Social Interest and Spirituality Creates Equilibrium
For the Discouraged Person

A Research Paper
Presented to
The Faculty of the Adler Graduate School

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in
Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy

By:
Sterline S. Cryer
October 2008
Bear with one another charitably,
in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience.

Do all that you can to preserve the unity of the spirit
by the peace that binds you together.

_Ephesians 4:2-5_
Social Interest and Spirituality

**Innate need to belong in harmony with others**

*an external interaction to strive for goals*

__an internal desire to connect in calm and peaceful environments.__
# Table of Contents

Social Interest and Spirituality Creates Equilibrium for the Discouraged Person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Social Interest</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Spirituality</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Equilibrium</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Discouragement</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Good Mental Health</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors that Lead to Discouragement</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convictions that Leads to Discouragement</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology ~ Social Interest and Spirituality</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity Factors Correlated to Social Interest and Spirituality</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods Used to Encourage the Discouraged Person</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Techniques</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

A healthy interaction between social interest and spirituality creates a state of equilibrium for the discouraged person. Social interest involves a sense of social feeling and a transcendence of personal striving in the social world. Spirituality involves a deep sense of divine sacredness. The individual forms a state of equilibrium when a healthy balance between social interest and spirituality exists.

The research findings showed that social interest and spirituality are so closely interdependent that what affects one, affects the other. Qualities characterized by social interest would also show positive spiritual qualities. The results indicated a positive correlation between social interest and spirituality supporting the hypothesis that healthy spirituality and social interest are linked. In addition, social interest was negatively associated with religious ethnocentrism and fundamentalism because of personal problematic conceptualizations.
Introduction

People who are discouraged feel incapable and lack courage. Eventually, they act in unhealthy ways operating on the useless side of life. Discouraged individuals have trouble maintaining healthy goals to do what is required to feel fulfilled and optimistic (Nikelly, 1971).

Adlerians believe that our basic goal in life is to belong, feel significant and safe and secure. Not achieving this would result in discouragement. Individual Psychology seeks to understand the discouraged person’s mistaken beliefs by examining childhood private views of self, others and the world. One of the techniques of psychotherapy is to encourage change that would influence growth and healing. Qualities derived from social interest (social feeling, belonging and community) and spirituality (harmony, peace, and sacredness) help individual’s to balance levels of stress by creating an equilibrium for body, mind and soul.

This master’s paper explores the relationship between Adler’s key personality traits social interest and spirituality as a state of balance for the discouraged individual. Leak (2006) found unique congruence between social interest and spirituality. He examined relationships between social interest and various types of spirituality; all were viewed in self-transcendence.

His research explored two hypotheses. Hypothesis one was based on people who showed qualities characterized by social interest would also show positive spiritual qualities (genuine spirituality, universality connectedness with others, goal striving and ultimate concerns). Leak viewed social interest as an individual’s relationship with
Social Interest and Spirituality

others and a transcendence of self-interest that resulted in a sincere concern with striving for community and human welfare. Hypothesis one maintained consistency to Adler’s striving for social feeling and the idea of community.

Hypothesis two was based on people low in social interest maintained negative spiritual qualities. Hypothesis two was associated with unhealthy correlations between social interest and religious ethnocentrism and fundamentalism.

McFarland (1989) found religious fundamentalism to have many types of discrimination and biases against other religions, women and ethnic cultural groups. He characterized ethnocentrism as mean spirited among members.

McBrien (2004) explored forgiveness as a healthy interpersonal model. He examined the relationship between forgiveness and spiritual aspects of social interest. McBrien described spirituality as the highest form of social interest. He suggested that social interest provided an understanding of the spiritual aspects of forgiveness.

Concept of Social Interest

Gemeinschaftsgefühl translated from German into English, as “social interest” is the primary principle of Adler’s Individual Personality theory (Watts & Carlson, 1995). According to Watts et al. (1994) Adler described social interest as acquiring a sincere human interaction with others, as an effort to experience social or community feeling. Social interest implies “an innate potentiality which has to be consciously developed” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 131). Corey (1990) stated that people are social beings, and it is social feeling that has to be nurtured. Individual Psychology rests on the belief that the person’s happiness and success are associated with a social connectedness in a society that cannot be understood in isolation from the social context. Kaplan (1991)
associated behaviors, feelings and cognition with social interest. He explained that behaviors included helping, encouraging, being cooperative and empathic; feelings involved belonging and commonality; and cognition involved having equal rights, obligation to others, and attaining community feeling.

Nikelly (1971) suggested that social interest was determined by an individual’s movement or striving through life, which assesses their lifestyle as socially useful or socially useless. When striving on the useless side, a sense of social feeling is broken, distorted, or affected by circumstances. Negative feelings and disconnection may be the consequences. The useless striving directs the individual aimlessly into destruction, or chronic neurosis or psychosis. Nikelly described a neurosis and psychosis as nervous breakdowns. He explained that the extent of the breakdown is assessed by the degree to which the person is prevented from normal participation in society, its demands and its benefits. The individual’s striving becomes personal, private, self-superior, and painfully self-destructive. “The striving for personal superiority and lack of development of social interest are both mistakes. However, they are not two mistakes which the individual has made; they are one and the same mistake” (Nikelly, 1971, p. 143).

The individual who lack social interest also lacks confidence to face problems originating from their lifestyle. The problems persist and become personal and private conscious thoughts. “The meaning they ascribe to life is a private meaning: No one else benefits from their personal achievements. Their goal of success is in fact a goal of mere fictitious personal superiority, and their triumphs have meaning only to themselves” (Adler, 1992, p. 5). Everyone strives for significance and belonging, “but people always
make the mistakes if they do not recognize that their own significance lies in their
contribution to the lives of others,” (p. 5).

For example, Mark and Linda (age 25) have been friends since junior high school. Mark and two of his friends were arrested for robbery. Mark was released. His two friends were sentenced to five years in prison. Mark told Linda that he had nothing to do with the robbery and felt horribly bad that his friends were incarcerated. Mark mentioned that he remained isolated from his family, because they were convinced that he had something to do with the robbery. Linda believed Mark and showed compassion toward his feelings. She allowed him to stay with her under the condition that he would find employment. Mark expressed difficulty in seeking employment in the past, but would give it a try.

One morning, Linda noticed that Mark had gotten up early. She assumed that he had gone to look for work. Linda looked out of her kitchen window and noticed Mark and one of his friend’s were moving furniture into her garage. Linda went outside to ask Mark whose furniture he was moving into the garage. Mark raised his voice at Linda and told her to go back into the house. Later that afternoon, Linda asked Mark about the furniture. He told her that he was going to sell it. Linda asked Mark if he had stolen the furniture. He refused to answer her question. She suspected that he was untruthful about the previous robbery. Linda mentioned to Mark that she understood how hard it was for him to find employment and that she could only imagine how awful he must have felt to steal in order to obtain money. Mark replied, “My feelings are not your feelings, and my thoughts are not your thoughts.” “By falling back on a private meaning, he protected
himself against criticism. For a private meaning can never be put to a test,” (Adler, 1992, p. 6).

