

# Adlerian Aphorisms

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Aphorisms or maxims are pithy succinct statements operating on the ancient adage that brevity is the soul of wit. Maxims share with wit and humor all the techniques of the comic: Sudden non-threatening switches in perception blended with the word-magic of double and hidden meanings, condensations, and "re-solutions" with a smile. In addition to such rare euphoria, the aphorism often is a pleasant irritant which stimulates the thought process to a beneficial end, as a grain of sand can provoke an oyster to produce a priceless pearl.

Adlerians should find a natural affinity for aphorisms. One of the hallmarks of Adlerian counseling is the enlivening cohesive force of non-hostile laughter. In an atmosphere of cooperation-as-equals, such laughter and smiles betoken a sudden awareness of "mental-health-in-sickness" and "sickness-in-health," as well as an insight into the universality of the tragicomic paradox (O'Connell, in press). Simply stated, Adlerians can laugh because they see patients as active agents rather than passive victims in the universal search for significance, which they share with the therapist (O'Connell, 1969).

Adlerian diagnoses are not discouragogenic, static, Greco-Latin labels, but present brief inspiring and dynamic alternatives to, and caricatures of, constricting actions. Adlerian diagnoses are more likely to include denotative pointings to a here-and-now happening in the encounter (Shulman, 1971) or the brief metaphor or simile which becomes a thought-teaser for the counselee to entangle. Metaphors, often phrased in animal forms, are more stimulating to thinking when the self-induced movements of constriction (of self-esteem and social interest) are included. (. . . a sabretoothed canary always looking for a stronger cage . . . , "a curly-headed eagle who gets lonely on his rocky crag.") Of all the sentence completion items, "What kind of an animal would you like to be? Why?" seems to elicit patient-generated descriptions of his own life style goals in super-succinct forms e.g., "An eagle . . . can see all . . . and get in and out of situations quickly." On the other hand, for those with the factophilic disease in

which everything is complex because it must be reliably weighed, counted, and measured, aphorisms are superficial and never funny or useful.

Eight years ago I discovered a list of aphoristic Dreikurisms and years later sent it to IP for publication (Dreikurs, 1972). Dreikurisms were used to foster my class discussions. On the spur of the moment I administered the list to a class as a true and false test (O'Connell, 1974). With the advent of the encouragement lab (O'Connell, 1975a), Dreikurisms were used to stimulate democratic discussions within one lab group, while another group observed and gave feedback on what they saw happening. Encouragement labs stimulate lots of questions, especially since lab has been abbreviated from six to two days for post-ASAP workshops, and intellectual closure is generally not immediate in time. Many of these questions about the process of encouragement were answered in maxim-form. Like zen koans, the maxims point out the futility of useless questioning, turn the questioner back from external-authority to an inner search, or prompt requests to peers for group feedback.

The graduates of these encouragement labs now number in the three-figures. This list of maxims is dedicated to them in answer to their continuing questions on encouragement and "the natural high" (O'Connell, 1975b). We stimulate, teach, and act better with a finger pointed to movement and an aphorism on our lips than do the factophiliacs of other persuasions (but let us not base our esteem on this role alone).

The Buzzisms below were all responses to questions about Humanistic Identification (O'Connell, 1965) and encouragement. Hopefully they will generate further "isms" to highlight each person's responsibility for the encouragement of himself, his neighbor—and even his God (Teilhard, 1964).

### 130 Buzzisms

1. Everyone needs and gets power (influence).
2. Most people learn to get power in ways which seriously limit their self-esteem and social interest.
3. We change our actions and attitudes when we realize we *must*, can, and will avoid pain and increase our power by such transformations.
4. The only absolute control you have in life, is in expanding or constricting your self-esteem and social interest.
5. You have control over your self-esteem and social interest only when you believe you have.
6. The more strength (SE & SI) we create, the less influence (power) we strive for.

