

(1787) 12/16)

Organizations/Business

Eva Dreikurs Ferguson and Linda J. Page, Column Editors

In the working environment, relations among people can be far more complex than in other spheres of human life. The focus of this column is to show how the ideas and methods of Individual Psychology are useful in the workplace and to compare Adlerian methods with other approaches. Individual dynamics and organizational and group dynamics issues are discussed in detail. Potential contributors are encouraged to submit manuscripts, including case studies, illustrating the application of Individual Psychology in business and organizational settings. Send manuscripts to Linda J. Page, Adler School of Professional Coaching, 48 St. Clair Ave West, Ste 1000, Toronto, Ontario, M4V 3B6 CANADA.

Work Relations That Enhance the Well-Being of Organizations and Individuals

Eva Dreikurs Ferguson

Adlerian principles apply to the workplace in many ways that improve human relations significantly among peers and between management and workers. Basic principles found to be effective in family life and in schools, such as how to use encouragement instead of rewards and punishments and how to understand as well as help to redirect mistaken goals, have been found to improve work relations.

Encouragement and Mutual Respect Rather Than Rewards and Punishments

Today there is evidence for a trend away from using punishments in the workplace in preference toward the use of rewards for control and modification of work performance, and for Adlerians this can be hailed as a more

The Journal of Individual Psychology, Vol. 62, No. 1, Spring 2006
©2006 by the University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819

Editorial office located in the College of Education at Georgia State University.

Handwritten notes on the left margin, including the number 2006 and some illegible scribbles.

humane and therefore improved approach. Adlerians do not advocate rewards or punishments as methods of control, but to the extent that the replacement of punishments with rewards moves the motivational atmosphere at work from one of threat and fear to one of incentives and "success" strivings, the change in emphasis is an improvement over the old methods of rule.

Contemporary managers have used rewards because awards, pay, and bonuses are easy to administer. They are financially valuable to employees. There are also nonfinancial rewards, like praise. The literature on intrinsic motivation compared to extrinsic motivation has shown that rewards can lead to very negative results (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Ferguson, 2000), but other literature has shown that rewards can improve performance output. Known as reinforcements in the writings of Skinner (1948, 1989), rewards and incentives have been applied to countless areas of human functioning.

Because the use of rewards and punishments represents an emphasis on "control" that is characterized by an autocratic process (Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2004), in an era of increasing democratization in all spheres of human interaction there is a demonstrable need for alternative methods. As Dreikurs (1971/1998) pointed out, punishment and rewards have no place in a democracy, in which intrinsic motivation needs to guide the individual into prosocial actions and thoughts. Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (2000) and Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper (1998) describe the essential concepts and methods involved in the process of encouragement, which has the goal of helping individuals to believe they have value and are capable and that they can contribute as equals within and to society.

In his book *Social Equality*, Dreikurs (1971/1998) points out that not only are we mistaken when we attempt to "control" others, but we deal with ourselves in misguided ways when using fear, criticism, and punishment as methods of steering our own behavior. Although rewards when used with others, or when used in our own attempt to bribe ourselves toward certain types of behaviors, can steer actions in short-term ways, for long-term effective functioning a completely different strategy is required. Positive coping methods are required in a democratic society in which individuals seek to contribute and to be responsible, to respect self and others, and to build upon a set of values that enhances one's own and others' well-being and overall functioning.

Kohlberg (1994; Kohlberg & Higgins, 1987), who told me at a colloquium in fall 1986 that he had been influenced by the writings of Adlerians, described a "preconventional" type of morality. It is the earliest stages of a child's moral development, of "being good" or "doing the right thing" in order to avoid punishment or to receive rewards. When workplace punishments or rewards are used to modify work behavior, they will be effective if

the concerned individuals share this type of thinking and values, but they will not lead to "good behavior" when the participating individuals' cognitions and values involve concern for the group welfare and focus on goals of contribution by all members of the organization.

Rather than blame and punishment, bribes and rewards, organizations need to heighten all individuals' courage in dealing with immediate and long-term tasks and with long-term relationships. Courage means being willing to learn from one's mistakes, and encouragement leads to heightening of courage. When encouragement is used, individuals increase their ability to improve actions, heighten their contributions, and embrace rather than react defensively to life experiences. They use "mistakes" and failures as a means of learning, not as a source of blame or humiliation.

Learning to respect ourselves and others is essential if cooperative problem-solving is to occur in the workplace. Adlerians have pointed out that when individuals use democratic processes they neither fight nor give in (Dreikurs et al., 1998): They neither seek to dominate others nor allow others to dominate them in terms of autocratic rule. Rewards and punishments reflect external control. Mutual respect is violated by methods of external control, and rewards and punishments are inappropriate in a context that maximizes mutual respect.