Mark’s movements were parallel to the useless side of life based on his personal and private meaning that does not conform to social feeling, but rather mistaken beliefs and faulty assumptions. Individual therapy could help Mark to become more aware of his images of the world. Upon acceptance of this awareness, his neurotic behavior would have been altered as a way to redirect his perception to move on the useful side of life to develop social interest (Corey, 1990). On the other hand, Linda expressed sincere empathy for Mark a genuine characteristic of social interest.

Sicher (e.g., Davidson, 1991) stated the following:

“Empathy could not exist if we did not have any social interest. Empathy is only possible if we can place ourselves in the situation of the other person. It is an inner understanding of the other person; not just knowing something about the problem. Empathy is a large part of social interest.” (p. 22)

Concept of Spirituality

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2008) describes spirituality as a distinguished sense of connection. Spirituality gives a deep sense of wholeness or connectedness to the universe (Eckstein & Kern 2002). Koch (1998) viewed spirituality as a relationship with God, Allah, or a higher power. It does not matter whether an individual believes in God, or a divine source, spirituality is felt as “inclusive and unifying,” (Culliford, 2005) for
everyone. Spirituality is the ultimate nature of what it means to be human. Spirituality is a holistic attribute that gives true meaning to purpose, belonging, and acceptance.

In this paper, spirituality will be viewed independent of religion. Religion associates with beliefs, institutional worship, and practices (O’Brien, 2003). Religion offers a faith-based worship with traditions, ritual practices, sacred music, biblical readings, and other forms of worship. It is primarily located in a holy sacred place (church, mosaic, or synagogue) for people to acquire scriptural literature, insight, knowledge and an understanding of the Holy Bible, Koran, and Torah; a place to received spiritual food for the mind, body and soul.

“God is the greatest manifestation of the goal of perfection; he is one who is eternally complete, who directs the stars, who is master of fates, who elevates man from lowliness to Himself, who speaks from the cosmos to every single human soul,” (Adler, 1964, p. 275). The soul is an internal spiritual trait, an innate characteristic in every person. “The spiritual dimension tries to be in harmony with the universe, strives for answers about the infinite, and comes especially into focus in times of emotional, physical and mental stress” (Culliford, 2005, p. 1). The spirit is the soul of an individual. It is written, “God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Bible, 1976, p. 4). The three human traits (body, mind and soul) are intertwined transcending a healthy holistic balance; this happens when the individual generates divine awareness, positive thoughts, encouraging feelings, and good physical health. An imbalance between the three traits generates discouragement causing mental illness, emotional anxiety and physical medical issues.
For example, Maggie an eighteen-year-old college student scheduled an appointment with her therapist to discuss her eating disorder. During childhood, Maggie was nicknamed Bubbles by her friends and Fatty by her family, because she was overweight. At age ten, Maggie asked her family, particularly her mother, to stop calling her Fatty. Her mother replied that Maggie was named Fatty when she was eighteen months old; and at least she was fat and cute. Maggie tried to diet, but the temptation for sweets overwhelmed her. She continued to gain weight. At age sixteen, Maggie weighed 150 pounds. She complained to her mother and named particular areas on her body that offended her most. She wanted to get rid of the fat on her back, stomach, hips and thighs; only to avoid being teased at school. Her mother explained that Maggie needed to learn how to appreciate her body.

Through strong determination and a will to lose weight, Maggie stopped eating sweets and cut down on the starches. Maggie loss twenty pounds and became even more conscious of her appearance and decided only to eat vegetables. Her mother noticed the weight loss. She told Maggie that food would not be wasted at the dinner table. Maggie tried to avoid eating dinner by stating that she was not hungry. Maggie was encouraged to join the family during dinnertime. Soon after, Maggie gained the twenty pounds back and grew very resentful of her mother.

Maggie mentioned to her therapist that she felt humiliated, inadequate, and unattractive. She shared feelings of emptiness that made her feel lonely and disconnected from others. Maggie’s therapist suggested spiritual inspirational books, tapes and prayer for strength and encouragement. Maggie created a daily spiritual routine in her life. She prayed in the mornings, read a couple of pages from her inspirational books, and placed
earphones on to listen to calming music as she walked two miles each day. After two weeks, she began to feel better about herself. Maggie felt encouraged and hardly talked about her weight. She had a new type of energy and fulfillment. The spiritual component gave her hope and peace. She continued to lose weight slowly, without stressful thoughts.

When Maggie graduated from high school, she moved out of town to attend college. She stopped her spiritual routine and refrained from good eating habits. She gained all of her weight back and became obsessed with losing it again. She began to diet, but the weight just would not drop off fast enough. Then Maggie became addicted to laxatives. Eventually her anorexia started and she became physically sick. Maggie made excuses not to return home for Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Instead, she waited until spring break. Maggie’s family noticed her massive weight loss. Her mother lifted up Maggie’s sweater, saw her visible rib cage, and almost fainted. Maggie’s mother asked her daughter not to return back to college, but to meet with their family medical physician who diagnosed her as having anorexia nervosa. Maggie’s Multiaxis assessment is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axis I</th>
<th>307.1 Anorexia Nervosa (Restrictive Type)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Axis II</td>
<td>Avoidant Personality Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Nonpurging Type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axis III</td>
<td>Malnutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axis IV</td>
<td>Psychosocial Stressors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axis V</td>
<td>GAF: 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Axis I: Anorexia Nervosa the restrictive type describes weight loss through dieting and use of laxatives. There were no indications of engaging in binge eating or purging. Axis II: There was a pattern of social inhibitions, feelings of inadequacy and hypersensitivity to negative evaluation. Axis III: Serious medical conditions indicated a state of malnutrition. IV: Psychological and social environmental stressors impacted
Maggie’s life. V: Global Assessment of Functioning scale described symptoms of psychosocial stressors were present.

Maggie was affected mentally by intensive distorted thoughts about her body image. Physically, she starved her body causing medical issues. Mentally, she felt overwhelmed with anxiety. Spiritually, she had no hope or connection, only emptiness. These factors contributed to an imbalance between the three (body, mind and soul) traits.

**Concept of Equilibrium**

The Merriam Webster Dictionary (2003) defines equilibrium as “intellectual or emotional balance; a state of adjustment between divergent influence” (p. 422). This paper addresses equilibrium as a state of balance between social interest and spirituality that creates levels of harmony when there is balance. An imbalanced equilibrium may be triggered by the effects of external and internal stressors that affect the individual’s health and wellbeing. An individual’s emotional balance depends upon their reaction to stress. These stressors may influence the individual to subside into a state of discouragement.