7. The greater one's strength, the more power is willingly granted by others, even though one does not seek it.

8. As Viktor Frankl has noted, purpose in life becomes a salient issue only for those granted too much or too little social power.

9. True humility follows actualization of our true strength: self-esteem and social interest.

10. The theory of humanistic identification (HI) addresses itself to the implacable issue of creating power and influence in a paradoxical world.

11. Humanistic identification unites Adlerian and Jungian humanism, depth, and optimism.

12. The calculus of life style energy:  $HI = (SE \& SI) \cdot \infty$

13. HI can only be mastered existentially.

14. The goals of HI (or "the natural high") are simply stated. On all three levels—the within, the between, and the beyond (or deeply within)—one seeks to expand self-esteem and social interest, without cost to any living thing. In effect expansion of SE and SI aids and does not decrease others.

15. Natural highs can be laid out on continua, the base line being the frequency and intensity of extrapsychic objects needed to produce the high.

16. The ultimate in the natural highs is that produced within your "inner universe" by the stimulus of "simply existing."

17. Why did my quality natural highs cease the day I started school?

18. Blame is a social plague.

19. A gossip is a dis-ease carrier.

20. If you fail to encourage, you are hyperdependent, competitive, (active or passive) and/or ignorant of human connections.

21. We become addicted to reactions of others and suffer "withdrawal" symptoms when we fail to "score."

22. No one can discourage or encourage another. We contribute "evidence" that can be used in either direction.

23. As often as we fail to make the movements of encouragement, we are showing prejudice.

24. In an authentic democracy, one models and reinforces (but does not demand) encouraging behavior.

25. Courage is active social interest.

26. If ultimately we are the only encouragers and discouragers of ourselves, perhaps we should characterize favorable and unfavorable envi-

ronments as "Encouragogenic" and "Discouragogenic" situations and actions.

27. Being alive and human means to have thwarted expectations. The trick is to not upset oneself about being upset.

28. Allow yourself the luxury of being thoroughly nervous and bored.

29. Parenthood, like any other role in life, becomes discouragogenic when one looks for power and purpose from others (e.g., your "better than"—children).

30. Without encouragogenic peers, success breeds discouragogenic conditions.

31. Thwarted expectations evoke tension without meaning. The "certainties" of negative nonsense are added by the frustrated demands of the life style.

32. The very structure of our language stimulates the discouragement of "passive victimization." We blame persons, places, and things with our litanies of "Thou hast made me so!"

33. *Instrumental* practices are concerned with inventing conditions for optimizing human strength (SE & SI). *Institutional* practices are discouragogenic, fostering the dis-ease of "innate" inferiority.

34. Isn't it tragic that for most persons professional and priestly power resides in institutionalized signs and trappings?

35. Someday I will attend to my own writings—and will become wise.

36. Yet if I become wise, I will no longer allow myself to be "loved" gratuitously. And then I must encourage while others discourage. Only then will I be really loved.

37. Fear of death is basically fear of living.

38. For an example of an optimal natural high, note Viktor Frankl's mystical experiences in the midst of death and degradation.

39. I lament the loudest when death stimulates my unresolved human paradoxes and I am foolishly trying to control their emergence.

40. Humor results from "re-solution" of human paradoxes.

41. In those times when you have "Re-solved" the three human paradoxes (#54, 55, 56), you are apt to be a humorist.

42. *St. Augustine's Paradox*—What I am doing right now is of ultimate importance yet if I die presently, nothing really changes.

43. *Tragicomic Paradox*—All our lifetime we have been creating invidious comparisons, while demanding that others love us unconditionally.

44. *Existential Paradox*—We are God-like in our ability to create meaning, but simply dust in our anal-temporality.

45. When our cherished symptoms become events we can share with anyone and see as creative and funny, they quickly disappear. Yet they can never be "Tranquilized" effectively.

46. Aren't the signs and symptoms of mental disease protestations against "too-much" or "too little" feelings and actions?

