

## Optimism Improves Your Health

Eva Dreikurs Ferguson, highly respected proponent of Adlerian/Dreikursian psychology, presented a thought provoking treatise on important ideas in this theory of psychology and therapy. Questions raised included: “Are you open to new experiences? Do you like people?” If so, you are probably enjoying a satisfying life and aging process.

Optimism improves one’s health; there’s no question about it. This is the tenet of Adlerian Psychology and also Positive Psychology. Therefore, the big question follows: **WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO OUR OPTIMISM?** Now then, this leading question would get individuals and their therapists to the challenge of health and happiness issues.

Other valuable ideas Jane learned from Dreikurs Ferguson included the “Private Logic” and “Life Style” concepts. The latter states that we have a set of beliefs that we follow through our lives. “Life Style” (an Adlerian concept) includes fundamental conviction of who we are, and it is established by age 4-6 years old. Amazing! It is influenced by our position in the family (oldest, youngest, middle, only, etc.) and shows up in what we do for a career, who we marry, whether we have children and other important choices.

This private logic is not objective truth or reality, nor is it what others

would see or think. Life Style also is not objective truth but, rather, our inferences about what life is like and our own private conclusion about “what sort of person am I?” and much of the time it does not change our effectiveness as social beings. Citing the Gestalt Psychologist, Kurt Lewin, Dreikurs Ferguson pointed out that that during the 1930’s both Adlerian and Gestalt theories were developed.

Lewin, a Gestalt theorist, studied leadership styles and how power was used in the group. The leadership styles were autocratic, democratic, and laissez faire. These categories also apply to how individuals raise children or teach a classroom. How the leader in a group/classroom/nation behaves influences every member of the group. This is another influence on one’s private logic. Kurt Lewin’s phenomenology stated that we read the world not as it is but as it appears to us. Isn’t this awesome food for thought?

Adlerian Psychology speaks to both the individual and the group. Again, more provocative questions: “SINCE WE KNOW WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR OWN ACTIONS, WHAT DO YOU DO TO CREATE THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT YOU ARE IN?” and “HOW CAN WE RESTRUCTURE THE GROUP PROCESS SO THAT IT IS HEALTHFUL?”

Perhaps you can begin to see how challenged Jane's thoughts were and how her mind was broadened by what she saw and learned.