

Spirals: A reflective tool for exploring the depth and width of Adlerian practice.



Spirals was developed by Joy Mounter with children, in her role as a primary school teacher. Together they created, '*a space we could hold open for our learning and reflections: a space for reflection and reflexivity over time: a space to generate our own understandings and self-identity, giving us the energy of motivation*'. Spirals is intended to help us to discover, explore and improve our selves with respect to what gives meaning and purpose to each of our lives. As a living archive it can be in a form of personal choice. One of the oldest geometric shapes, the spiral, is fundamental in nature, design and religion' (Mounter,2012)¹

Combining Carl Jung's description of a spiral as a cosmic force, its sacred meaning represents growth and the journey of life - through birth, the phases of life to death (reincarnation). It is the perfect symbol for integrating the journey of personal, academic and life learning into practical wisdom and good judgement. Spirals has become a method suitable for people of all ages wishing to pursue individual or collaborative enquiries into topics of personal interest, or more formal research.

In this video, accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ti4syOriDdY>, Joy's class of six year olds speak about how they adapted the TASC wheel described below, when working on their projects. In this next annotated video, Joy explains the development of Spirals to the Adlerian Skype Research group <https://youtu.be/0ZndMWaggXQ>. We recognised its suitability for Adlerian psychologists searching to explain their particular fields of Adlerian practice.

Spirals for Adult Enquirers

For example:

- Exploring questions such as, 'How do I use Adlerian psychology in my life?'
- Practitioners wishing to understand, improve, evaluate + explain their actions.
- Methodology for pursuing continuing professional development projects.
- To discover, 'How do I collect evidence to show how my practice is effective?'
- Explore, 'How do I introduce Adlerian psychology in my workplace?'
- Collate evidence for BACP accreditation: psychological + use of supervision.
- Research for academic accreditation towards a higher degree.

The Spiral Process

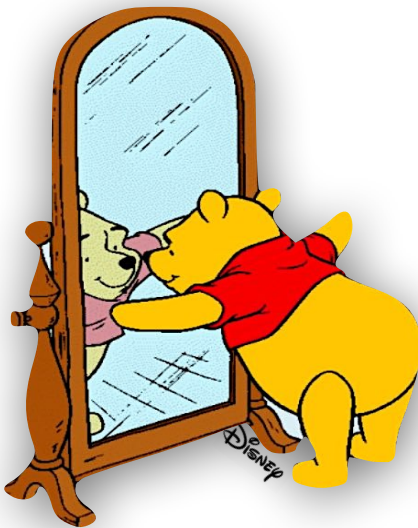
Developed by Joy with children in a primary school:

*We began by considering how we "create knowledge", what does this actually mean?
These are my thoughts developed as we wrote together:*

¹ Mounter's MA Dissertation, 'As a Headteacher Researcher how can I demonstrate the impact and self-understandings drawn from Living Theory Action Research, as a form of Continual Professional Development in education?' University of Bath, December 2012

'Time through learning is a transitional experience that ripples out affecting all it touches as specks of consciousness, momentarily felt. Dimensional impacts bounce and meander, spiralling within the sphere we create and beyond those we are aware of. This transitional inflection or vortex, stores on some level the awareness to process in the moment it is felt or until that moment may never be found again. Can we be reflective learners if we only have the ability to reflect in the near moment and not within the vortex of thought that impacts on who we believe we are, but have no recollection of the time or space in which it was created? We cling to the awareness or feeling of some distant thought or connection or let it go and return as a variation of thought, as a connector to our past. The creation of knowledge implies by its nature, the concept of birth and oneness of ideas, but isn't it a mirror of all that we are through the moments we save, the connectors produced and analysed as new growth. Tangled but clarified by historical reflections and strength of the future we as yet have no experience of?'
 (Joy Mounter, 2008)²

Names the children gave to the sections are retained in the Spirals adaptation presented here:



Dear Me

Dear Me is the first part of Spirals. It is space to reflect on past experiences, present situations and how these are affected by your passions, values, beliefs, opinions, attitudes and interests. Reflect here on the person you are and the person you show others.

For Adlerians, life style and personal goals arising from private logic, social history and context, and individual creativity will influence the direction of these reflections.

PRISM: a Rainbow of skills and resources

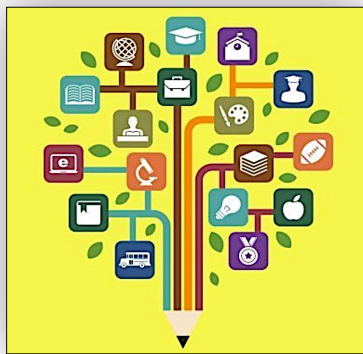


Communication: Online, Questioning, Empathy, Self Expression
Inquiring Mind : Curiosity, Reflection and Outlook, Making links
Active Learning: Resilience, Grit, Focus, Optimistic Belief
Creativity: Passions, Interests, Imagination, Creativity, Hopes, Joy
Self-identity: Myself as Researcher; Myself as practitioner
Emotional Resilience and Well-being, I am important, My future
Problem Solving: Reasoning, Planning, Lateral Thinking
Adventure: Active, Healthy Living, Courage, Social Interest

²The Time is Right Now! 'How can I enhance the educational influence of my pupils in their own learning, that of other pupils, myself and the school?' 3rd MA Educational Enquiry



Called *Rainbow of Skills* by primary school enquirers and *Prism* for adult enquirers, this section enables reflective understanding of our skills, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes; and of ourselves in the world. It encourages creative exploring of aspects that define us. Using the reflections in the *Dear Me* resource section and the TASC wheel (left) allow us to understand what motivates our beliefs, values and how we want to contribute to our lives and to the lives of others. We can recognise our life skills, identify strengths, areas to develop and think about future opportunities and direction.