47. Our human paradoxes are reflections of the omnipresent conflicts between man's inherent worth and his equally innate worthlessness.

48. Since both poles of any human paradox are true, man must create his strength (self-esteem and social interest) and power (influence) through his self-training in a crazy, irrational world.

49. Wit and humor can be considered opposite. Humor is an attempt to expand SE and SI of self and others under stressful conditions. Wit is an effort to constrict.

50. Humor can only be judged to be so by its consequences on HI (SE & SI); in other words, after the effort, not during or before.

51. Intended type—A humor often misfires into wit in the eye of the beholder, when cooperation-as-equals is missing from the dyad.

52. We want to change our feelings, but not our behaviors and attitudes.

53. Everyone is responsible but no one is to blame.

54. One of the greatest sins of our times has been to label our tensions and boredoms as illnesses.

55. If you are searching for a quiet, simple, and safe spot, support your local insane asylum.

56. Our traditional medical model stifles psychic growth. Orthodox psychiatry offers drugs, surgery, and Greco-Latin labeling as an alternative to creative growth.

57. The mirage of control through techniques of 19th century scientism continues to mesmerize us. For those who attempt to control by counting, measuring, and weighing the universe is always too complex for comfort.

58. The universe may be eventually seen as very simple, once we see it as very strange (compared to our present mistaken certainties).

59. The most striking breakthrough in biofeedback will come when we can hook hidden negative nonsense to lights and buzzers for one to become aware of the creativity and subsequent pain of self-induced constrictions.

60. The demanding "Therapist" becomes "The-Rapist."

61. Watch *your* inner and outer movements in absolute awe and you'll enjoy all the dances of modern psychopathology before your own eyes in attenuated form.

62. We are all unique persons, but are intensely courting trouble when we demand "all the rights and privileges thereunto appertaining" to our uniqueness.

63. Two key commandments of the politics of psychiatric research: never do crucial research on your own theory and find stupid, inept control groups.

64. To be successful in psychiatric research: invent refined measurements of humanly unimportant states—and count, weigh, and measure physiological variables. Such ventures help to account for the triviality of psychiatry, psychology, and "social service."

65. In the Jungian system, the humorous attitude may be regarded as mandalic, activating archetypal energy while uniting ("re-solving") paradoxical elements of life.

66. In HI terms, "constellating archetypal energy": means inventing and accepting faith in one's worth and belonging on the transpersonal level (III).

67. With the comparable concepts of synchronicity, Gemeinschaftsgefuehl, and radial energy, the theories of Jung, Adler, and Teilhard unite, with unbounded optimism, in "re-solving" the existential paradox. What a pity that the late Ernest Becker did not incorporate these terms!

68. The implicit message of the above humanistic-futuristic triad is that man is responsible—despite (and perhaps because of) his feeble temporality—for the evolutionary advance of the infinite universe.

69. Statements such as #66 are grounds for mental hospitalization. Among other reasons, they threaten our Jonah syndromes (Maslow) and the very base of institutional structures: the self-fulfilling unworth of the disenfranchized "inferiors."

70. HI outvalues the Jungian value orientation in at least two ways. Unlike Jung, HI gives preferential treatment to certain archetypal constellations: self-esteem and social interest. In addition, much of the theory and techniques of HI are directed toward the removal of self-induced impediments to the unfolding of our infinite worth and belonging. (Level III of HI).

71. Theories are necessary for leading us to facts, yet they also blind us to further knowledge.

72. Thinking and acting dyadically is neither selfless nor selfish: It is social hedonism.

73. Reinforcing the four goals of misbehavior makes you a kind of dis-ease carrier.

74. One should be grateful for, and grow with, the grace of God rather than passively pray for it.

75. We related to the transcendent God as we do to other living "objects," with passive and active competition, hyperdependency, and/or ignorance of connections.

76. Level III is a religious question, not divorced from the intrapsychic and interpersonal realities. "Traditional" theologians are incensed by HI, while avante-garde theologians find HI stimulating and encouraging. Why? Because the former still unwittingly resort to autocratic-control methods in thinking and moving.

