



The Courage to be Disliked

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Abstract

Originally written in Japanese by Ichiro Kishimi and Fumitake Koga, *The Courage to Be Disliked* is a book that talks about perennial life questions and the liberation of the mind. Incorporating concepts from Adlerian psychology, this is done through a Socratic dialogue in which the philosopher converses with the youth. Divided into five “conversations,” this book is filled with wise gems, in a non-complicated and very accessible manner, that can be utilized in personal and professional areas. This non-fiction book has sold over three million copies and has been translated into many languages. Because of its very relatable and universal values, it is becoming a modern classic. Many readers even describe the book as transformative and paradigm-shifting. This book is highly recommended to young people and professionals in the arena of counseling, teaching, and social work.

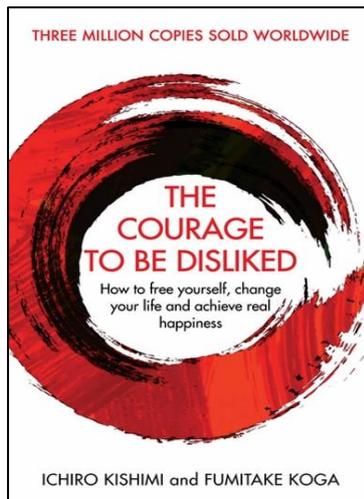
Keywords: Adlerian Psychology, Interpersonal Relationships, Counseling, Courage, Socratic Dialogue.

The Courage to be Disliked

Öz

Orjinali Japon yazar Ichiro Kishimi tarafından yazılan *The Courage to be Disliked*, daimi yaşam soruları ve düşünce özgürlüğünden bahseden bir kitaptır. Adler psikolojisinin kavramlarını içeren bu kitap, filozofun gençlerle sohbet ettiği Sokratik bir diyalog yoluyla oluşturulmuştur. Beş sohbete bölünmüş olan bu kitap, bilge mücevherlerle doludur, karmaşık olmayan ve erişilebilir şekilde kişisel ve profesyonel alanlarda kullanılabilir niteliktedir. Kurgusal olmayan bu kitap, üç milyondan fazla satmış ve birçok dile çevrilmiştir. Bu çok yönlü ve evrensel değerlerinden dolayı modern bir klasik haline gelmektedir. Hatta birçok okuyucu kitabı, dönüştürücü ve paradigma değiştirici olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu kitap danışmanlık, öğretim ve sosyal hizmet alanındaki gençlere ve profesyonellere şiddetle tavsiye edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adler Psikolojisi, Kişilerarası İlişkiler, Danışmanlık, Cesaret, Sokratik Diyalog.



Kishimi, I., & Koga, F. (2019). *The courage to be disliked*. London: Allen & Unwin. 288 p.

What is happiness? How do I view life? Should I let others do the work for me? How do I treat my subordinates? Why should I not be bothered when others do not like me? These are some questions that one might encounter throughout the dialogue—the style of this book—between a youth and a philosopher. Contrary to the title, the content is not just simply about braving the dislike of others, but it goes more than that because it branches to several topics, just as how normal conversations are amorphous and free-flowing.

Perennial questions about life, self, and relationships are given answers through the lens of Adlerian psychology. Divided into five “conversations,” this book is filled with wise gems that can be utilized in personal and professional areas. Throughout the dialogue, the philosopher helps the youth in liberating his thinking. This plainspoken book was written originally in Japanese by Ichiro Kishimi, who is a philosopher, counselor, and translator of several books that relate to Adlerian psychology; and Fumitake Koga, who is an author of many books under the non-fiction category.

The First Night: Deny Trauma contends that many people do not change because they look at their past and use it as a defense of what they are doing at present. This is etiology, attributing causes to a phenomenon. When everything operates in such a manner, it ends up with determinism, where the future cannot be modified because of past occurrences. Adlerian psychology says that causes are not much important to think of; instead, people must pay attention to teleology, the attribution of purpose to a phenomenon. Furthermore, it states that “trauma is denied.” The self is determined not by the experience itself but by the meaning a person assigns to it. It does not mean that people are not influenced by abuse or calamity. The point, however, is that “life is not something or someone gives; it is what a person chooses.” Personality and disposition are plastic and can change at any time, regardless of the environment a person is in. People constantly select their views and lifestyles so they can make persistent decisions to change toward their liking. To change, people need courage.

The Second Night: All Problems Are Interpersonal Relationship Problems focuses on the role of interpersonal relationships in our lives. Emphasis is given to the inevitability of people being hurt in relationships. Meanwhile, loneliness and being alone are differentiated. Loneliness results from a deep sense of exclusion from a group or society. To be lonely, one must feel that he is outcasted from others. On the other hand, one can become alone and still be happy. Speaking of loneliness, it may be gotten from the feeling of inferiority, in which objective facts about oneself are assigned to lower value in comparison with others. For example, a person subjectively interprets his height as inferior to his colleagues and it causes a problem for him. The good news is since it is about subjectivity, it can be changed depending on the will and how a person frames it.

Discussed also is another concept called the pursuit of superiority, which refers to the desire of wanting to improve. This can be unhealthy for someone when he thinks that life is a competition, and he should overpower his contemporaries. When the focus is on winning and dominating others, he does not become true to his values. He may not be a loser in a physical sense, but he will not be at peace because he views other people’s success as a defeat for him. A caveat must be made—the pursuit of superiority and feeling of inferiority is not negative per se. They can become constructive mechanisms.

When people utilize these human tendencies wisely, this can promote flourishing and growth. A healthy feeling of inferiority comes from comparing previous and present selves to ideals, leading to reflection. This is not about comparing oneself with others. The same goes with the healthy pursuit of superiority which can be demonstrated when one wants to become superior to his previous state, desiring positive action. When one does not want to move or try to undertake a single effort to improve himself anymore, it is already an inferiority complex, which is an abnormal state of mind. Pinpointed also is removing the lenses of winning and losing. Through this, people can begin to become genuine to themselves.

