

Home Delivery System for Family Education

Jonell H. Kirby and Powell E. Toth

It was Tuesday. A group had gathered at a neighbor's house and were making themselves comfortable in front of the television.

"We tried our first family council this week," stated one father.

And another assured him, "We got off to a rough start with our family council – we couldn't seem to stick with our decisions at first – but things are really different at our home now that we've learned to make joint decisions."

"And not talk so much!" added his wife.

A third grade teacher commented, "I really wish I had known about a family council when my own children were small. But I'm using the techniques with my class, and my problems have just about disappeared."

"It's 6:30," one of the group members announced and reached over to turn up the sound on the TV. Everyone in the room became quiet and looked at the set with interested anticipation.

This scene is reproduced with variations in numerous homes, schools, and other community agencies throughout southern West Virginia in the area served by WMUL-TV (Huntington) and WSWP-TV (Beckley) – the stations broadcasting a graduate course in Counseling and Guidance,¹ "Application of Adlerian Psychology." The participants may or may not be students, but most of the small groups have been organized by individuals taking the course for credit. A group usually views the presentation together, and then they discuss the program and its application to their own homes or classrooms. Students who are not enrolled in the television course but are in our counseling practicum use the same procedure for initiating and conducting community study groups.

Each televised lesson is a demonstration of group and individual counseling of elementary and high school students or of family counseling. Following the demonstration session a panel of experts, student, parents, or peers interact with the television teacher to discuss the demonstration group. In some instances the viewing audience call in questions they have concerning the session, and those questions are responded to in the same manner as those raised by the panel members.

This course, which began in August, 1972, is still in progress. However, the evaluation to this point is extremely positive, and the feedback, interesting. Final evaluation and more detail can be obtained later by writing the authors.

¹The television teacher is Dr. Manford Sonstegard and the course is offered for graduate credit through the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies.

The Facilitator had trained us in the skills we would need to be self-sufficient and thereby assured us that when the time came to consider a commitment, we would have freedom of choice.

Epilogue

In our reference library is a paper entitled "Toward a Therapeutic Community"¹ which refers to work done in this concept in Wenatchee, Washington, during the 1960s. The last two paragraphs are particularly pertinent to the evolution of the self-sufficient status of The Family Education Center of Delaware:

The concept of the therapeutic community is useless without the implementation. Developing a therapeutic community is a complicated process. It requires the unified efforts of many people who think divergently and who often protect vested interests. The time it takes to convert divergent thinking to convergent thinking and eventual coordinated planning is an absolute prerequisite.

The time invested will pay generous dividends in several respects. One of these is the extent to which vast numbers of people of the community perceive the plan of action to be theirs. This avoids the "Icarus fate" of many a worthy project.

¹Dr. Manford Sonstegard, "Toward a Therapeutic Community," *The Individual Psychologist*, 1960, 4, 14-17.

- (e) To develop and foster a cooperative working relationship between the many state schools and colleges, educational television, State Department of Education, and undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education facilities.

Administering the Program

There are myriad details to attend to in administering such a program, of which financing is not the least. But of equal importance is coordinating efforts of technicians and educators. Under no circumstances should quality of program content and effective presentation be subverted by mechanical considerations. To effect the necessary cooperation, a coordinator is needed who understands both technical and educational considerations. The alternative, as was the case in our program effort, is to have technical experts familiar with televising educational material. Following our attention to considerations necessary for cooperation, we proceeded with the mechanics of producing the program, *i.e.*, programming time, scheduling production facilities, and providing for contractual and other legal aspects of programming. Plans for purchasing tapes were also among our initial concerns.

We decided to use "prime time" once a week for the presentations. This meant the programs were spread over a two-semester time frame. To afford even broader coverage, a repeat showing was scheduled during the daytime viewing period to minimize schedule conflicts and allow a "second chance" to see the program. The repeat program was scheduled in the early afternoon which allowed teachers to view the program after school. This made it convenient for groups of teachers and administrators to watch the program together and discuss it immediately upon its completion. It also gave those who did not have UHF sets the opportunity to avail themselves of the school set.

Cutting across semester lines worked out to be an advantage. As in any effort, communication indicating the starting date did not reach everyone since the program began the first week in September. The advertising efforts found many people still on summer vacation. Therefore, those students who found out about the program after a couple of weeks could watch the remaining sessions, attend the workshops, and still get credit by registering during the second semester.