Urban (2008) suggested that the affects of stress in people are seen physically, mentally, and emotionally. He stated the following:

“Stress is the body and mind’s response to any pressure that disrupts its normal balance. It occurs when our perception of events doesn’t meet our expectations and we are unable to manage our reaction. As a response, stress expresses itself as resistance, tension, strain or frustration that throw off our physiological and psychological equilibrium, keeping us out of sync. If our equilibrium
is disturbed for long, the stress can become disabling and
create numerous health problems.” (p. 1)

When a person’s stress response is activated, instead of leveling off the stress
hormones, heart rate, and blood pressure remain elevated, (HelpGuide.org 2008) these
stressors affect the physical, mental, and emotional health and wellness of an individual.
According to HelpGuide.org (2008) continuous or prolonged activation of stress
responses produce internal risk for physiological symptoms (heart disease, high blood
pressure, and joint pain) psychological symptoms (memory loss and cognitive imparities)
and emotional symptoms (depression and anxiety).

Physiological stress responses are usually perceived by any change that requires
adjustment (threat, attack or danger). Physiological symptoms may cause rapid heart
rates, distress on the central nervous system, and limited blood flow to major arteries and
muscles causing damage to the body (Suite101.com, 2008). Psychological responses to
stress affect “hormones in the brain functioning and communication skills.”
Psychological symptoms may consist of “impaired learning, memory loss, and other
cognitive skills” (2008). Emotional stress responses may cause anxiety and depression.
Emotional symptoms may consist of eating disorders, substance abuse and obsessive-
compulsive disorders (2008).

A balanced equilibrium has limited response to stress. Positive social interest
(belonging, community feeling and striving) and spirituality (divine awareness, calming
and peacefulness) may ultimately replenish the imbalanced alignment creating
equilibrium. The continuum below, Table 1.1 shows how a person moving on the useless
side of life may experience physical, mental and emotional stress resulting in health
problems. The useless side of the continuum shows physical discomfort, mental stress, and emotional discontentment causing an imbalance between body, mind and soul. When prolonged, this imbalance creates physiological inferiorities, mental illness, and emotional distress for the individual, all leading to discouragement. As individuals develop appropriate coping skills to manage life challenges, they begin to move toward the useful side of life, Table 2.2. Equilibrium is established when body, mind and soul are in sync creating balance between social interest and spirituality.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useless</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Equilibrium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Pain</td>
<td>Heart Disease</td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurosis</td>
<td>Memory loss</td>
<td>Worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Movement on the useless side of life creates an imbalance in body, mind, and soul. Movement becomes stagnant causing the individual to yield to discouragement.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useless</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Equilibrium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>BODY</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>MIND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>SOUL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Movement on the useful side of life creates a balance in body, mind, and soul. Movement becomes consistent causing the individual to strive for significance.
Concept of Discouragement

The Encarta (2007) dictionary defines discouragement as to make someone feel less optimistic, motivated and confident. Adler viewed discouragement as psychopathological (Sperry & Carlson, 1996). Adlerians believe discouragement started from faulty perceptions of early childhood experiences of the pampered and neglected child. Inferiority feelings arise when a child is discouraged. “A child can be discouraged when they are not loved, cared for, pampered or neglected,” (Oberst and Stewart, 2003, p. 23).

According to Shulman and Mosak (1990) pampering and neglect are mistaken ways of rearing children. They defined pampering as overprotection and overindulgence on behalf of the parent, which interferes with the child’s sense of development, competence and independence. Dreikurs (e.g., Shulman, et al., 1990) viewed the neglected child as not receiving guidance or confirmation from the parents, which causes the child to feel unvalued; and to seek a positive sense of self elsewhere. He claimed that the pampered child maintains positive self-esteem because it is established by parental guidance. Shulman suggested that the pampered child develops inferiority feelings because they rarely learn to resist their wants and needs.

Oberst and Stewart (2003) stated the following:

“The pampered child is spoiled and demanding.

A pampered child can develop inferiority feelings. Parents of pampered children are always prepared to remove all obstacles from the child’s way.

The child never learns to struggle or to delay their wants
and needs. It is not love and care [they] receive, but only the advantages of a parasitic existence.” (p. 23)

For example, Linda a thirteen-year-old was used to having her own way and getting what she wanted from her parents. Linda asked her parents if she could stay overnight at a friend’s house. They told her no, because it was a school night. Linda angrily yelled at her parents and demanded that they make an exception to her request. Linda’s parents refused to give into her unacceptable behavior. Linda continued to yell and scream at her parents for being unfair. They were insulted, yet ignored Linda. They punished Linda for being disrespectful. They told her that she would have to come home after school instead of participating in after school activities for two weeks. Linda threatened to take her life if her parents would not change their mind. Three days later, Linda attempted suicide by taking her mother’s sleeping pills. After recovering, Linda successfully continued to get what she wanted from her parents.

“The pampered individual seems to ask one overriding question of people. “What can you do for me?” The pampered lifestyle is an exploiting, enslaving attitude toward the environment,” (Nikelly, 1971, p. 143). The pampered individual’s symptoms are used to manipulate others.

Neglect maybe an unintentional act on the part of the parent. The parent may talk to the child, but listen without understanding or concern. The parent may ask “the child to perform at a higher level than the child is ready for, or does not recognize other needs of the child,” (Shulman, et al. 1990, p. 138). According to Nikelly (1971) a child who is neglected may experience negative criticism in the home and school environment.
For example, seven year old Sam was verbally and physically abusive toward his five year old brother Barry. When Barry tried to explain the problem to his mother, she told him to stop crying and to learn how to handle his older brother. Barry explained to his mother that he does not know how to handle his brother. His mother ignored him. While in school, Barry mentioned to his teacher that another student pushed him out of the lunch line. Another teacher instructed him to go to the end of the line. The teacher dismissed Barry’s concerns and told him to concentrate on his reading. The next day, Barry got into trouble for punching a student in the eye. Throughout elementary school Barry’s behavior was labeled oppositional and defiant.

Both Linda and Barry experienced discouragement that influenced psychological and social convictions. The experiences of the pampered and neglected child contribute to discouraged and fearful feelings.

Sperry, et al. (1996) stated the following:

“Rather than providing encouragement to engage in other efforts involving mastery and achievement, these experiences leave the youngster feeling discouraged and fearful. Rather than experiencing trusting and loving relationships, the young child grows to become distrustful and manipulative. To compensate for these exaggerated feelings of insecurity and anxiety, the child becomes self-centered and uncooperative.” (p. 4)
Concept of Good Mental Health

The concept of good mental health involves low levels of stress, anxiety and psychological distress and high levels of emotional coping and spirituality (Dalmida, 2006). Adler’s (Sweeney and Witmer, 1991) characteristics of a healthy person are better understood holistically. Wellness is a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well being of body, mind and soul as a means for the individual to interact more fully with the human and natural community. In counseling, Adlerians recognize the importance of treating the client as an indivisible whole. The individual is better understood as a complete unit (body, mind, soul) rather than individual parts (Sweeney, et al., 1991 and Witmer, 1991).

