Congress. When relationships are in trouble, there must be repair to the relationship before there is going to be cooperation to meet the needs of the situation. When people are treated as less valued, unequal and having nothing of value to contribute, they are unwilling to cooperate.

Democratic Leadership

Whether in the family, the school or any organization, leaders engage all those who are affected by decisions in the decision making process. Leaders need to win support for their position. This can be accomplished when all views have been considered. Even if there is still some disagreement, consensus can be reached by agreeing to try out one new decision for a prescribed period of time and setting a future date to review and revise it or change it. If it is working, it can become a permanent decision and, if not, other options can be considered. People often mistakenly believe that this process is too slow. However, they do not consider the consequences of doing it another way. Problems occur that the leadership could not anticipate without information from all concerned. There is disharmony, lowered morale, resistance and sometimes even sabotage when a decision is forced on those who are directly affected by the decision. This takes much more time to resolve and has a negative effect on relationships and morale that can last a long time.

Democracy in Action

Families need family meetings, classrooms need to have classroom meetings and organizations need to hold meetings with those who are affected by the decision. All who are affected by the decision need

an opportunity to have their views heard. If everyone can't be in a meeting due to the size of the group, input can be requested in writing prior to the meeting. People will give input if they know that their opinion is going to be valued and considered.

When those involved participate in the decision and how it will be implemented, the result is better quality decisions, more willingness to cooperate, help in the implementation of the decision and more compliance. It also improves all the relationships and reduces conflict and ill will. There is an overall good feeling about the group or community.

When the decision is made and those involved agree to the implementation process, the individual has the freedom to execute their part of the plan, but also becomes responsible and accountable to the group regarding their part of the plan.

Democracy is not just to be used by the government; it is a responsibility for everyone.

By: Susan Pye Brokaw

Susan Pye Brokaw is a founder and core faculty member of the Adler Graduate School and has a private practice as a psychotherapist in Minnetonka, MN.