Also, discussed are the three categories of life tasks that are pivotal in successful interpersonal relationships. These life tasks are friendship, work, and love. They help one be able to live as a social being. Therefore, one must not fall for the life lie which refers to the excuse that one gives to himself so that he will not worry about his other life tasks. An example is a businessman who is focusing so much on work and neglecting love tasks, rationalizing that he cannot give much time to his family because of the abundance of work that is necessary for the family's sustenance. People who are dwelling in life lie need to regain courage.

The Third Night: Discard Other People's Tasks emphasizes Adler's advice that one must not be wary of the expectations of other people. Being recognized by others is nice but not necessary. The danger of this is a person may become a slave of others to the extent that he can lose his own authentic self. Many people also suffer because of wanting to be recognized by other people. For example, a person does the task of another to a degree that the former misses his important affairs and undertakings. Therefore, the separation of tasks is very important.

One must know whose task it is by knowing who will receive the result by the choice made. One must set boundaries and let others do their respective tasks. If someone always tries to intervene in other tasks, the latter will not learn and will avoid future challenges. In a gist, real freedom comes from being disliked; it is a symbol that one is living his own principles. However, that does not mean engaging in what is unethical and immoral undertakings.

The Fourth Night: Where The Center of The World Is reiterates the value of separation of tasks—a mode of thinking which unravels the complex entanglement of one's interpersonal relationships. If people see others as comrades, not as enemies, it leads to a community feeling which makes life a refuge. A shift from self-interest to social interest is the starting point to having a community feeling. People who cannot undertake separation of tasks are self-centered. They worry about what others would say about them. Hence, it is more of attachment to self than concern for others. These people think that they are the center of the world, meaning they are interested in how others can serve them. They want others to satisfy their expectations, and when not, they become insulted and view others as enemies.

It is explained that the concept of community goes beyond the conventional assumption; it involves the past and the future, the inanimate objects, and even the universe. It is infinite. Hence, people truly are not alone—they are connected in many ways even to those that cannot be seen. Furthermore, another point discussed is praising and rebuking. These are forms of manipulation that builds vertical relationship. It is hierarchic and views a person. Meanwhile, the horizontal relationship has this concept of "equal but not the same." Here, a person should not intervene with someone's tasks, instead, encouragement should be used. It means to help someone regain courage in facing tasks. The true sense of words can be gotten from the feeling of being beneficial to someone or the community.

The Fifth Night: To Live in Earnest in the Here and Now pinpoints that the goal of interpersonal relationships is community feeling which has three qualities—(1) self-acceptance, (2) confidence in others, and (3) contribution to others. First, self-acceptance refers to accepting one's vulnerabilities and incapacities. It is different from self-affirmation which suggests to oneself that he can do something, though it is beyond his capabilities. Secondly, confidence in others pertains to believing unconditionally in people without regard for oneself. This should be delineated from the trust, which can be gotten from set conditions. And lastly, contribution to others means giving service to others; however, it does not mean self-sacrifice. Emphasized also is the view of labor which should not be seen as a means of earning money but as a means of contributing to others. This reinforces existential worth. Moreover, the two objectives for behavior are to be self-reliant and to live in harmony with others. Pinpointed is the importance of cultivating harmony of life to reinforce genuine living. Those who lack that hastily generalize a single encounter. For example, a workaholic who avoids other obligations.

To be truly happy, one must have a feeling of contribution, visible or not, and it should be coupled with freedom from the desire for recognition. Humans have an organic desire to pursue an ideal state. There are also who undertake the pursuit of easy superiority, where they strive to become especially bad and engage in problem behavior just to be noticed. Both are done to transcend from normal to a special state. Explained also is that normal does not mean incapable. It takes courage to be normal; whether one has achieved lofty goals or not, they are the same. Life is a series of moments. It is engerial, meaning the process itself is the result. It is not kinetic where there is a starting and an endpoint. Hence, paying attention to the here and now conscientiously is pivotal. Meanwhile, the greatest life lie is thinking that the here and now is a preparatory stage for something else in the future. The book concludes that the world will change if the individual changes.

Overall, this book is commendable for relaying the concepts in Adlerian psychology in a non-complicated and very accessible manner. First, the plain language utilized has made it convenient for the common masses; whenever jargon is introduced, it is explained in a simple way coupled with examples and explanations which reinforce the understanding of the readers. Now, the scientific and learned audiences are not the only ones who are benefiting from the legacy of the great Alfred Adler.

However, this book has also points that must be improved on. While the philosopher is depicted as wise and discerning, the youth, on many occasions, is portrayed as hard-headed and stubborn. This is simplistic and lacks subtlety in the characterization of young people, for they can also offer wise insights based on their encounters and prior learning. Moreover, the number of subparts in each conversation is, on average, 11, which can be overwhelming. Combining parts with similar and related concepts is beneficial and can encourage brevity.

Despite that, the Socratic dialogue format has made the content organic and vivid, painting a classic archetypal picture of a sage guiding a hero on a journey. It is not deadening—the flow of the conversation between the two characters is insightful, and the development of the story is not compromised just because of the integration of Adlerian concepts. They are sewn harmoniously.

Having sold more than three million copies and translated into many languages, this book is very relatable to many audiences. This book is anticipated to join the roster of books under the modern classic category. Many readers even describe the book as transformative and paradigm-shifting. Indeed, this book is highly recommended to those whose professions are in the field of counseling, teaching, and social work. Similarly, it is highly suggested to be read by young people, whose fascination lies in life questions, understanding of oneself, and interpersonal relationships.