Long-range planning allowed the sessions to be taped in the early spring and summer. This allowed for completion of all taping prior to July 15. We felt this was necessary to protect quality. Editing was completed without last minute conflicts of scheduling equipment and facilities. This permitted a manual to be developed to parallel the programs and to synchronize the two.

Contractual agreements with the agencies and individuals were also completed early. Although this is a fairly standard activity governed by law, it is an important step which protects all parties involved. Many potential misunderstandings, *e.g.*, what provisions are there for rewrite and editing, for program-

Rationale and Approach

This televised program was conceptualized as a way to maximize the educational benefits of a formalized course in higher education designed to develop understanding and skill in guiding human behavior. Specifically we made Counseling and Guidance 382, *Application of Adlerian Psychology*, available via public/educational television during “prime time” to parents, teachers, and students to provide help in creating and maintaining a helpful and cooperative atmosphere in the home, in the school, and in the community. One overriding goal of Adlerian Psychology is to foster a therapeutic community concept where mutual respect and responsibility are the prevailing attitudes.

In rural West Virginia where distance is often expressed in time rather than in mileage because of the relative inaccessibility of some areas, we saw television as a way to take education to the people, *i.e.*, home delivered family education. Also, this system provided us more flexibility in our own academic program development since we could use staff and clients from any place accessible to any educational television studio. And in addition, the participants in the demonstration groups were given “real” help for “real” problems – we had considerable flexibility in filming, thus we did not have to force the problems to fit the conveniences of the instructional sequence and the instructor. In a like manner, we were able to obtain a professor who was a “real” Adlerian and recognized as such by his peers.

For a new and developing graduate college looking for innovative ways to deliver education to its public, and with limited staff and facilities, these considerations seemed especially attractive. Thus, we approached the administration for support of the program with the following stated objectives:

- (a) To offer a higher education course via television at a convenient viewing time which is accessible to individual students in remote and relatively inaccessible areas of West Virginia.
- (b) To provide information for teachers to assist them in understanding and guiding the behavior of students. Thus, the course may be used as: (1) a formalized graduate credit course, (2) in-service education, (3) Continuing Education Units (CEU), or (4) individually as each teacher chooses.
- (c) To assist parents and family members in understanding the dynamics of behavior and techniques for creating a more pleasant atmosphere in the home and democratic procedures in family living.
- (d) To offer a credit course via television which will have wide appeal and applicability, *i.e.*, (a) in graduate programs such as counseling and guidance, psychology, social work, etc.; (b) in undergraduate programs especially for teacher trainees; (c) for in-service education for teachers and various other agencies such as Job Corps, paraprofessional training programs, study groups, churches, etc.; and (d) for parents and family members.

the students to indicate Agreements or Disagreements with the statements. As would be expected, on the pre-test the students with previous exposure and training in Adlerian Psychology mostly agreed with the statements. About a third of the students, whose general inclinations and personal philosophies were closely aligned with the basic assumptions of Adlerian Psychology, had a relatively high level of agreement; about a third of the students agreed with many but not all of the sayings, and a low level of agreement was indicated by about a third of the students.

Although the Study Manual was used to direct the students' study, they were also asked to record each week — and to share later at our scheduled clinics — the following:

- (a) What did you learn?
- (b) How did you use what you learned?
- (c) What happened?

This proved to be a useful assignment, and some examples from their responses are shared later in this article under the heading of feedback.

The examinations are taken at home and mailed to the instructors. During our second classroom clinic we provided feedback related to the mid-term examination and clarified misconceptions and misinterpretations of Adlerian Psychology which we had received from the students. Whatever time seems needed to clarify information will again be devoted to this activity at our final clinic to be held at the end of the televised series.

Evaluation for purposes of grades seemed to be an almost impossible task without inhibiting communication and/or imposing a posture of acceptance of philosophy and practice that might not be real. To minimize this problem we will assign pass-fail grades only. It is understood that credit will be earned if the assigned work is completed. At this point this seems to be an effective way of dealing with the problem.

Feedback

The response to the television program in terms of numbers taking the course, rating of helpfulness, and usefulness of the materials presented has been positive and encouraging.

About 150 students are taking the course for credit, and a survey shows that only about ten students see the program alone. Of the others, approximately 70 see it with family members and the other 90 see it in small groups organized as community education study groups.