Adler’s Individual Psychology is based on a wellness approach of five life tasks: friendship, work, love, self-regulation and spirituality (Sweeney et al. 1991). The five life tasks are based on a wellness model that encourages consistency, and constructive movement on the useful side of life as a means to establish social interest. The tasks interact with each other. They play a fundamental role connecting the individual to external social environmental forces creating either a sense of belonging and significance, or discouragement and feeling of insignificance.

The following life tasks are associated with social environmental forces that create positive or negative effects for people striving toward social interest. Each life task has unhealthy and healthy attributes listed. Also listed, are health concerns affected by movement on the useless side of life (moving from social interest) and good health as an indicator of movement toward the useful side of life (moving toward social interest).
Friendship Life Task

The friendship life task is most difficult to fulfill because it requires courage to be successful (Sweeny, et al. 1991). It becomes difficult as part of lasting intimate relationships. The friendship life task involves basic social needs, social relationships, and interaction with others. Friendship involves social relationships that connect the individual with other people in the community, church, or various organizations. Health concerns are associated with disappointment, isolation, self-absorption and physical and emotional distress with close relationships. In order to establish good health, Eckstein, et al.’s (1981) suggested that people should participate in, exercise, and do something for others.

Eckstein, et al.’s (1981) pointed out that some friendships dissolve quickly or on bad terms leaving a person in a state of depression or loneliness. To avoid discouragement from these types of situations, it would be best to have friends outside of close relationships. Vaillant (e.g., Sweeney et al., 1991) advised being able to love family members, children, and close friends were definite indicators of good health.

Work Life Task

Dreikurs (e.g., Sweeney, et al., 1991) believed persons showing an inability to meet the requirements of the work life tasks are symptomatic of a serious mental illness. The fundamental value of work sustains a person’s life and contributes to others. According to Eckstein et al. (1981) each task represents some form of health concerns.

The work life task involves work ethics: skills, talents, and opportunities. Employment connects people to teamwork relationships, daily tasks, communication with coworkers, promotions and a variety of benefits. Aspects of the work life task are
employment status, job responsibilities, duties and relations with other people. Health concerns for the work task are associated with high levels of anxiety and boredom (Eckstein et al., 1981). This may be due to high levels of stress around work performance and job dissatisfaction. Indicators of good health for the work task include employment choices, satisfaction with work relationships, and positive attitude toward career goals.

**Love Life Task**

Vaillant (e.g., Sweeney et al., 1991) explored the relationship between love and health. He found that men who were healthy had closer relationships with their spouse and better sexual adjustment. He stated, “Trust, intimacy, caring, companionship, compassion, and similar qualities of loving relationship promote good health.”

Eckstein, et al.’s (1981) suggested that health concerns were associated with power struggles, detachment, guiltiness, hurt, blaming and conflict. The love task involves deep sincere intimacy where a person could become easily hurt by betrayal and distrust. Good health for the love task consists of committed relationships, clear roles and respect for one’s partner.

Dreikurs (e.g., Sweeney, et al., 1991) stated the following:

The realization of being loved is a moment of high importance psychologically. It is characterized by a desire to give oneself and to accept the other one by a sustained and exclusive interest in the other one, by a longing to be together. (pp. 15-16)
Self-regulation Life Task

Maslow (1970) suggested that a healthy individual is one who has a strong positive self-concept and acceptance of themselves. The self-regulation life task involves acceptance of oneself, emotional awareness, interpersonal contentment, and self-worth. Health concerns stem from negative emotions, depression and anxiety. Health concerns involve negative energy forces from mental, emotional, and physical traits. Indicators of good health are associated with optimistic thinking, hope and encouragement. The self-regulation life task provides the ability to utilize, organize and develop one’s external social life tasks. Witmer (1989) believes these skills are essential in wholeness and health.

Maslow (1970) described components of self-regulation that included the following: (a) sense of worth as accepting oneself as purposeful and having a sense of confidence to strive for significance in life, (b) sense of control as having competence with feelings of mastery and confidence, (c) realistic beliefs associates with a positive outlook on life and (d) spontaneity and emotional responsiveness describes self-actualization. He suggested that people who are spontaneous in nature benefit from simplicity and commonality in response to events, (e) intellectual stimulation, problem solving and creativity traits consists of the need to learn, organize, flexibility and creativity, and (f) sense of humor consists of laughter, relaxation and breathing simulation. Sense of humor also enhances physiological, psychological and emotional change, and (g) physical fitness and nutrition implies an increase in longevity intellectual functioning and behavior (Mosak 1987; e.g., Sweeney et al. 1991).
**Spirituality life task**

Spirituality concerns itself with human kind’s ultimate reality. It identifies to emotional stability and psychological health. Being spiritual may improve a person’s wisdom or enhance positive feelings and thoughts. Spirituality offers inner peace and tranquility. Spirituality plays an important role in the self-regulation life task. Spirituality offers inner peace and tranquility. Eckstein (1981) suggested that indicators of good health are living a stress free and effective life.

Health concerns involve negative energy forces from mental, emotional and physical traits. Spirituality and the self-regulation life task are the center points for mental and physical traits in relations to personality and human development (Sweeny et.al. 1991). The Wikipedia Encyclopedia stated the following:

“Spirituality as way of life concerns itself with aligning the human will and mind with that dimension of life and the universe that is harmonious and ordered.”

The spiritual life task is the inner harmony that generates values that shape one’s character and interpersonal relationships with others.

**Factors that Leads to Discouragement**

**Basic Mistakes**

Shulman, et al. (1990) defined basic mistakes as distorted perceptions (of self-evaluation, perfectionism, a fear of making mistakes, concern for personal success, and devaluation of inner feelings) in the lifestyle. The researchers described basic mistakes as faulty social values and behaviors related to social standards that are inhibited to healthy development. They also compared basic mistakes to Albert Ellis’s irrational
ideas as unconscious assumptions based on what is right or necessary in our lives. Ellis suggested that these assumptions stemmed from cultural experiences that influence our expectations and goal behavior.

Shulman, et al. (1990) identify basic mistakes as characteristics of misperceptions, faulty values, irrational and negative meaning to life circumstances that lead to distorted approaches to life. They classified the mistakes in five categories:

1) Distorted attitude about self: “I am unworthy,”

2) Distorted attitude about the world and people: “Life expects too much of me,”

3) Distorted goals: “I must always be in control,”

4) Distorted method of operation: “Manipulating others gets me what I want,” and

5) Distorted ideals: “Money defines success.”

Basic mistakes are usually discovered in the therapy experience where clients explore and learn how to correct their faulty assumptions.

Four goals of Misbehaviors

Dreikurs designed a theory about children’s misbehaviors. He observed students for years in controlled environments. He concluded that there were four goals of children’s misbehaviors: attention, power, revenge and displaying of inadequacy seeking behaviors. By identifying the goals of misbehavior parents were able to handle their children more effectively.