Revenge and Power Goals vs. Organizational Goals

Adlerian theory and methods can increase human well-being in partner relationships (Logan, Kern, Curlette, & Trad, 1993), schools (Dreikurs et al., 2004), and in the workplace (Ferguson, 2003; Miranda, Goodman, & Kern, 1996). When individuals feel belonging in relationships, they strive to contribute and cooperate. When they feel inadequate and not of value, they often strive for mistaken personal goals in relationships (Grunwald & McAbee, 1998). Common in the workplace are strivings for the mistaken goal of personal power or personal revenge. Personal power is distinct from organizational power. In large organizations, a hierarchy of power and accountability exists. When cooperation and mutual respect are the basis for decisions, problem-solving, and negotiations, the persons with organizational power do not use that power for asserting personal power. They do not confuse organizational power with personal power. Unfortunately, many managers in organizations make that confusion.

The mistaken goals of personal power and revenge are pursued by managers as well as subordinates when they believe that personal value will be gained when power or revenge is obtained (Ferguson, 2004). Peers in co-worker relationships as well as managers in interaction with subordinates

have pursued mistaken personal goals that have been detrimental to the well-being of an organization. A feeling of belonging and value continue to elude individuals pursuing these mistaken goals, and in the process the welfare of the organization is diminished. Typical behaviors observed in organizations are the use of punishment as retribution when individuals high in organizational dominance misuse their organizational power. They fail to distinguish the needs of the organization and their own personal needs, and they confuse *organizational goals with personal goals*. Many decisions and actions that have led to destructive consequences can be documented in contemporary society as well as in past eras, when persons with organizational power have inflicted punishment or harm or preferential rewards and benefits for personal goals rather than organizational goals.

Conflict resolution requires mutual respect (Dreikurs et al., 1998), and problem-solving in organizations requires encouragement. Steps for establishing mutual respect and for utilizing encouragement have been described extensively (e.g., Dreikurs et al., 1998; Dreikurs et al., 2004), and members of organizations can learn these. The value systems of organizations can be changed from autocratic to democratic, and members of organizations can come to recognize their personal mistaken goals. Adlerian principles and methods help provide criteria and processes for enhancing organizational morale as well as personal well-being, and encouragement is essential for coping with stressful circumstances that inevitably arise in the complexities of contemporary life.

References

- Deci, E. L., Eghrari, H., Patrick, B. C., & Leone, D. R. (1994). Facilitating internalization: The self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Personality, 62*, 119–142.
- Dinkmeyer, D., & Dreikurs, R. (2000). *Encouraging children to learn*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Dreikurs, R. (1998). *Social equality: The challenge of today*. Chicago: Adler School of Professional Psychology. (Original work published 1971)
- Dreikurs, R., Cassel, P., & Ferguson, E. D. (2004). *Discipline without tears: How to reduce conflict and establish cooperation in the classroom* (rev. ed.). Toronto: Wiley.
- Dreikurs, R., Grunwald, B. B., & Pepper, F. (1998). *Maintaining sanity in the classroom: Classroom management techniques* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.
-

Ferguson, E. D. (2000). *Motivation: A biosocial and cognitive integration of motivation and emotion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ferguson, E. D. (2003). Work relationships, lifestyle, and mutual respect. *The Journal of Individual Psychology, 59*, 501–506.

Ferguson, E. D. (2004). *Adlerian theory: An introduction*. Chicago: Adler School of Professional Psychology.

Grunwald, B. B., & McAbee, H. V. (1998). *Guiding the family: Practical counseling techniques* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.

Kohlberg, L. (1994). Stage and sequence: The cognitive-developmental approach to socialization. In B. Puka (Ed.), *Defining perspectives in moral development: A compendium* (Vol. 1, pp. 1–134). New York: Garland Publishing.

Kohlberg, L., & Higgins, A. (1987). School democracy and social interaction. In W. M. Kurtines & J. L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Moral development through social interaction* (pp. 102–128). Oxford, England: Wiley.

Logan, E., Kern, R., Curlette, W., & Trad, A. (1993). Couples adjustment, life-style similarity, and social interest. *Individual Psychology, 49*, 456–467.

Miranda, A. O., Goodman, E. D., & Kern, R. M. (1996). Similarities between social interest and contemporary definitions of corporate leadership. *Individual Psychology, 52*, 261–269.

Skinner, B. F. (1948). *Walden two*. New York: Macmillan.

Skinner, B. F. (1989). *Recent issues in the analysis of behavior*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Copyright of Journal of Individual Psychology is the property of University of Texas Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.