

ICASSI!

It looks like a foreign word, but it is a delightful acronym. It stands for the International Committee of Adlerian Summer Schools & Institutes. Established 42 years ago by psychotherapists from many nations to teach the principles of Alfred Adler and Rudolph Dreikurs, it is an opportunity like no other. For her birthday, Don gave Jane a two week trip to Maryville College in the scenic mountains of Tennessee to study with some of the finest therapists and scholars in Adlerian/Dreikursian psychology. Her experiences were “mountain top,” and she wanted to share them with the readers of *Robinsons on Parallel*. Jane, as you know considers herself an Adlerian counselor, since the principals of the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler fit so well with her work in middle school. She has studied, used, taught, and lived Adlerian Psychology ever since her mentors, Frank and Kathy Walton, introduced the ideas to her in 1971 at another institute, the General Electric Institute, at the University of South Carolina.

What does the theory purport? Who is Alfred Adler? Where is Maryville College? Did Jane get to the Smokey Mountains? What was learned about the Cherokee Indians and their “Trail of Tears?” What practical applications did Jane learn from the classes she took, the lectures she heard, the participants she listened to? Ah, such meat for this column.

Let us begin with a little about Adlerian Psychology. In the words of Eva Dreikurs Ferguson, Co-Chair of the institute and the daughter of Rudolph Dreikurs himself: Adlerian Psychology focuses on cooperation, equality and mutual respect between individuals and groups. It provides tools for understanding the whole person so individuals can live healthy, strength-based lives.

The nutshell description of the theory and practice of Adler and Dreikurs goes like this: It is holistic (each of us is a unique whole person), social, and purposive (human action is understood in terms of self-set goals, of which we usually are NOT aware.) Mental health is understood as a person's or a community's striving for contribution, equality, and mutual respect between individuals and between groups. Adlerian theory is based on many decades of prevention and treatment of psychological and social problems. It offers practical steps for improved human relationships in the family, school, and in multinational interactions.

Now, you can see why Jane is so enamored by these useful ideas.