Dreikurs (e.g., Ansbacher, 1988) discussed four goals (attention, power, revenge, and displaying of inadequacy) of children’s misbehaviors. Dreikurs arranged the goals in response to “increasing social discouragement.” He believed that children misbehaved when they were discouraged. Dreikurs explained that all behavior occurred for social
purposes; children want to belong. Children developed beliefs that formed patterns of behaviors (Betz, 2002). These behaviors are used to reach the goal of fitting in the world. Dreikurs suggested when children misbehave they are emulating one of the four goals.

Dreikurs, Dinkmeyer, McKay, Dinkmeyer, Dinkmeyer, and McKay (1997) stated, “When children misbehave they want something. They may want: to get attention, to have power, to get revenge, or to display inadequacy,” (p. 24). Dreikurs offered clues for parents to look for to tell which type of behavior their child was performing, and suggestions of how to redirect the misbehavior. Parents were to look for (1) feelings, describing the feeling when the misbehavior happened, (2) action, what was done about the misbehavior, and (3) response, what was the child’s response to the parent’s decision?

**Attention**

Dreikurs (Dinkmeyer, et al., 1997) suggested if a child demands attention the parent would probably feel annoyed. The parent may remind the child that the behavior was unacceptable. The child may react to the parent by listening or repeating the behavior. The child stops the behavior if it is attention because the goal was achieved. If the child continues, then it is power. For instance, 5 year old Roger (who knows how to tie his shoes) may chose not to tie his shoes, but wait for an adult to tie them for him. Dreikurs suggested to ignore the attention seeking behavior and not to be annoyed. Rather, give positive attention when the child was not expecting it. A good example would be to notice Roger when he tied his shoes and offer positive attention by saying, “I like the way you tied your shoes.” Positive attention builds the child’s self-esteem and character.
Power

Dreikurs (e.g., Dinkmeyer et al., 1997) suggested if the child wants to show power the parent may feel angry. The parent may give into the child or find ways not to give in. The child may fight back if the parent does not give in. If the parent gives in the child will stop misbehaving. During the power stage, children want to have control. They attempt power struggles with their parents. For example, after Donna (19 months) finished eating her chocolate ice cream, she threw the empty bowl onto the kitchen floor and screamed “more ice cream.” Donna received a small amount of ice cream from her mother and was told that she could not have anymore. Donna continued to throw her bowl onto the floor and screamed for more ice cream; her mother became very angry. Parents may feel angry when children display control for power. The parent might give in to the child’s power struggle. Giving in, the child got what was wanted. Dreikus suggested that parents must refuse to fight or give in and avoid becoming angry. The best results for this behavior are consequences.

Revenge

Dreikurs (e.g., Dinkmeyer et al. 1997) suggested if a child shows revenge the parent may feel hurt and angry. The parent may try to get even. The child may seek more revenge. A child who wants to show revenge feels deeply hurt. The child displays those hurt feelings through revenge. If the child loses a power struggle, they may choose revenge. Children seeking revenge believe they belong only by hurting others, as they have been hurt. Children want to lash out at their parents to get even for being hurt. Dreikurs suggested that it would be very hard to reverse the cycle of revenge. Parents should try not to join the child in a revenge battle, rather work on mutual respect.
Displaying of Inadequacy

Dreikurs (e.g. Dinkmeyer et al. 1997) suggested if a child displays inadequacy the parent may feel like giving up on the child. The parent believes the child is helpless. The parent may take no action and agree with the child that tasks are too hard. Yet, the child’s behavior does not improve. A child who displays inadequacy is very discouraged. The child is unable to live up to certain expectations or demands. The discouragement takes place over time. It comes from not finding a place to belong. Dreikurs suggested not to give up on the child and to find strength to encourage effort and improvement.

Convictions that Leads to Discouragement

Cultural

The Webster Dictionary (2003) defines conviction as a strong persuasion or belief; and culture as the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization. Some ethnic groups find that seeking mental health professionals who are culturally competent is one of many cultural convictions that lead to discouragement.

Generally, mental health professionals focus on individualism rather than collectivism amongst cultural groups. Sue and Sue (2003) commented “that racial/ethnic minorities often use a different psychosocial unit of operation that collectivism is valued over individualism,” (p. 107). A person’s ethnic and cultural heritage is influential in shaping attitudes, beliefs and behaviors about many areas of life. It is important to find professionals who recognize, understand, respect, and respond to ethnic cultural convictions. Race, ethnicity, and culture are powerful factors of how people communicate, make decisions, and disclose information. Among Asian Americans a
“group orientation is highly valued.” African Americans value the “emotive and affective quality of interpersonal interactions as qualities of sincerity and authenticity,” (Parham, 1997, p. 15). Some Hispanic cultures tend to see the unit of operation as residing within the family (Mays, 1985, p. 107).

Mental health professionals have historically failed to study ethnic cultural groups of issues such as race, “which seem to touch hot buttons in all of us because they bring to light issues of oppression and the unpleasantness of personal biases,” (Sue et al. 2003, p. 14). Ethnic cultures would benefit from a psychosocial unit that values collectivism rather than individualism.

**Life Circumstances**

There are many life circumstances that are influenced by discouragement. The most detrimental is suicide. “Nearly one million people worldwide die by suicide annually,” (Wikipedia, 2008). Suicide is the act of terminating one’s own life. It is primarily caused by depression, despair and discouragement (Wikipedia, 2008). In most cases of suicide, discouragement is the cause. As the following story details:

“A young musician in New York, in a fit of despondency, committed suicide. He was so poor that he had been obliged to pawn his violin. Discouraged at his lack of success and filled with fear at the possibility of not being able to redeem his beloved violin, which was a very rare one, he decided that life under such conditions was not worth living, and then and there ended it.” (Marden, 2008, p. 2)
The young man’s subjective views about self-regard, “What good am I without my violin?” and the world, “How do I fit in the world?” challenged his social interaction with others outside of the violin. “The individual has subjective convictions not only about oneself, but also about the world and about the relation between self and the world,” (Shulman, et al., 1990).

Methodology ~ Social Interest and Spirituality

*Studies Found*

Limited empirical research exists in the link between social interest and spirituality. Researchers explored the relationship between social interest and various types of spirituality in relations to self transcendence. Exploration of an interpersonal forgiveness model emphasized a connection to the spiritual traits in social interest. Researchers concurred that the cosmic experience of social interest influences an understanding in the spiritual dimension in theories of forgiveness.

