

Parenting from an Adlerian Perspective

Elternschaft aus individualpsychologischer Perspektive

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Abstract

Parenting is a fundamental task around the world. It also represents crucial human relationships. In many modern nations the adults who do parenting have little preparation or training, and thus they rely on memory of their own childhood and how their parents raised them. In many cases, the new parents seek to alter the methods their parents used and thus rely on what the current culture and contemporary experts' advice. It is important that Adlerians are in the forefront for providing the expertise guidance.

Kurzzusammenfassung

Elternschaft ist weltweit eine fundamentale Aufgabe, die prägende menschliche Beziehungen darstellt. In vielen Nationen erfahren Erwachsene, die Eltern sind, eine nur geringe Vorbereitung und können daher nur auf die Erinnerungen ihrer eigenen Kindheit und ihre Erziehung durch ihre Eltern zurückgreifen. Häufig suchen die Eltern von heute alternative Erziehungsmethoden zu der ihrer Eltern und verlassen sich dabei auf die aktuelle kulturelle Situation und auf den Rat zeitgenössischer Experten. Es ist von besonderer Wichtigkeit, dass Adlerianer hier eine führende Rolle/Position einnehmen und ihre Expertise zur Elternschaft helfend zur Verfügung stellen.

Parenting is one of the fundamental tasks of adults in all societies, insofar that all societies have children and bring forth a new generation. In some societies the parenting task is shared by multiple adults, but in societies in which families consist of only the parents and their offspring, parenting is an individualized task. Parents need to nurture both the physical and emotional well-being of their young, and often they are poorly prepared for these challenges.

Adlerian psychology is oriented towards improving the well-being of all. From the early days of his work, Adler (1930, 1933/1963) understood the importance of training parents and teachers to help children to be courageous and to contribute to improve the lives of the community. For children to grow up to be good citizens, they need courage (for meeting the challenges of life) and Gemeinschaftsgefühl (Social Interest) (Adler, 1933/1939). Adults when raising their children need to know how to help their children to develop these attributes.

Dreikurs, who, like Adler, was a practicing psychiatrist, was a younger colleague of Adler's in Vienna. They worked tirelessly to improve the lives of their patients and of the community. They consulted in schools to help teachers understand individual and group dynamics and to improve the lives of their students. After Dreikurs came to the USA, he developed community child guidance centers (Dreikurs, 1943, 1944, 1949a, 1949b, 1951) based on the model developed by Adler in Vienna. In these community centers, teachers and parents learn democratic leadership ways for the benefit of the children's lives. Dreikurs (1948; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964) wrote books to help parents understand their children and to help them grow into productive, caring, and engaged citizens.

Through Adlerian methods and principles parents and teachers learn how to encourage the child (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963). Parents are leaders in the family (Ferguson, Hagaman, Grice, & Peng, 2006), and in this leadership role they strongly impact the dynamics in the family. Depending on the style of leadership the parents utilize, the children can either develop strong Social Interest and attitudes of collaboration and cooperation or they can form competition and strive on the vertical rather than the horizontal plane (Sicher, 1955) of equality and contribution.

Dreikurs (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1999) recognized that the work of Kurt Lewin (1948) on leadership styles had a bearing on how parents raise their children. The democratic style (Ferguson, 2004), of freedom with order, teaches the child mutual respect and cooperation in contrast to the autocratic style, of order without freedom, and in contrast to the laissez faire style, or freedom without order. People often confuse the laissez faire style with the democratic style (Ferguson, et al, 2006). When parents and teachers make this confusion it leads to many problems in families and in the larger community, with children focusing on their own rights and privileges without honoring the rights of others.

Adlerians, by their full understanding of individual and group dynamics, are able to be in the forefront of providing guidance to modern families. Adler and Dreikurs set the paths that are now available for Adlerian psychologists, psychotherapists, teachers, counselors, and social workers as well as the public at large to assure that children and the next generation function with high courage and Gemeinschaftsgefühl.

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Univ.-Prof. Dr. Eva Dreikurs Ferguson is a psychology professor at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville. In her rich publishing activity, she is dedicated to a variety of topics. Among her best-known works is "Discipline without tears" (Dreikurs, R., Cassel, P., Ferguson, ED (2004)), a revised edition of the original edition, written by her father Rudolf Dreikurs and Pearl Cassel and translated in several languages, also in German.

The current research interests of Univ.-Prof. Dr. Eva Dreikurs Ferguson focus on the interaction and mutual influences of cultural aspects, values in parenting and cognitive processes.

Eva Dreikurs Ferguson is also the chairperson of the International Committee of the Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes (ICASSI), which takes place every year in another country.

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Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Eva Dreikurs Ferguson ist Psychologieprofessorin an der Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville. In ihrer reichen Publikationstätigkeit widmet sie sich einer Vielfalt von Themenbereichen. Zu ihren bekanntesten Werken gehört „Discipline without tears“ (Dreikurs, R., Cassel, P., Ferguson, E. D. (2004)), eine von ihr überarbeitete Neuauflage der Originalausgabe, verfasst von ihrem Vater Rudolf Dreikurs und Pearl Cassel. Das Buch ist in mehreren Sprachen, auch in Deutsch, erschienen.

Die aktuellen Forschungsinteressen von Univ.-Prof.ⁱⁿ Dr.ⁱⁿ Eva Dreikurs Ferguson zentrieren sich auf die Interaktion und wechselseitigen Einflüsse von kulturellen Aspekten, Werthaltungen in der Elternschaft und kognitiven Prozessen.

Eva Dreikurs Ferguson ist außerdem die Leiterin des Internationalen Komitees der Adlerian Summer Schools und Institute (ICASSI), die jedes Jahr in einem andern Land stattfinden.