**Forgiveness:**

**A Gemeinschaftsgefuhl Skill**

Rocky Garrison Charmaine McIntosh

rockygarrison@gmail.com c.mcintosh@rogers.com

North American Society of Adlerian Psychology

Vancouver, BC

May 21, 2017

Participants will learn

1. IP definitions for Gemeinschaftsgefuhl, courage, and forgiveness
2. A strategy for enacting each of the three aspects of forgiveness
	1. asking for forgiveness
	2. forgiving oneself
	3. forgiving others

Gemeinschaftsgefuhl (GSG) was described by Adler (1908) as an innate potentiality which must be consciously developed (Ansbacher, 1968); this is the purpose of this workshop.

**AGENDA**

1. **Definitions (Lecture & Discussion)**
	1. **Gemeinschaftsgefuhl** (GSG): awareness of belonging in the human community and the cosmos and an understanding of responsibility for shaping the way of life of the community
		1. Adler
			1. Around 1914 “…Adler had already dropped both the counter-fiction and GSG as a counteractive force in favor of GSG as an innate disposition for **spontaneous social effort…”** (Adler, 1956, p. 145).
			2. “In the fourth type [of the types described by AA for teaching purposes only] (the socially useful type), **prepared for cooperation and contribution**, we can always find a certain amount of *activity* which is used for the benefit of others (Adler, 1935a, p. 7).
			3. “All failures – problem children, criminals, suicides, neurotics, psychotics, drunkards, sexual perverts, etc. – are products of inadequate preparation in *Social-*Feeling (Adler, 1935b, p. 7) (italics in original).
			4. “… only the individual who is prepared for social cooperation can solve the social problems which life imposes. By this we mean that there should exist a certain degree of contact feeling – of striving for cooperation – in the ‘law of movement’ of the individual (Adler, 1935b, p. 8).
			5. “We see how, for the safeguarding of his picture of the world and for the defense of his vanity, the patient had erected a wall against the demands of actual community life (Adler, 1936, p. 11).
			6. GSG “…means the interest in, or the feeling with, the community *sub specie aeternitatis* (**under the aspect of eternity**) Adler, A., 1956, p. 142).”
			7. “…the mistake involved will never be great if a high degree of social interest is bound up with the goal of superiority (Adler, 1956, p. 141).”
			8. Summary
				1. Social embeddedness
				2. Iron logic of communal life
				3. Communal life necessary for survival
				4. Innate potentiality to be developed
				5. Must take the form of some kind of contribution
		2. Translations
			1. “Community Feeling/Social Feeling/Social Interest: These are unsatisfactory English language translations of Adler’s German term *Gemeinschaftsgefuhl*(GSG). Most accurate of these is **Community Feeling,** which encompasses the individual’s awareness of BELONGING in the human community and the cosmos of which it is a part, and an UNDERSTANDING of his or her responsibility for the way the life of the community is being shaped by his or her actions. It is a fundamental sense of being one amongst the others as a fellow being (Griffith & Powers, 2007, p. 11).
			2. The meaning of the term has been problematic in German as well as English (Weinmann, 1957, cited in Ansbacher, 1968)
				1. **Gemein:** common
				2. **Gemeinschafts:** community, collective, a general connectedness
				3. **Gefuhl:** emotion, strong feeling, sentiment, feel, touch, sense, act of feeling, sense of touch, sensation; feeling, perception, reverential feeling, courtesy feeling
			3. Reardon, J. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_83UDXLa-tg&feature=youtu.be>)
				1. Emphasizes “eins” = one
				2. Oneness of all people
				3. “owning a feeling of oneness with others”
			4. Farau, 1959
				1. Social feeling, social interest, and social sensitivity are inadequate translations – he supports a return to Adler’s original term, like gestalt
				2. “Thus social feeling is **individual responsibility** with in and for the community. It is just the opposite of collective conformity (p. 12).”
				3. “He who sees in Adler’s *Gemeinschaftsgefuhl* only a social feeling, rather than a **cosmic feeling** which includes social feeling, cannot understand and apply it fully (p. 15).”
			5. O’Connell, 1965: **Humanistic Identification** (“…comes closest to the description at which we shall eventually arrive … Ansbacher, 1968, p. 33)
				1. “Interest appears too mild, volitional and intellectual; social too narrow, compliant and tethered by conventions and mores (p. 44).”
				2. “In essence, humanistic identification refers to a process (not completed at the age of six or 60) characterized by **a feeling of brotherly love** or close kinship with other human beings in the present, as well as a strong affinity for the human race as a whole, past and future. Humanistic identification is demonstrated intellectually by ‘outsight,’ a commitment toward understanding the psychological needs of others and the tension generated by their lack of fulfillment; and by an active movement toward satisfying such needs and becoming a significant other (44).”
				3. **Continuum from skin-tight identification to humanistic identification**
			6. Way, 1966: “I would therefore be inclined to translate this difficult word as ‘sense of community’-of **community with the Universe** which is to be regarded as essentially friendly (quoted in Ansbacher, 1968, p. 135)
		3. GSG Literature RG 10 min
			1. Ansbacher, 1978: Development of concept of GSG
				1. 1898 – 1907 (prior to an explicit concept of man)
				2. 1908 – 1917 (prior to Social Interest)
				3. 1918 – 1927: an innate counterforce restraining self interest (conflict model)
				4. 1928 – 1937: an aptitude and cognitive function (actualization model)
			2. Ansbacher, 1968: Object Dimension and Process Dimension
				1. **Object Dimension** (Social) (the objects toward which the interest is directed)