Leak (2006) examined relationships between social interest and various types of spirituality (religious autonomy and spiritual self-determination, self-transcendent goal striving, spiritual transcendence-universalism and connectedness, and spiritual ultimate concerns) all were viewed in terms of self-transcendence. Leak’s general predictions were based on two hypotheses: (1) individuals who showed positive qualities characterized by social interest would also show healthy spirituality; these qualities were consistent with social interest in relations to Adler’s striving for social feeling and the idea of community, and (2) two unhealthy religions would show a negative correlation to social interest. Social interest negatively associated with religious ethnocentrism and fundamentalism.
McBrien (2004) examined the “purpose of striving for high levels of social interest in terms of a Christian understanding of spirituality.” He explored the connection between forgiveness and the spiritual properties of cosmic social interest. McBrien viewed empathy as a positive trait in forgiveness and when present, encouraged characteristics of social interest. His goal was to bring awareness to the altruistic extent of forgiving and to acknowledge how spiritual forgiveness profits from social interest. McBrien found that social interest provided an understanding of the spiritual aspects of forgiveness.

Worthington (1999) described a five step theoretical model of interpersonal forgiveness that offered promise for therapists. He used the acronyms “REACH” to describe his Pyramid Model of Forgiveness: (a) recall the hurt, (b) have empathy for the offender, (c) be altruistic in forgiving, (d) commit to forgive, and (e) hold onto forgiveness. Worthington (1998) included an affective tool “the primacy of emotion in forgiveness.” Adler’s concept of social interest supports Worthington’s view of empathy in forgiveness. In view of empathy, Ansbacher (1991) described a person as “interested in the interests of others,” and is “able to understand and appreciate their subjective experiences, their private worlds, their opinions.”

Stasio and Capron’s (1998) research found that social interest and empathy coincide between fellow feeling, thoughtfulness and compassion as a measure of empathic competence. They placed social interest and spirituality on a continuum with low and high levels. The low ends of social interest related to discouragement and poor mental health. The high ends of the continuum related to spiritual awareness. Both
researches maintained “spirituality, as the highest form of social interest and is described in terms of cosmic social interest” Stasio et al., (1998).

McBrien (2004) suggested that counselors recognize social interest as a therapeutic technique to help hurt and angry clients address issues of forgiveness. McCullough and Worthington (1994a) ignored Adler’s social interest to assess the effectiveness of forgiveness as a therapeutic counseling technique. The researchers reviewed 12 studies using a variety of forgiveness counseling techniques. They described six encouraging techniques for clients to consider for forgiveness: (a) supporting unconditional positive regard, (b) guiding the client to refocus his or her attention away from those emotions associated with the offense, (c) encouraging the client to have empathy for the offender, (d) employing a personal or religious forgiveness ritual, (e) supporting the client to forgive himself or herself, and (f) encouraging a reconciliation if appropriate. The researchers concluded that clients “who present issues involving hurt and anger could best profit from choosing forgiveness,” (McCullough et al., (1994a). However, they discovered that forgiveness techniques conflicted with mental disorders.

In contrast, McBrien (2004) viewed Adlerian psychotherapy as the source to encourage forgiveness. In therapy, the client develops techniques for understanding, compassion and empathy for the offender; as a means of living a lifestyle with social interest. McCullough et al. (1994b) agreed that these emotions were necessary for the forgiver to overcome resentment for the offenders. They viewed the emotions with intrinsic forgiveness. McBrien commented that Adler’s psychotherapy encouraged the fullest cosmic expression of social interest.
McBrien (1980) described spirituality in terms of cosmic social interest, as the highest form of social interest.

“To be spiritual means to know, and to live according to the knowledge, that there is more to life than meets the eye. To be spiritual means, beyond that, to know, and to live according to the knowledge, that God is present to us in grace as the principle, interpersonal, social and even cosmic transformation.” (p. 1057)

Leak’s (2006) hypothesis one was measured with the Social Interest Index (SII) and correlated positively with healthy, transcendent spirituality and social interest measured by:

- Religious autonomy and spiritual self-determination
- Self-transcendent goal striving
- Spiritual transcendence – universalism and connectedness
- Spiritual ultimate concerns

**Participants and Procedures**

Leak’s (2006) sample was composed of undergraduate students from a Catholic University. The students were selected upon interest in religion and identified as Christians. The selection produced a sample of 105 participants; 67 women and 38 men, 65% Catholic and 35% Protestant.

**Validity Factors Correlated to Social Interest and Spirituality**

Social interest was measured with the 32-item Social Interest Index (SII) (Greever, Tseng and Friedland, 1973).
Leak (2006) modified an interpersonal personality and psychological authenticity scale designed by Sheldon, Ryan, Rawthrone, and Ilarde (1997) to show religious autonomy or felt authenticity and congruence of an individual’s personal relationship with God and justification to maintain that relationship. He examined religious autonomy as internally caused by personality traits that were spiritually self-determined. Leak assumed these positive traits encouraged one’s sense of choice and self-expression in relationships, rather than submitting to controlled relationships. The nine item survey was used to examine the effects of self-determination on roles and relationships that were authentic and congruent verses controlled relationships. Sample questions consist of: “I have freely chosen the way I am in my relationship with God (self-determined)” and “I have a relationship with God because I would feel anxious or guilty if I didn’t (controlled).” Relationships found to be authentic were also favorable to wellbeing and positive personality traits. Healthy forms of religious autonomy and spiritual orientation correlated positively to the SII.

Emmons (1999) explored the concept of personal goal striving. He examined the role of spirituality in self-transcendent goals to determine the effects of spiritual motivation, personal wellbeing and happiness. Emmons used the 53-item Goal-striving Inventory (Leak 2004) and the 15-item self-transcendent goal striving subscale. A five point scale was used to answer questions from the subscale ranging from “never to several times per day.” The prefix for each question started with: “one of the strivings is ……; something I am typically trying to do is…..” Sample statements consisted of striving: (a) “be aware of the spiritual meaning fullness of my life and all life on earth, (b) eliminate my self-centered actions.” Leak implied that a variety of statements were self-
transcendent with direct reference to God (vertical self-transcendence) and the remaining statements derived on striving for goals beyond self (horizontal self-transcendence). Emmons viewed social interest as seen beyond the self that may be vertical or horizontal. He predicted that the SII would correlate positively with self-transcended goal striving.

Piedmont (1999) defined spiritual transcendence as unitive harmony, holistic and interconnected to create a deep committed to others. He believes spiritual transcendence is a source of intrinsic and altruism motivation. Piedmont suggested that spiritual transcendence included “universality and connectedness.” He identified universality as a principle in the unitive nature as being prayerful and contented which resulted from personal involvements with a transcendent reality. Piedmont identified connectedness as a belief that people are part of the human community and play an important part in its creativity and continuous harmony.

Piedmont, (1999) used a 24-item spiritual transcendence scale to measure a person’s capacity for transcendence. The connectedness and universality scales were used. The connectedness scale measured one’s belief as being a participant of the human race as contributing to create a deeper bonding and commitment to others. The universality, measured one’s belief in the “unitive nature of life.” Piedmont provided evidence of the correlation of spiritual transcendence with the SII.

