



Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Volume 19
Issue 2 January 1979

Article 15

1-1-1979

We Suggest

Eleanor Buelke

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Buelke, E. (1979). We Suggest. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 19 (2). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol19/iss2/15

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



WE SUGGEST

Eleanor Buelke

Turner, Janet, and Pew, W. L.

The Courage To Be Imperfect

New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1978. P. xv + 412.

Throughout the course of history, there have been those who have coupled courage with creative insight and intelligence and, in so doing, have altered the direction of that course. The more that others learn about the circumstances under which persons dare to risk being "incorrect," and their strengths and knowledge, the stronger others may become in steadfast commitment to a staunch, consistent portrayal of their convictions. This book about Dr. Rudolph Dreikurs and his work bring him to life, illuminating and animating his concept of man as "purposive, ever striving for growth, value, and meaning in this world, and self-determining in his movement through life."

The social upheavals we are witnessing today, in which traditional values are being challenged, often abandoned, had been quite accurately predicted by Alfred Adler in Europe more than half a century ago. It is his socially based, holistic view of mankind, in which life is seen as an evolutionary process, as movement, growth, and change, that Dreikurs transplanted to the logical setting of the democratic institutions of America. Most of the significant schools of psychological thought flourishing in the United States today are based on Adlerian views of human development and functioning, developed and refined by Dreikurs into a teachable system, with pragmatic applications in all forms of human interaction.

Part I of this volume tells of the life of Dreikurs from birth in Vienna, through his youth-to-manhood years and medical training there, in a time of social ferment and prejudice towards Jews, into his experiences and association with Adler and his pioneer work in social psychiatry. It concludes with his departure from Vienna in 1937 as political events began to cause increasing restrictions upon professional activities and individual freedoms. With this step, he had assured his survival from the holocaust soon to follow in Europe, to become part of the wave of "illustrious immigrants," many of Europe's greatest scientists and intellectuals who were to escape the madness of Hitler by coming to America.

Part II related Dreikurs's many difficulties as he attempts to establish himself professionally in a rather overwhelming, English-speaking milieu in the Chicago area. Constantly fighting to maintain his optimism and zeal in transplanting the Adlerian model of psychiatric treatment against growing influence of Freudian psychoanalysis, he is shown to have great courage in the face of persistent disappointment and setback. Through his work at Hull house, with schools nearby, and in hospitals in and around Chicago,

he begins to widen his activities and sphere of influence, continuing to lecture, to write, and to act against prevailing doctrines for improvement of individual and group behavior. He never wavers in his advocacy of health programs aimed at prevention of mental illness through public education and community psychiatry, rather than the inappropriate doctrines of behaviorism and psychoanalysis, both of which Dreikurs considered to be counterproductive to principles of democracy. The decision he ultimately makes, to focus his tremendous energy on the "formidable and entrenched institution of American public education," has had far-reaching consequences. It has left long-range effects on educational practices throughout our country. At that time, it was to change the thrust of his professional career.

Part III follows Dreikurs in his work directly with teachers and educators. His subsequent lectures, writings, participation in many psychological associations, and personal contacts as a teacher in Chicago Medical School have influenced thinking and attitudes in many social and educational institutions here and afar. He had always been a step ahead of his time and, today, remains a major contributor to the fields of psychology and psychiatry, to teacher education, and to the self-respect and personal dignity of countless mothers, fathers, and children who benefit from his conceptions of humanistic counseling and therapy.

Some practical statements of Dreikurs's philosophy have implications for teachers with students of any age:

1. Change in behavior is the only reliable clue to real self-insight; self-deception results because our opinions about ourselves are based on "thoughts, desires, and emotions [and] fail to give sufficient consideration [to] our *actions* to what we *do*;"
2. To understand behavior is to be fully aware, not only of the facts, but also of their relationship to other ideas and facts, and, also, to the implications; only realization of implications gives a solid basis for practical action;
3. Establishing the real problem situation can be done more quickly through feedback received from the one with a problem than from endless fact-gathering about the situation;
4. Problems should be viewed as stemming from *interpersonal*, rather than *intrapersonal* difficulties; with treatment through the practice of confronting children in a frank, noncondescending discussion of purposes for the behavior;
5. All behavior is purposeful; misbehavior of children has one or more of four distinctive goals: (1) to gain undue attention; (2) to demonstrate power or defiance; (3) to seek revenge or retaliation; or (4) give up in complete discouragement. Knowing which goal is operating for a specific behavior may give insight into its seriousness and indicate how to handle the situation;
6. In a relationship, love is fine and necessary, but respect is even more important. The best combination is love and respect. Love is the consequence of a good relationship— not its cause; and

7. There is a necessity for all to live together as equals, with dignity for all, instead of engaging in deadly rivalry and competition for power or superiority.

Throughout his years of work in America, Dr. Dreikurs held to the belief that it is “the people who will ultimately decide whether we ameliorate or exacerbate the social problems and uncertainties we face,” and that the “only practical solution is greatly to increase the psychological understanding and skill of the citizenry, particularly parents and teachers.” On two separate occasions in his speaking, he counseled his listeners with the following potent phrases:

... the persons most capable of acquiring real self-knowledge are those who have the “courage to be imperfect” to risk making mistakes, to risk the uncertainty of living and doing, thereby overcoming their own safeguarding tendencies toward self-deception.

To be human does not mean to be right, does not mean to be perfect. To be human means to be useful, to make contributions not for oneself, but for others— to take what there is and to make the best out of it.

Insight into their real selves, fortitude to function at their best regardless of what it is, with joy in the functioning, resolution to make contributions for others—these are vital concepts of goals sought by courageous teachers everywhere, for themselves and for their students.