77. The actions of the traditionalist often reflect contempt for human potential, fear of losing control over "the peasants" and fear of losing control of thought if evolution and depth psychology are acknowledged.

78. The authentic traditionalist is one who sees the three levels of love as the hallmark of Christianity and tries to actualize this love constantly.

79. The philosophy of our government toward addictive chemical substances has always been an unworkable one: Completely stop economically-profitable sources of supply, rather than consider ways and means of self-training in natural euphoria. Billions for police defense, not one cent for the natural high!

80. One of the great stupidities of the addict is his certainty that the high resides in the external substance.

81. The addict is ignorant of the fact that the "fix" is only one method of stimulating his inner potentials.

82. The addict sacrifices his life (along with that of others) for his remarkable idolatry of substance.

83. The addict disdains the straight because of his idolatries of different objects and substances.

84. Looking down at the "straight" mesmerizes the addict into a faith that he belongs to a special group *better* than all others.

85. Thus the addict gets power and esteem through his brand of self-created constrictions.

86. Don't blame the addict. You constrict also and your blame of his *person* might add to his constriction.

87. The creative discouragement of addicts is only exceeded by that of the staff.

88. Whatever made some people in Washington think we could treat psychopathology with psychopathology?

89. *Glass Ark Cooperation*: You make the rules and give the orders. Then I'll break them and blame you.

90. *Wanted*: A fool with 250 dexterous fingers to plug 250 moving holes in the Glass Ark.

91. *The Addict's Prayer*: "Dear God, Grant me a magic external substance to overcome my weakness for a magic external substance."

92. *Addict's Addendum*: "Oh, yes, dear God—nake me feel good—immediately and—eternally—and never feel pain—make me your #1 angel on earth."

93. Any diagnosis is worse than useless if it does not attempt to give the recipient a picture of the remedial movement and self-training needed to reach actualization. What does "psychopathic deviate" and "chronic undifferentiated schizophrenia" do for the addicts' life style?

94. a. Autocrats must arrange for others to be "weak." Otherwise how can they justify their unhealthy assumptions?

b. Techniques of actualization or enlightenment proliferate and quickly fade away. It is not enough that people realize they *can* apply techniques like meditation. Techniques need theories to explain why people *must* practice them.

95. Followers of the creative geniuses of psychiatry like the quote that a midget on a giant's shoulders sees more than the giant himself. Perhaps they see more in different directions, but inveterate followers are an embarrassment to genius when they pervert his ideas into "symbols of immortality" for personal power.

96. Did you ever notice how frequently people fail to give direct answers to questions? And how frequently do we avoid-dance to the tune of passive competition?

97. *A Shocker for the humanists*: HI only expects social systems to teach belonging and connectedness. The world has not the goods and services to dole to all. Therefore part of belonging and connectedness is learning to die with grace, when the system and the social interest of our friends can no longer support us.

98. Have you noted that the psychotherapists with the most lucrative private practices seem to have the least puzzlement about, and love for, the study of persons? Or is this man-made dualism really the result of sampling errors?

99. The true inner conflict in HI theory is that between man's God-like nature (level III) and his temporal-finite nature (construed as inherent unworth).

100. All other conflicts are symptomatic of the above existential conflict (See #99). The tragicomic paradox is the contribution of man's mistaken power moves to the basic dilemma. St. Augustine's paradox represents the futuristic human question motivated by the unsolvable but "re-solvable" existential paradox.

101. Every human paradox and unconscious archaic symbol has two extreme poles. It is the reuniting them together in consciousness that gives us energy and a hopeful perspective. Don't let them split and disappear for long.

102. Any theory that has an outlook of self-creation and social responsibility finds an ally in HI. For example, Maslow's Jonah syndrome relates to the tragicomic paradox. The former is the learned motive and the latter the specific behavioral pattern which is both cause and effect of the syndrome.