Leak’s (2005) spiritual ultimate concerns consisted of vertical and horizontal ultimate concerns. Vertical ultimate concerns identified with having a personal relationship with God and committing devotional time to one’s religion. Horizontal ultimate concerns were transpersonal and identified with supporting and assisting others with tribulations, submitting to community and societal needs, and contributing to the
moral and ethical justice in the world. Emmons supported Leak’s (2005) measure of ultimate concerns as correlating with mental and emotional health of an individual.

The 5-item Spiritual Concerns Scale measures an individual’s ultimate concerns identified as possibly spiritual in nature (Leak, 2005). Two subscales were used: (1) vertical ultimate concerns, a)”being close to God in daily life, and b) greater devotion to religion,” and (2) horizontal ultimate concerns, a) helping others with problems, b) improving local community society, and c) working for greater justice in the world. The validity of Leak’s measure of ultimate concerns predicted that the SII would correlate with horizontal ultimate concerns (immanent, in-the-world striving) and vertically concerns.

Hypothesis two correlated negatively to social interest and spirituality with measures of unhealthy religiousness: religious fundamentalism and religious ethnocentrism. Religious fundamentalism and ethnocentrism claimed certain convictions to be true according to subjective religious beliefs and perceived negativity against others. Both functioned on a selective cult environmental influence that condemned others of their ethnicity, race, gender, national origin, religion, culture and sexual orientation.

Religious fundamentalism was measured with the 6-item fundamentalism scale (McFarland, 1989). The scale expressed precision and authority of the bible, the importance of keeping the true teachings of God’s work, and the necessity of preparing for heaven and avoiding worldly ideas (1989). He found evidence that was proven for its validity was positively correlated with many types of discriminatory statements and
biases against ethnic cultural groups; expressed rigidity, closed-mindedness and lacked characteristics of social interest.

Religious ethnocentrism was measured with the 16-item religious exclusiveness scale (Altermeyer, 2003). It measured characteristics of personal belief (atheists) about other religions, cult relationships in the group and evil spirited among members. Altermeyer stated that the scale captured “not just avoidance, but deliberate criticism, rejection and dislike of others religious beliefs.” Evidence proved for its validity showed that the SII captured negative correlation with ethnocentric as mean spiritedness, and exclusive view of the role of religiousness in one’s life.

Results

Correlations between the SII and measures of spirituality and religious autonomy (authenticity) and self-determination were positively related in relationship to individuals making personal choices versus being controlled in reference to beliefs. The SSI correlated to the nature of self-transcendent goals in terms of individuals striving daily towards movement in community, relationships or closer to God. The SII was correlated with the spiritual transcendence universalism and connectedness in bonding, and genuine concern for others. The SII also correlated with horizontal concerns in relation to helping people improve their lives and vertical concerns as developing a personal relationship with God. The SII correlated negatively to religious ethnocentrism and fundamentalism.

Methods Used to Encourage the Discouraged Person

Encouragement

Encouragement is one method used to encourage the discouraged person. Encouragement influences individuals to strive toward positive social interest.
Dinkmeyer and Losoncy’s (1996) defined encouragement as the process of assisting the development of a person’s inner resources and courage toward positive striving. Azoulay (1999) stated that encouragement acts as an impulse or motive that precedes cognition rather than as reinforcement following a thought. Adlerians believe encouragement is a state of being that focuses on: 1) how one is doing, rather than what one is doing, 2) the present, rather than the past, 3) the action, rather than the prediction, 4) the effort, rather than the opposition, 5) the motive, rather than, error, 6) the process, rather than the end result, and 7) the positive, rather than the negative (Sweeney, 1998).

Dreikurs (1964) stated the following:

“Half the job of encouraging a child lies in avoiding discouragement…Anything we do that supports a child’s lack of faith in himself is discouraging. The other half lies in knowing how to encourage.” (p. 38)

Azoulay (1999) suggested that encouragement was a bridge between the outer and inner worlds of an individual. For example: a third grader presented a family picture for the class (outer world). The teacher offered feedback and told the child to find ways to make the picture more colorful (inner world). To encourage the child’s outer and inner worlds, the teacher could have complimented particular colors used to make the picture come alive (outer) and commented that the child must have felt great about drawing (inner) a nice picture. Azoulay believed when connecting the outer world to the inner world encourages enthusiasm and inspiration for the child to move onto the next action. Dreikus (1964) believes, “people need to develop and value the courage to be imperfect before they can encourage others.” (p. 16)
Spirituality

Spirituality may also be a method used to encourage the discouraged person. In 1994, 93% of people surveyed in the U.S. stated that they believed in God, a creator, or a spiritual force (Sheler, 1994). In another survey, 82% of the respondents stated that they believed in the power of personal prayer (Kaplan, 1996). People who are spiritually impacted by their spiritual faith believe that God’s mercies will show them a way out of discouragement. The bible tells a story about a man named Nehemiah whose purpose was to organize the citizens of Jerusalem and build a wall around the city. The people were discouraged at the possibility that a wall could never be built around the city. Nehemiah left a responsible position to fulfill the purpose God had prepared for him. Nehemiah was encouraged to organize the people in spite of their complaints and fears. Instead of complaining, Nehemiah used his talents to get the job done.

Warren (2008) stated the following:

“God is seen as one who listens to the discouraged and then, using the petitioner’s assets and even weaknesses, gives him or her strength to overcome the problem.” (p. 1)

Inspirational bible stories such as the story of Nehemiah could generate encouragement to the discouraged person. Most early theorists refused to accept Carl Jung’s spiritual dimension of the necessity to address spiritual issues when working with clients (Cheston, 2000).
Intervention Techniques

Psychotherapy

Adlerian intervention techniques serve as a useful source for clients with low degree of social interest. Adlerian psychotherapy encourages the client’s movement toward the development of social interest. Psychotherapy addresses the idea that social interest plays a fundamental role in creating equilibrium for the discouraged person. Cheston (2000) viewed psychotherapy as regulating, improving, and changing the mind. Hall (1982) proposed psychotherapy as a link between the mind and body that influenced bodily symptoms. Berlinger (1993) stated that psychotherapy means “soul healing, a term originated by Freud. Adlerians recognized psychotherapy as understanding one’s lifestyle, explaining the goals of the lifestyle and strengthening social interest. Individual Psychology views the individual as holistically unified and not of separate parts. Adlerians believe that all behaviors are goal directed even though the individual may not be consciously aware of the purpose of the behavior.

