

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADLERIAN GROUP

Dimension	Initial Stage	Working Stage	Final Stage
Key developmental tasks and goals	Central developmental tasks are establishing empathy and creating acceptance, setting goals and making commitments, understanding one's current lifestyle, and exploring one's premises and assumptions. The psychological investigation that occurs in the group involves exploration of the family atmosphere and subjective interpretation of childhood events.	Members are helped to understand their beliefs, feelings, motives, and goals; they develop insight into their mistaken goals and self-defeating behaviors; they work through interpersonal conflicts; and they explore the beliefs behind their feelings. A goal is to create meaning and significance in life. Through group interaction, one's basic values and lifestyle become evident.	This is a time when members explore multiple alternatives to problems and make a commitment to change. They translate insights into action and make new decisions. A goal is to facilitate members' awareness of their mistaken notions through observation of fellow group members and reality testing.
Role and tasks of group leader	Main goal of the group leader is to establish a collaborative relationship and to decide with clients on the goals of the group. Leader's tasks include providing encouragement, offering support and tentative hypotheses of behavior, and helping members assess and clarify their problems. Role of leader is to observe social context of behavior in group and to model attentive listening, caring, sincerity, and confrontation. Leader helps members recognize and use their strengths.	Functions of leader at the working stage include interpreting early recollections and family patterns, helping members identify basic mistakes, helping members become aware of their own unique lifestyles, challenging them to deal with life tasks, and helping them summarize and integrate what they've learned so that they can make new plans. Leader assumes that members can best be understood by looking at their strivings and goals.	At the final stage the focus is on reeducation. Leader helps members challenge attitudes and encourages them to take risks and experiment with new behavior by translating their new ideas into actual behavior outside the group. Leader's tasks include helping members recognize their mistaken beliefs and become aware of their own self-defeating beliefs and behaviors. Leader offers encouragement as members put their insights into action.
Role of group members	Members state their goals and may establish contracts. They are expected to be active in the group and begin to assume responsibility for the ways in which they want to change. Members begin to work on trust issues, which are important in the encouragement process and in developing good morale within the group. Because of the way the group is structured, members meet their needs for belonging.	Members become increasingly aware of their lifestyles. They analyze the impact of the family constellation; they also begin to recognize that they are responsible for their own behavior. Members support and challenge others so that they can explore their basic inferiority feelings. Participants learn to believe in themselves by taking action to change their lives. They explore their mistaken attitudes and faulty motivations.	Members are expected to establish realistic goals. They see new options and more functional alternatives. They learn problem-solving and decision-making skills. This is a time of reorientation. Members encourage one another to redirect their goals along realistic lines. Members help one another in considering alternatives and in making new choices. Members are encouraged to act <i>as if</i> they were the persons they want to be.

- Encouragement** The process of increasing members' courage to face life tasks; used throughout therapy as a way to counter discouragement and to help people set realistic goals; implies faith in people as they are and focuses on assets and strengths to build self-esteem.
- Family atmosphere** The climate of relationships among family members.
- Family constellation** The social and psychological structure of the family system; includes parental relationships, birth order, the individual's perception of self, sibling characteristics, and ratings.
- Fictional finalism** An imagined central goal that gives direction to behavior and unity to the personality; an image of what people would be like if they were perfect, perfectly secure, or complete.
- Holism** Characterizes the whole, indivisible person; all parts work together in harmony in movement toward goals. People are integrated beings who proceed with others through life; a reaction against separating personality into parts and a focus on the unity of personality.
- Individual Psychology** Adler's term for his approach, reflecting his belief in the uniqueness and unity of the individual.
- Inferiority feelings** The ever-present determining force in behavior; the source of human striving. Humans attempt to compensate for both imagined and real inferiorities, which helps them overcome handicaps.
- Insight** Understanding that can be translated into constructive action.
- Interpretation** The process by which individuals are helped to gain insight into their lifestyle.
- Lifestyle** The individual's basic orientation to life and the themes that characterize the person's existence; a blueprint for living that each individual develops based on a subjective view of self and the world. The convictions individuals develop during the first six years of life to help them organize, understand, predict, and control their life experiences.
- Life tasks** Adler's notion that all humans must face and solve certain problems universal in human life, including the tasks of friendship (community), work (making a contribution), and intimacy (love and marriage).
- Mistaken goals** Related to patterns of misbehavior such as attention getting, power struggle, revenge, and inadequacy or withdrawal.
- Mutual respect** Respect for the dignity of others and for oneself.
- Other-esteem** Directed toward promoting personal and social responsibility; involves respect, acceptance, caring, valuing, and promoting the welfare of others.
- Phenomenology** The belief that humans actively and creatively interpret their life experiences in a personal and unique way; a focus on the subjective fashion in which people perceive their world.
- Priorities** Characteristics that involve a dominant behavior pattern with supporting convictions that an individual uses to cope; examples include significance, control, comfort, and pleasing.
- Private logic** Basic convictions and assumptions of the individual that underlie the lifestyle pattern and explain how behaviors fit together to provide consistency.

