

## LYDIA SICHER AS THERAPIST

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*Introductory Comment:* Lydia Sicher (1890-1962) was one of the outstanding Adlerian practitioners. Those who knew her in her work speak with great reverence and gratitude for what they have learned from her. But aside from being a prolific reviewer of books she wrote very little, and practically nothing on therapy. We therefore consider the following account, written from personal experience of her style of Adlerian psychotherapy, a unique and important document.

The account is by the prominent contemporary psychotherapist, George R. Bach, who has developed his own approach to psychotherapy which he calls *Creative Aggression*. In a letter to Walter O'Connell, Bach strongly approved of O'Connell's "bias" ideas and "natural high" techniques, and added: "Incidentally, the late Lydia Sicher, a former assistant to Adler, was my analyst years ago—and [I was] influenced by dialectical Hegelian [thinking in her] approach to psychotherapy." Realizing the significance of these lines, we asked Bach to elaborate, and he was good enough to reply with the present account.

Sicher is described as "never pulling her punches," and other Adlerians may proceed similarly. Adler himself certainly used such tactics, but we believe his general tone was perhaps softer. He spoke of submitting the patient to a "mild barrage of questions," and always emphasized "the necessary tact, art, and fellow-feeling so as not to put the patient to shame for his mistake" (*Superiority and Social Interest*, 1964, pp. 285 and 284).—*H. L. Ansbacher*

While I was on the graduate faculty of psychology of the University of Southern California in the early 1950s, I sought further post-doctoral training as well as personal guidance from the late Adler student, Lydia Sicher. During 2 years of working with her, we had many occasions to discuss theoretical issues.

I myself was formerly an assistant to Kurt Lewin and was very attracted to the idea of the constructive, growth-stimulating functions of conflict. Lydia reinforced me in my search of evolving clinical methods to put my "pro-conflict" ideas into practice, especially in group psychotherapy and couples and family therapy.

Somehow she linked mine, Adler's, and her own views, and traced them all back to Hegel's fundamental philosophical notions of a

creative synthesis emerging from conflict and that this synthesis was not so much a "resolution" in terms of a conflict-free state, but rather a stimulus for further growth, as part of a continuous dialectic process. Lydia practiced this on other trainee-patients and me by never flinching, never pulling her punches, being always ready to challenge the truth or social reality or ethical responsibility of any of my thoughts and actions and ideas which I would present to her during the "dialectic" of her type of therapy.

This was not a relaxation-type therapy, no "unconditional positive regard" stance on her part. It was stressful therapy, but never unproductive, always real, genuine and truth oriented. Of course this would hurt. But the hurt became a signal for corrective change. I did not always like it, but on retrospection, after 25 years have passed, I am indebted still to a significant growth-stimulating process. My own creativity started there and then, even my contribution of central significance: Showing people how to utilize conflict and aggression creatively, described in six published books and numerous articles, lectures and workshops. The "creative aggression" approach received some germination from Lydia Sicher's way of conducting Adlerian therapy and professional education.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE R. BACH

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