

In the study of personality and neurotic disturbances, early recollection usually can give us a fundamental estimate:

- 1.) of the beginning of a life history, the starting point of the personality development, his activities, relationship to others and ability to cooperate;
- 2.) of problems which confronted the patient, how he solved them, and an indication how he will meet future problems;
- 3.) of his pattern of life in its origin, his concept of himself, his main interest and purpose in life.

A SUMMER SEMINAR IN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

On July 18, 1943, about eighteen persons, ranging in age from fourteen to the middle fifties, gathered at a cottage near Chesterton, Indiana, to start a week's Seminar in Individual Psychology and Cooperative living.

It took three cottages to house them. These were located in a real farming neighborhood, with no electric lights, no telephones, no newspapers, and no running water (except the Little Calumet River flowing nearby.) This environment, a delightful change from city life, offered quiet for thought and helped to keep outside influences away. Meals and housekeeping were cooperative projects and each member was assigned a task.

From Sunday, July 18, to Saturday afternoon, July 24, Dr. Rudolph Dreikurs, Professor of Psychiatry at Chicago Medical School, and Miss Eleanor Redwin, a psychologist and child guidance worker from Chicago, were the teachers.

All morning and afternoon classes were held out-of-doors in an informal circle under shady trees. The evening session was held on the screened - in porch at a cottage.

At the first meeting each person told why he had come. Two teachers wanted to secure help in dealing with school problems; a singing teacher wanted help in advising students in their personal development; a recreation worker wanted to know how to deal with problems of delinquency; a clerk, a lawyer, a chemist, a hotel clerk and two housewives were interested in their personal adjustment. A saleslady, a writer, a school girl, a stenographer, another teacher and another housewife wanted to combine a vacation with a deeper study of Individual Psychology.

Dr. Dreikurs stressed the opportunity that was ours to think through the problems of life together. He asked each to be earnestly **unafraid**-- to give all he could to this week of cooperative living.

One student suggested that we follow the plan of "Mutual Criticism" as developed by members of the Oneida Colony in the 1850's. By this plan "any member wishing to be criticized submitted his name. His character became the subject of special scrutiny by all members from then until the next meeting when his 'trial' took place. At that time each member was called on to specify as frankly as possible, everything commendable or objectionable in the character and conduct of the person specified. Thus he had the advantage of a many-sided mirror."

This suggestion stirred up considerable criticism and brought forth the comment that the person who criticizes reveals as much about himself as he does about the person who is being criticized. Finally all but two people decided that they desired criticism at the end of the week.

With this start, we were off. Each morning Dr. Dreikurs discussed psychological theory on such subjects as: Social Adjustment, Life Style, Inferiority Feelings, Neurosis, Work, Love, Sex, Marriage. Each afternoon Miss Redwin talked on the educational application of the morning lecture, and each evening both instructors helped us make the personal application of the day's theme. For instance, when family constellations were discussed, each one described his family background and placement, whether he was the oldest child, middle child, youngest

child, or only child, and what that meant in his development. Under school experiences, each told of his first day in school. The freedom and the willingness with which one and all participated in open and frank discussion of his personal life experiences was truly amazing. As the week progressed, the emotional tension increased until we reached a natural climax when each person's life style was interpreted and discussed. At this time mutual criticisms were given most informally and naturally.

Dr. Harry Sicher, Professor of Anatomy at Loyola University Dental School and personal friend of Dr. Alfred Adler, arrived on Saturday afternoon, July 23, and led the remaining discussions of the Seminar. He showed the relationship of Individual Psychology to religion, to science, to economics, to race prejudices, to the other psychological schools. He led us from our personal lives and problems to our larger social life and to the problems of our civilization. Upon this note the Seminar ended.

As a result of the group work we experienced during this week, certain facts were imprinted indelibly on our minds. For one thing, the best-intentioned parents, if ignorant of psychological principles or unable to apply them, cause their children myriad problems and make life very hard for them. After all the confessions at the Seminar, it seemed as if parents were a menace rather than a help to their young. Also, we were impressed with the fact that everyone, no matter how smooth and successful his life may appear on the surface, has many difficult personal problems to solve; and we were more than convinced that we can definitely help each other solve these problems if we face them frankly in group discussion under adequate guidance.

A few highlights from some of the notebooks follow:

"We should never talk about problem children but about children with problems."

"No handicap in itself means anything; it's what we do about it."

"If you are happy, you forget about yourself."

"We have no 'nervous' people, but people who are maladjusted."

"Treat a child as you would a person whom you met for the first time at a party."

"Eliminate fighting and eliminate giving in, then you are ready to do something about the situation."

"Man is not a victim of sex but a master of it."

"Inferiority feeling is a sense of not belonging."

"Intelligence is the outgrowth of cooperation."

Some of the members' comments on the Seminar, which have been heard since it was over and we have had some time to digest the experience, are very interesting. "It was so real -- the fact that all participated gave a unity to the proceedings." "It was the most stimulating week of my life." "My confidence was strengthened by the fact that I could accept and in turn be accepted by so many human beings." "The Seminar was particularly helpful to me because I haven't chosen my life work yet or my life mate. Having older adults with young people gives them a certain perspective and balance that would be impossible otherwise."

There seems to be a unanimous wish to repeat the experience of another Seminar next summer, and a unanimous "Thank you" to all participants -- the teachers, organizers and students alike.

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