Extended to a variety of “objects” by Adler

Ranges from a feeling of belonging among others to a harmonious communion with the cosmos

“a general cohesion with and affirmation of life (p. 31)”

The complex of concepts usually associated with this term: belonging, contribution, equality, cooperation, other-centeredness, empathy

**Useful**: in the interests of mankind generally

* + - * 1. **Process Dimension** (Interest) (behavioral and perceptual aspects)

Empathy

Identification

Common Sense: “all behavior which we find advances the community (Adler, 1964, p. 44)”

Cooperation

Synergy

* + - 1. Fenchel (1963)
				1. “… an emotionally positive attitude toward the human race, a feeling of belonging and wanting to belong, the feeling of connectedness with man as a universal relationship - **the only successful way of overcoming man’s basic feeling of inferiority** (p.5).”
				2. “… A response readiness of the total organism which is undifferentiated at first and develops within the context of the total organism – environment situation (p. 7)”
				3. Applies it to finances in psychotherapy and to the relationship of individual psychologists to other theories.
			2. Huber
				1. Huber & Forsyth (1972): research
				2. Huber (1977)

GSG “… is best summarized as an **empathic, cooperative way of life** (p. 65).”

Compass: “The question, then, is whether or not a man moves with his fellows in an empathic, cooperative manner (p. 66).”

GSG = Humanity is linked together

“… consonant with Spencer’s and Darwin’s doctrines of ‘the survival of the fittest’ and ‘natural selection (p. 67).”

GSG “… involved being able to understand the life style of other people (p. 69).”

“The maladjusted are to be understood as people who are striving for perfection in a socially useless way (p. 73).”

* + - 1. Lazarsfeld, 1961: “GSG is in essence an **emotionally positive attitude** towards the human race, a feeling of belonging and wanting to belong, the feeling of connectedness of man with man as a universal relationship, an all-embracing bond. (p. 181)
			2. Papanek (1964)
				1. GSG as “**a cosmic principle**” in contrast to “an extended egoistic perversion” which leads to destructive identification with one or more unimportant group
				2. “…we should consider the entire community of human beings as the subject of our educational psychological guidance…”
				3. “…the way to improvement lies in increasing the cooperative and social abilities…”
			3. Lazarsfeld, 1991: GSG “… implies the individual’s relationship to the world at large, to **the cosmos** (p. 95).”
			4. LaPorte, 1966: pre-school project description
	1. **Forgiveness**
		1. Definition
			1. Giving up on having a different past
			2. Enright, 2001
				1. Acknowledging we are people who have a right to be treated with respect
				2. We have been hurt and have a right to feel hurt, anger or resentful
				3. Intrinsic forgiveness: based on love
				4. Extrinsic forgiveness: due to expediency or expectations
				5. North, 1987: "People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right)."
				6. Forgiveness is an act of mercy and does not resolve the tension between justice and mercy
			3. McBrien, 2004
				1. Reviews the emerging psychology of forgiveness and 5 models of forgiveness
				2. Identifies empathy as the keystone to forgiveness
				3. “The main contribution of Individual Psychology to forgiveness psychology is focused on encouraging the expansion of social interest so it can offer the forgiver a sense of future within an ever-expanding community (p. 412).”
				4. “…the cognitive behaviors most likely to promote healing are to release resentments and cease revenge-seeking behaviors (p. 412).”
			4. Releasing the cognitive snares that bind us to the past
			5. A resistance to loving connectedness with a part of the world
		2. Why Forgive?
			1. We forgive to free or our heart
			2. The question is not, “is this person worthy of forgiveness?” The question is, “Do I want to be a forgiving person?”
			3. Enright, 2001
				1. You forgive to quiet your angry feelings.
				2. Forgiveness changes destructive thoughts into quieter, more healthy thoughts.
				3. As you forgive, you want to act more civilly toward the one who hurt you.
				4. Forgiveness of one person helps you interact better with others. Perhaps your anger with your supervisor has spilled over to your relationship with your children. Forgiving your boss would be a gift to your children.
				5. Forgiveness can improve your relationship with the one who hurt you.
				6. Your forgiveness actually can help the one who hurt you to see his or her unfairness and to take steps to stop it. Your forgiving can enhance the character of the one who hurt you.
				7. You forgive because God asks you to do so. You forgive as an act of love toward God.
				8. Forgiveness, as an act of kindness and love toward the one who hurt you, is a moral good regardless of how the other is responding to you. Loving others, while protecting yourself from harm, is a morally good thing to do.
		3. Unforgiveness: Being in unforgiveness is like being on a giant fishing hook. Next to you on the hook is the person who has hurt you. The hook is extremely painful. Wherever you go, so does the hook, and so does the offender. The only way to get off the hook is if you allow the offender off first. The cost of not allowing the offender off the hook is, perhaps, a lifetime of unhappiness.
			1. In IP terms, unforgiveness is obtaining significance and/or superiority from the perception or belief that one has been treated unfairly; forgiveness is self acceptance on the psychodynamic level and leveling on the social level.
			2. More Resources
				1. Enright, 2001, 2015
				2. McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000
				3. Worthington, 2001
	2. **Courage**: the willingness to act in line with GSG CM 10 min
		1. Farau (1959) “We Adlerians know that Individual Psychology is the only school among the modern psychologies which has never ceased to stress the importance of moral values. Adjustment represents only one side of the coin: the other is courage (p. 12).”
		2. Lazarsfeld, 1991: in psychotherapy “…people acquire the courage to be imperfect, the courage to work to become less and less perfect (p. 94).”
	3. **Skill**: an ability or proficiency
1. **GSG Courages and Skills (Guided Experiences)**
	1. The courage to be unique (forgiving oneself)
		1. Learning to See Our Goodness (experiential exercise)
		2. What would happen if you accepted yourself exactly as you are? (experiential exercise)
		3. The Guest House (experiential exercise)
	2. The courage to have others be imperfect (forgiving others)
		1. Fellow Feeling (experiential exercise)
		2. Openings (experiential exercise)
		3. Letting Go (experiential exercise)
	3. The courage to be imperfect (asking for forgiveness)
		1. Acknowledging Imperfection as a Possibility (experiential exercise)
		2. Processing Felt Inferiorities (experiential exercise)
		3. Six Elements of an Apology (written exercise)
	4. The courage to have others be different
	5. Cosmic Courage

