

Introduction

This is the story of a psychologist named Sidney Jourard whose work in the field of psychology focuses on one of life's more profound questions: How should one live? This biography was written to bring some of what he discovered to a new generation of readers, and to share insights about being a person that are of particular value in our contemporary culture.

Sidney Jourard was my father. I am his middle son, a professional musician and a member of a pop group that achieved commercial success in the nineteen-eighties and continues to record and perform today. I'm also a writer and author of several music-related books. I grew up in Gainesville, a small college town in north-central Florida, where my father was a professor of psychology at the University of Florida.

This book began as a modest project—I was researching my father's life and academic career for a family history archive. During the process I determined that his life was atypical in both content and style, and that his insights as a psychologist could be of value to present-day readers. I delved deeply into his academic career, and by integrating it with his personal life wrote this biography.

Starting around the mid-fifties, my father became increasingly involved in a new approach to the study of mind and behavior—Humanistic Psychology, a perspective developed by other humanist thinkers such as Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Charlotte Bühler, and Virginia Satir. He was the first elected president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (1963-1964). Among his collected writings is *The Transparent Self*, a primary text in the field of self-disclosure, a process by which one person communicates personal information to another person at varying levels of intimacy, ranging from likes and dislikes to hopes and fears and deeply-held beliefs. Sid examined the beneficial role of self-disclosure in personal and societal interactions. Other areas of his study and research include self-image and body-awareness, physical contact between people

and where they touch, the concept of authenticity (a state in which your inner personality is congruent with your outward presentation to others), the psychological need for privacy, perspectives on education, psychotherapy and marriage, and the relationships between body, mind and spirit. As early as 1958 Sid was exploring the subjects of healthy personality and personal growth, and developing insights that helped people become free agents of their own lives. He proposed that most people function well below their capabilities and have the potential to control their lives to a higher degree than they thought possible, and that each has the capacity to continually grow in both self-awareness and ability.

His life and academic career were intertwined in a way that often made the line between them indistinguishable, and his passion for intellectual pursuits was mirrored by a passionate and intense personal life. Sidney was an uncommon blend of cerebral and earthy, a rare mix that wasn't universally understood or accepted by others in academia. His keen intellect was combined with a mischievous personality and a well-developed sense of humor. I have yet to meet anyone who was even remotely like him.

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Evidence of the continued presence of his ideas in popular culture appears without particularly seeking it out, and in unexpected places. During the process of writing this introduction in 2020, two examples presented themselves. My daughter is a massage therapist, and as she watched an online ethics course as part of her continuing education and certification process, the narrator mentioned Sidney's "touch study," a series of casual social observations he made between 1963 and 1966. When the socialite Paris Hilton recently remarked that "I'm so used to playing a character, it's hard for me to be normal ... I don't even know who I am sometimes," she describes a problem Sid identified in the late fifties: that the construction and continual reinforcement of a false public self at odds with your private self can eventually lead to self-alienation.

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Perhaps Sid's overarching goal as a psychologist was to guide psychology away from the interests of institutions and esoteric areas of investigation, and toward the service of human beings and the everyday experience of being alive, as revealed in

comment he made at a psychology conference in the early seventies. A colleague who was there recalls:

I have no idea to this day why Sidney Jourard was on this particular panel, except I appreciate the irony of Sid being there. What the panel was about was paranormal phenomena. There must have been six people on that panel. And they talked about seeing ghosts, and moving objects without touching them, and sensing the communication of humans from one person to another without the ordinary methods of communication like talking or writing or those kinds of things; laying on of hands. . . . Sidney Jourard was the last person on the panel, and what he said was, “We’ve been treated today to one miracle after another, and what I want to say is, that I’m not impressed. I’m having enough trouble just trying to keep my life together. And what I want is a psychology that teaches us how to live. Daily. Just keeping our lives together. And then, if we’ve got that kind of psychology, perhaps we’ll have time for miracles.”¹

Sidney developed valuable insights for anyone striving to better recognize and understand the controlling forces that drive their lives and who seek to recognize those that are counter-productive to their personal growth. His ideas, insights and persona will be found herein, along with my belief that among his views you may find some that bring insight into the workings of your own life.