During therapy, Adlerian therapists focus on the individual’s lifestyle (which gives an understanding of person’s personal thinking and behavior patterns) and private logic (the concept about self, life, and others) that in essence guides behavior. Corey (1991) insisted that clients’ problems occurred because of dependency upon private logic that often does not conform to the reality of social living. He believes the goal to Adler’s psychotherapy consists of client’s learning their basic mistakes and then bringing to light how to correct faulty assumptions that lead to discouraging convictions. For instance, some people may believe the only way to get what they want in life is to sabotage others, or that they could only have contentment when dependent upon others. The lifestyle
people develop in childhood may affect how they communicate, behave, or relate to others in adulthood. If people are unable to fulfill specific beliefs, they become discouraged. Discouragement may lead to unhealthy demands for attention, power and revenge. Extreme discouragement leads to feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

Process of Psychotherapy

Therapy in Individual psychology is a psychodynamic psychotherapy that may be useful to obtain the recovery of equilibrium for the discourage person. There are four stages (Establishing the Relationship, Exploring Individual Dynamics, Encouraging Insight, and Reorientation) of Adlerian therapy that offers skills and techniques to guide the discouraged individual toward healthy and productive lifestyles.

I. Establishing the Relationship

Establishing a relationship between the client and therapist is a very important stage. The therapist establishes a trusting relationship by joining with the client. The relationship is built on trust, acceptance and encouragement. The therapist reflects upon skills to successfully meet clients where they are in the present moment. For this to happen, the therapist enters the family system and adapts to styles, rules and patterns. During this process, the therapist observes the family structure, metaphors and themes.

The process of joining a family system contributes to establishing empathy and understanding, active listening, and setting ground rules, while creating a trusting relationship. By which, the therapist joins with the client as equals to explore problems.

II. Exploring Individual Dynamics

During stage two of counseling, the therapist and client work together to understand individual dynamics by exploring the client’s lifestyle, private logic, and
faulty assumptions. The therapist begins the assessment by exploring how the client functions in the various aspects of life. During this time, clients are asked what they hope to accomplish from the therapeutic intervention. A technique used to gain a sense of the client’s lifestyle is simply to ask how they start a typical day. During this assessment, the therapist pays close attention to client’s feelings, motives, beliefs, and goals.

III. Encouraging Insight

During stage three, the therapist challenges the client to develop insight into mistaken goals and self-defeating behaviors. Adlerian therapists understand insight as a step toward change. The goal of the therapist is to interpret (ask questions in relations to hunches) the hidden purposes and goals of the client’s behavior to gain insight into their client’s private logic to get to the mistaken beliefs. When clients become aware of the interpretation and gain insight, they are better able to work on discouraging lifestyles.

IV. Reorientation

During stage four, the therapist guides clients to see new action-orientated alternatives to their situation. The client makes decisions and modifies goals. They examine other approaches and choices about their beliefs; recognize that they could do something differently and take the opportunity to act on it. Clients are encouraged and challenged to develop the courage to take risks and make changes in their life. This happens in the process of completing homework assignments that may consist of asking the client to journal what a self-respected person would not tolerate. Assignments are essential during the reorientation process.
Lifestyle Assessment

The lifestyle assessment utilizes a variety of techniques that may be used to establish equilibrium to create useful movements and patterns in the person’s lifestyle. The lifestyle interprets an understanding of the client’s style of life that was established during their lifetime, primarily in childhood. The lifestyle consists of four components: (1) the self-concept, subjective ideas about oneself, (2) self-ideal, a person’s anticipation of (what they want, should have and ought to do) how to be in life, (3) environmental evaluation, a person’s convictions of the world, life and people, other than self, and (4) ethical convictions, personal perceptions of morals (right and wrong) expectations of how to perform or exist in life.

The lifestyle assessment is a questionnaire that explores what Adlerians believe to be components that influences a person’s life. The lifestyle assessment involves pertinent information of the client’s family origin. The therapist collects the personal data (past and present) from the client to analyze, interpret, and summarize into the client’s lifestyle analysis. The Lifestyle Analysis consists of four categories:

I. Family Constellation

The family constellation explores the family dynamics (family atmosphere, values, ethnicity, religion, and interpersonal relationships). The therapist asks several questions to obtain a clearer picture of experiences that have affected the client’s development. Those experiences are assessed in a process of forming convictions and basic assumptions (Mosak and Shulman, 1988) in the client’s lifestyle.
II. Early Recollection

Early recollections assess the client’s earliest memories. This assessment process include client’s feelings and thoughts during the experience of early memories. From those memories the client reveals mistaken beliefs and convictions. Early recollections offer insight for understanding into the client’s lifestyle.

III. Dreams

Peven & Shulman (e.g., Corey 1991) viewed dreams as projections of the client’s internal dynamics that presents concerns and problems in life circumstances. Dreams are interpreted and discussed in therapy. From an Adlerian perspective, “dreams bring problems to the surface,” (Mosak, e.g., Corey 1991). Clients are able to recognize and identify internal dynamics by exploring dreams. Early recollections reveal feelings and thoughts about early memories. They are the attitudes, values, beliefs and basic mistakes about self.

IV. Summary

Summaries are written on each assessment and integrated into the lifestyle assessment questionnaire. The data is summarized and interpreted. The information reveals an analysis of the client’s assessment. It may show a representation of basic discouraging patterns and conflicts that influences the client’s movement on the useless side of life. Therapists pay close attention to belief patterns and motives behind the client’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors and encourage social interest and spirituality as a way to stabilize equilibrium. The summary is presented to the client and discussed in the therapy session.
Conclusion

Healthy interpersonal models of forgiveness were explored to find the relationship between forgiveness and the spiritual attributes in social interest. Researchers viewed social interest as a source to encourage forgiveness. They maintained that a positive connection existed between forgiveness and cosmic social interest.

Spirituality involves a deep sense of wholeness or connectedness to divine human experiences with God or sacredness. It is the ultimate nature of what it means to be human. Social interest involves a sense of social feeling and a transcendence of personal striving in the social world. Adler maintained that social interest is clearly revealed in the five life tasks. The tasks are effective when performing interpersonal relationships in work, friendship, love, self-regulation and spirituality.

Social interest is determined by the person’s movement or striving toward life goals. A person’s striving determines a lifestyle that is either movement on the useful or useless side of life. Negative feelings lead to the useless side of life, which consequently influences discouragement. The five life tasks are associated with striving or moving forward in life. The life tasks are determined by productive movement that leads toward healthy lifestyles and choices, or destructive striving that leads to negative lifestyles movement away from social interest.

Positive characteristics of social interest and spirituality in relations to self-transcendence (a state of enhancement for cognitive and emotional growth) create equilibrium for the discouraged person. The research examined empirically the link between social interest and spirituality. Various types of spirituality were explored in view of self-transcendence that correlated positively to social interest. The research
findings showed that social interest and spirituality are interdependent supporting the hypothesis that healthy spirituality and social interest are linked. The recovery of equilibrium through psychodynamic depth of psychotherapy is fundamental to mental health and psychological wholeness.

Future Research

Most empirical studies, yet few in number, have tended to conceptualize religion, devotional affiliations and practices. One area that deserves more empirical exploration is the link between social interest and spirituality within a framework of spiritual growth and social interaction. Research in these areas would help to explain the interaction between social interest (belonging and genuineness for others) with spiritual growth (positive beliefs and a sense of well-being) as important attributes to one’s perceptions, values and behaviors.
References