We have also received information from several groups that they are using the materials and program but have no members registered for credit. Examples of such groups include: (a) a family and community counseling service staff; (b) a

ming in future years, the rights of the instructor to royalties, etc., can be forestalled at this early juncture.

A decision to tape the programs and retain them on the two-inch tapes used in broadcasting was made early. The main reason for retaining the programs on two-inch tapes is utility. It is possible to transcribe from a two-inch tape to any smaller size tape, but it is not possible to transcribe from a smaller tape up to a larger size. Although it is very expensive, it adds a flexibility that cannot be maintained if tapes are erased. By retaining the two-inch tape, the programs can, and will, be revised and shown at a future date; and one-half or one-inch training tapes for classroom or closed circuit use can be made. Also duplicate copies can be made to share with other stations.

Once the programs have been taped, edited, and delivered for showing very little administrative efforts are involved. It then becomes a matter of seeing that registration details have transpired and tapes are returned and filed for future use upon completion of their viewing.

The real satisfaction in administering the program comes when you finally realize that several hundred people are benefiting from all of the myriad of details that have been worked out so they can have a family education system delivered to their home.

Program Design

With the decision to offer a three-semester-hour credit course certain limitations were imposed. To meet the academic standards, for example, a minimum number of hours are required. Our time standards were maintained with 30 one-hour televised demonstrations-lectures and three one-day clinics. The first clinic was held near the beginning of the televised series to preview the materials, discuss Adlerian concepts, answer questions, and outline course expectations and evaluations.

A manual for students provided a resume of each lesson, questions to consider, and suggested readings. The following texts were required: (1) Dreikurs, *Psychology in the Classroom*; (2) Dreikurs and Soltz, *Children: The Challenge*; and (3) Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper, *Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom*. In addition, Soltz, *Study Group Leaders Manual* was recommended for the study group leaders. Many observers of the program who are not taking the course for credit also purchased and are using the materials and many viewers attended the two clinics that have been held.

Evaluation of student progress, appropriate feedback to correct misinformation, and grading proved to be difficult but not insurmountable problems. A "Survey of Beliefs" was developed to measure student attitudes and beliefs about behavior. The "Survey" was adopted from Dreikurs Sayings¹ and asked

¹"Dreikurs Sayings" was published in the memorial issue of *Individual Psychologist*, November, 1972, pages 38-45.

“....one little girl (kindergarten) tried to have her way of doing things by crying and hitting out at others....She no longer cries and does participate since we’ve tried to give her attention for useful behavior yet make her comply with the rules.” (Early childhood education)

“My class made their own guidelines for behavior....they posted these in front of the room....they like the term guideline and follow them reasonably well – if they do forget I just stop the class for a moment or two and say, ‘I can no longer teach if **your** guidelines are not obeyed.’ It works!” (Fourth grade teacher)

“After 15 years as an autocratic teacher, I’ve learned to be democratic, and my relationship with my children has improved 100%. This course and one I took this summer gave me enough confidence to put **encouragement** techniques into everyday use.” (History teacher, junior high school)

“The parents of a problem child agreed to watch the program with me.We’ve all learned to try new ways to help him – that there are many ways other than corporal punishment.” (Ungraded primary teacher)

“....Our mornings are now pleasant....after forgetting a few things, they’re (my children) responsible about getting to school on time with the items they need.” (Nurse)

“....she was constantly talking, walking, fussing, and mumbling when asked to participate....we began ignoring misbehavior and encouraging appropriate behavior. Because she was a squeezed child I made her my secretary and referred her as one of five Special Education students to spend some time each day in a regular class. Her grades have improved and she loves to come to school – usually she comes early – and participates in the class activities. (Special education teacher)

Criticism

Most of the criticism of this program has been positive in the sense the viewers want additional help rather than change. There were requests for (a) more demonstrations with other (high school) children; (b) more examples of behavior as it occurs such as in the classroom; (c) more discussion of the behavior by more people such as parents, teachers, peers; (d) more opportunity for the viewer to interact with the teacher; (e) more workshop sessions; and several even requested (f) more written work.