103. Is it not true that any identification other than the wide humanistic one results in some degree of Jonah syndrome? Role-identification leads to development of negative identity, the shadow side, and avoidance, withdrawals, and negative nonsense: All of these moves narrow the possibility of the natural high.

104. Experiential methods of action therapy complement levels I and II. Active Imagination and the Intensive Journal are the chief growth methods of level III.

105. The only edible of which there is no shortage is experts.

106. Gentle strength (Satir) and friendly firmness (Dreikurs) are two ways of describing our most acute shortage.

107. When I examine my day and night dreams I discover that all constricting and discouraging symbolism belongs to levels I and II. The expanding and innervating are level III symbols. Progoff believes that if one stays with level I and II symbols—without diagnosing or interpreting—they will flower into level III phenomena. Very encouragogenic!

108. Only crazy men would argue with crazy men.

109. Our dis-eases will be cured when we practice cooperative-as-equals rather than sulky and sly negative nonsense.

110. Ask yourself if you're behaving like the trained Russian bear who guarded the hunter when he slept. One day a fly landed on the hunter's forehead, so the bear naturally lifted a huge boulder above his head and \_\_\_\_\_ . A glass ark is much more fragile than a hunter's head.

111. *The Addict's Hell*: An island where the only way to get a fix is through social responsibility.

112. Think of all the grant money which would be immediately available for research into natural highs if drug companies could bottle it!

113. It is a sign of the times that we look for "Deep-real" reasons for misbehavior (e.g., past, mechanical-authority-oriented).

114. I once thought people wanted happiness through knowledge. Now I realize they want a license to practice.

115. I think that even within the Adlerian framework of creative person and action orientation there are differences in focus: Adler on the cognitive and Dreikurs on the behavioral level.

116. My inhumanity, not my death, is mankind's enemy.

117. All successful psychotherapists are faith healers. They teach clients faith in self, others—and faith in a loving God.

118. The more I attempt to control life, the more paradoxes I see.

119. Our modes of generating power (influence) are polluters of self-esteem.

120. Isn't there a "positive nonsense" as well as negative nonsense? Certainly *demands* can be worded positively, but they eventually are precursors or precipitators of negative nonsense.

121. Expanded self-esteem through social interest is the only example of one's identity *not* constricting.

122. A classic example of the monadic misuse of dyads: When feedback fails because of the misuse of discouragogenic conditions. Patients do something which upsets therapist and therapist remarks "You have hostile impulses!"

123. The past is only a memory, the future is only a hope, therefore we can always in the here-and-now.

124. The encouraging, democratic, loving person often admires the self-trained creativity of the discouraged person but never wants to reinforce the process.

125. Puzzling paradoxes are paramount in the physical world as well as the existential, under the guise of waves and particles, energy and matter, fields and corpuscles. Are these relative dualisms likewise "re-solved" again and again solely and merely with smiles?

126. The non-fake-able technique: To be able to teach the constricted-one, through your verbal and nonverbal movements that self-blame increases influence but perpetuates his ambulatory hell—without having him constrict himself even more.

127. The addict needs someone to express "firm-friendly" fury about his stupid behaviors, while at the same time showing respect for his person: A skill as rare as unicorns' horns.

128. "Of the three great psychoanalytic pioneers, Adler was, without a doubt, the most modest, and is now, partly for this reason, the least read. Yet his work is of the greatest value, especially for its emphasis on the significance of dignity and self-esteem for the human spirit" (Thomas Szasz).

129. Unless one is self-actualized on Levels I and II, he does not understand the importance of the transpersonal (Level III). He is too busy playing deadly "psychic yo-yo," putting humans up and down, to contemplate the infinities within and without.

130. HI takes the Commandments of Jesus seriously: Love God (III), neighbor (II), and self (I), albeit in reverse progression. Who else takes these precepts seriously enough to consider uniting movement to such noble thoughts?

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