Techniques	<p>Basic listening skills are crucial at this time. Analysis and assessment of one's lifestyle and how it affects current functioning are conducted. Other techniques include questioning, reflection, and clarification.</p>	<p>Some of the techniques used at this stage are confrontation, interpretation, modeling, paraphrasing, encouragement, "catching oneself" in old patterns, acting "as if," and teaching. Leader can adapt a variety of techniques to help members work.</p>	<p>Basic procedures at the final stage consist of encouraging members to act and to change. Contracts are reestablished and role-playing techniques are used to help members reorient their goals. There is a continuation of the encouragement process.</p>
Questions to consider	<p>How can you as a leader establish a collaborative relationship with the members?</p> <p>Adlerians are concerned with the ways in which people strive for significance. How can the group itself be used to help members understand how they find meaning and how they meet the challenge of life?</p> <p>How well are the members dealing with current life tasks? Why are the members seeking this group now?</p> <p>In obtaining the lifestyle assessment of members, how would you address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parental influences? • family information? • memories of each sibling? • role in the family? • earliest recollections? • critical turning points in life? • basic mistakes? 	<p>What are the values of focusing on members' beliefs and motives with the intention of helping them develop insight into their mistaken goals?</p> <p>How can early recollections and family patterns be interpreted in light of the members' current behavior in the group situation?</p> <p>Leaders might think of this question in helping members become aware of their lifestyle: Under what circumstances does the person acquire a particular lifestyle, and how is it being maintained currently?</p> <p>What are some techniques for helping members catch themselves in old patterns and begin to behave in new and more effective ways?</p> <p>How can the cultural context best be taken into consideration so that techniques can be applied in flexible ways?</p>	<p>How can members be challenged to make a commitment to change? How can insights be translated into action?</p> <p>What are some ways members can apply problem-solving and decisionmaking skills acquired in the group to actual behavior outside of the group?</p> <p>To what degree are the members behaving as active and autonomous beings as opposed to acting as victims of fate?</p> <p>To what extent have the members become actively involved with other people and developed a new lifestyle through relationships?</p> <p>Can members summarize changes in attitudes, beliefs, goals, and behaviors? Are they feeling encouraged to take risks by acting on these changes?</p>

Reactions: Summarize your reactions to the Adlerian perspective on group developmental stages. What do you like *most*? *least*? What aspects of this approach would you incorporate in your style of group leadership?

Reorientation The phase of the counseling process wherein members are helped to redirect their mistaken goals and basic mistakes.

Social interest The sense of connectedness with others and the desire to contribute usefully to society by dealing with the tasks of work, friendship, and intimacy—a sense of identification and empathy with others, a feeling of belonging, a striving for a better future for humanity.

Socioteleological approach Implies that people are primarily motivated by social forces and are striving to achieve certain goals.

Striving for superiority A strong inclination toward becoming competent, toward mastering the environment, and toward self-improvement; this striving for perfection or completion is a movement toward enhancement of self and is known as the “growth force.”

Style of life An individual’s way of thinking, feeling, and acting. A conceptual framework by which the world is perceived and by which people are able to cope with life tasks; the person’s personality.

Teleology The study of goals and the goal-directedness of human behavior. Humans live by goals and purposes: they are moved by anticipation of the future; they create meaning.

Exercises and Activities for the Adlerian Group

Rationale

Many of the Adlerian concepts relevant for group practice involve issues such as the influence of one’s family on one’s current personality, reviewing one’s past to determine its present impact, striving for goals that define a unique lifestyle, and identifying ways of developing social interest and community feeling. The basic concepts of the Adlerian approach will assume a more concrete meaning for you if you personalize them. It is up to you to decide how personal you want to be in sharing aspects of your life with others in your class or group. Remember that you can be personal without sharing your deepest and most private experiences. The following exercises and questions give you opportunities to experience some of the themes stressed in Adlerian groups.

Lifestyle Assessment

Adlerians often begin a group with a structured interview to obtain information about the members’ family constellation, early recollections, life goals, and childhood experiences. If you have a basic grasp of the concepts of Adlerian psychology, you can develop your own inventory for getting some of this information. Although there are set formats for the lifestyle questionnaire, the purpose of this exercise is to provide you with the experience of gathering data about yourself that you could use if you were a member of a group. By practicing on yourself I hope you will gain some ideas for what to look for in interviews with members of the groups you will lead. Assume that you are interested in joining an Adlerian group *as a member*, and answer these questions as directly, simply, and honestly as you can.

1. What would you tell others about who you are? What are three adjectives that describe you?
2. How well are you dealing with current life tasks? In addressing this question, examine these areas of your life: leisure, friendship, being part of a family, relationships with others,