Living Archive

Creating an on-line or other safe place to store all those sticky notes, diary entries, video clips, photos, reflections and writing about the topics of personal interest, gives space for deciding the focus of possible enquiry projects. This is a place to collect a personal living archive, re-visit and create new meanings as ideas grow and further questions formulated.

It is useful to record the full references of interesting data that influences you, to save searching for them later.



Project

This is the place where you can plan your project and find a question of particular interest to you. The enquiry proceeds by using insights arising from reflections in *Dear Me*, *Prism* and *MeSearch*. This may be sufficient guidance to support your personal enquiry, however the children found the TASC wheel below useful for its question prompts. Developed by Belle Wallace (2004)³ for use in educational settings, TASC is an action reflection guide to a process of enquiring. Wallace's wheel offered a learning theory that made sense to Joy's class of 6 and 7 year olds, each engaged in understanding themselves as people, as learners and as part of a learning community. It was a natural progression for the children to develop their understanding of the TASC wheel itself from two dimensions, to understanding it as a three dimensional 'Spirals' model incorporating multiple themes. In later reflections and wider learning, the children's explanation grew into a five dimensional model that included time and space (Mounter 2019)⁴.

³ Wallace, B., Maker, J., Cave, D., and Chandler, S. (2004). *Thinking Skills and Problem-solving, An Inclusive Approach: A Practical Guide for Teachers in Primary School*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

⁴ Mounter, J (2019) Using Thinking Actively in a Social Context and Spirals in Living Theory research in explanations of educational influences in a global social movement. *Gifted Education International*

About the children Joy says, *'This continual reflection in the 'Evaluate', 'Communicate' and 'Learn from Experience' segments of the TASC Wheel continuously strengthened our views of ourselves, and our parts in the community where we could make a difference'⁵.*

TASC offers guidance for an action enquiry process suitable for individuals exploring themselves within the holism of Adlerian psychology used in practice.

MeSearch - bringing the threads together

MeSearch is a place to pull threads together from all the other sections as the project question is explored. This is the *'Generate'* segment of the TASC wheel where creative ideas emerge and are checked in discussion with other interested people who may be asking similar questions. Ideas are tested in practice usually prompting more questions. Firming up ideas together follows with everyone involved. This collaboratively created knowledge is shared as a gift for making a difference in the community⁴. In these actions, social interest and community feeling are expressed.


Methodology for the creation of valid knowledge towards academic accreditation and rigorous scrutiny of explanations to prepare for public sharing in a research publication, can be found using Living Educational Theory (see below).

MAD - Making a Difference in Community

Joy's pupils, by asking how she could write about learning without them, changed the fluidity of the teacher role between her and her pupils. It led to their awareness and desire as a learning community, to make a difference to their own learning and to the learning of others.

'Making a difference (MAD) that is important to each of us', Joy reports, 'is the community thread running through Spirals, with a community ethos held open for each of us, our classroom and other practices. We are contributing, feel valued and have a voice. We are exploring our learning skills, attributes, beliefs and popular learning theories whilst spending time understanding ourselves and our place in the world.

Reflections through TASC and Spirals lead us to a sense of well-being, confidence and living wisdom as we continue to grow. The more we reflect and explore our learning, the more we feel need for a way to hold that space, as an inner understanding resilience, towards others in community⁴



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

Living Educational Theory for researchers

TASC is an action enquiry process offering guidance appropriate for exploring the holism and movement of Adlerian psychology in practice. TASC is unable to fulfil all the academic requirements of research. What is missing is methodological rigour in checking and explaining claims. This is particularly obvious when exploring embodied expressions of personal style that individuals develop to make their relationships effective for their purpose. Living Educational Theory (LT) offers this research methodology for understanding, improving, checking and creating valid explanations of individuals' practices, in unique social contexts, for wide sharing.



ActionResearch.net

LT methodology represented by Jack Whitehead's paper (1989)⁵ focuses on practitioners generating explanations of their influence in their own learning and learning of others through questions such as, 'How do I understand, improve, evaluate and explain my practice?' A practitioner, in identifying values motivating their intended behaviour, creates a means of explanation: explanatory principles. These values are clarified through the process of reflecting-in-action. When a contradiction arises between a professed value and reality, a new phase of enquiry is prompted. Values therefore also add rigour by becoming standards for checking the authenticity of claims. 'Do I actually do as I claim?'

In this way a practitioner shows how they take responsibility for influencing their own development and wellbeing while influencing clients and others in their wider social world. In Adlerian enquiries, focus is usually on the meaning and purpose individuals give to their life and work. For Adlerian psychologists, practice values are likely to be closely entwined with Adlerian principles, particularly the influence of an individual's 'private logic' (Pound, 2019)⁶.

For more information and examples of LT research see the website www.actionresearch.net

⁵ Whitehead, J. (1989) Whitehead, J. (1989) Creating a living educational theory from questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?". Published in the Cambridge Journal of Education, 19(1); the 41-52

⁶ Pound, paper on values and private logic?