Quite a few students suggested the course be required of all teachers as in-service education; some said it should be seen by all students who plan to teach; several administrators said all teachers should be required to take the course; and some viewers said we should inform more parents of the course. Several students wanted us to “require” the course to be seen with a formalized class group to “ensure” discussion. One simply stated, “It’s cool!”

county level school administrative staff; (c) a community-school counseling service (inner city); (d) a federally funded Guidance Aide Training group (high school level); (e) a church-related study group; (f) a member of school faculty groups; and (g) two undergraduate education teacher training classes. In addition, we have 21 practicum students this semester who are using the program as a vehicle for organizing and conducting family and community education. This has been made a part of the practicum requirements for counselor trainees. Interpretation from these data gives us an estimated 750 regular viewers, *i.e.*, an average of five viewers for each registered student.

These are the “cold statistics.” More exciting are the personal comments and examples which show the influence the course has had on the lives of the individuals involved. A few excerpts from a questionnaire returned about the tenth week of the series tells the story very well. Comments from a representative sample of respondents are given below.

“...My wife and I watch the program together. We don’t let Billy (our own little boy) get us involved in his attention getting behavior any more. It seems to work.” (Elementary school administrator)

“...when my 16-month-old son throws a temper tantrum I ignore it. He still cries **one minute** and then goes on and plays without getting his way.” (Mother –unemployed)

“I have a student who acted too stupid and too slow to do her lab work – and she would talk to no one. I decided to give her more encouragement and less help. I believe her goal was ‘withdrawal into disability.’ Her grades are not real good, but at least she is doing her work – and she’s talking with another girl now.” (Biology teacher – tenth grade)

“...I’ve used the technique of class discussion to help the students recognize the importance of turning off the electric typewriters and ways to remember to do so. The group is more responsible.” (Business teacher – high school)

“One of my students used foul language and threw temper tantrums whenever she got angry with the other girls. I told her, ‘If I see you acting angry I will call your name – **only once** – and you must sit down and watch for the rest of the period’No more problems.” (Junior High, physical education teacher)

“Several seniors were having trouble with mathematics....During the sessions I pointed out that it might be **rebellion** against the **order** and **exactness** required in the subject.They agreed and are now doing their assignments and getting along well with the teacher.” (High school counselor)

“...now I give instructions once very clearly and ignore subsequent requests concerning assignments. The non-listeners soon developed good listening habits.” (High school math teacher)

“My future teachers are enthusiastic about the course because it helps them understand behavior....” (College instructor)

community involvement as a solution for societal problems has been officially laid to rest.

Regardless of the validity of Moynihan's thesis, it is apparent that Federal government no longer supports the concept of community involvement as a viable solution to societal problems. Instead, the current strategies appear to be designed to divide and isolate rather than to promote reconciliation and cooperation. It is significant that at the federal level the center of power appears to be shifting from the representative bodies of Congress to the centralized control of the Executive. This is the result of the feeling of many that at this time in history "strong" leadership is needed and an even more fundamentally implicit belief that rule by groups is "inefficient" and cannot work. In a very real sense we as a society are undergoing a crisis in faith regarding the ability of groups to govern themselves in a democratic manner.

In the light of the current pessimism and the apparent belief that "good" government must rest on the use of coercion and power, the work being carried on in the Adlerian movement becomes increasingly important. In this time of discouragement, it is critical to demonstrate that people can work together in a cooperative manner and can provide models for those who are interested in organizing to deal with common problems. As Adler pointed out, the most effective way to alter the course of a society is to "prove cogently" that other and more effective ways of dealing with problems exist and that these alternatives are "more in tune with the spirit and the ideas of the community of mankind." (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, p. 454, 1956).

From the Adlerian viewpoint, man is seen as a social being and as such cannot be considered apart from the groups to which he may belong. Thus, individual problems generally become problems of the community, and the Adlerian would advocate that the involvement of the community is inevitable if one works with individuals who are experiencing life problems. Adler recognized the importance of the community and set out to establish extensive training programs for teachers and parents, the family and the school respectively being the two societal groups which have the greatest impact on the individual. In his community guidance centers in Vienna, Adler consulted with parents, giving them practical suggestions as to the remedy of various problems with children. In the United States a number of Adlerians have continued the work initiated in Vienna. In New York Nahum Shoobs trained teachers to use various group procedures, including sociodrama, to establish effective classroom atmospheres. In Chicago Rudolph Dreikurs established what was probably the first child guidance center in the United States on the Adlerian model. In so doing, Dreikurs offered counseling to families of all racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds and established the model for the centers which now operate throughout the North American continent. Following Adler's goal to develop an effective, easily understood psychology, Dreikurs wrote a number of books