REFERENCES

Adler, A. (1935a). The fundamental views of Individual Psychology. *International Journal of Individual Psychology, 1 (1),* 5-8.

Adler, A. (1935b). The structure of neurosis. *International Journal of Individual Psychology, 1 (2)*, 3-12.

Adler, A. (1936). The neurotic’s picture of the world. *International Journal of Individual Psychology, 2(3)*, 3-13.

Adler. A. (1956). *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* (Edited by H.L. Ansbacher & R.R. Ansbacher). New York: Harper.

Adler, A. (1964). *Superiority and social interest: A collection of later writings* (Edited by H.L. Ansbacher & R.R. Ansbacher). Evanston, Il: Northwestern University Press.

Ansbacher, H. L. (1968). The concept of social interest. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, *24*, 131-149. (reprinted in 1991: *Individual Psychology, 47*, 28-46)

Ansbacher, H.L. (1978). The development of Adler’s concept of Social Interest: A critical study. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 34*, 118-152.

Ansbacher, H.L. (1991). The concept of Social Interest. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 47,* 28-46.

Enright, R. (2001). *Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Enright, R. (2015). *Forgiveness Therapy: An Empirical Guide for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Farau, A. (1959). The challenge of social feeling. In K. Adler, and D. Deutsch, (Eds), *Essays in Individual Psychology* (pp. 8-16). New York: Grove.

Fenchel, G. (1963). Social Interest – task and challenge. *Individual Psychologist, 1*, 5-12.

Griffith, J. & Powers, R. (2007). *The Lexicon of Adlerian Psychology (2nd Edition)*. Port Townsend, WA: Adlerian Psychology Associates.

Huber, R.J. (1977). Social Interest revisited: A second look at Adler. *Character Potential, 7*, 65-77.

Huber, R.J. & Forsyth, G.A. (1972) Selective attention and Social Interest. *Journal of Individual Psychology, (28)*, 51-59.

LaPorte, G. (1966). Social interest in action: A report on one attempt to implement Adler’s concept. *Individual Psychologist, 4*, 22-26.

Lazarsfeld, S. (1961). On Social Interest in psychotherapy. *Journal of Individual Psychology,* 17, 181-183.

Lazarsfeld, S. (1991). The courage for imperfection. *Individual Psychology, 47*, 93-96.

McBrien, R. (2004). Expanding Social Interest through forgiveness. *Journal of Individual Psychology,* 60, 408-419.

McCullough, M., Pargament, K., & Thoresen, C. (Eds.)(2000). *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice.* New York: Guilford.

North, J. (1987). Wrongdoing and forgiveness. *Philosophy, 62*, 499-508.

O’Connell, W. (1965). Humanistic Identification: A new translation for Gemeinschaftsgefuehl. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 21*, 44-47.

Worthington, E. (2001). *Five Steps to Forgiveness: The Art and Science of Forgiving*. New York: Crown.