**Transactional Analysis**

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**Authorship/referencing**
Alan Chapman edit and contextual material, 2000-13. Transactional Analysis theory was developed by Dr Eric Berne in the 1950s. The Blame Model was developed by Jim Davis TSTA. The OK Corral model was developed by Franklin Ernst. The 2011 Transactional Analysis OK Modes Model and diagram is © Mountain Associates, 2010-13. Please retain this notice on all copies.

**Transactional Analysis - modern usage - introduction**

Transactional Analysis is a theory developed by Dr. Eric Berne in the 1950s. Originally trained in psychoanalysis, Berne wanted a theory which could be understood and available to everyone and began to develop what came to be called Transactional Analysis (TA). Transactional Analysis is a social psychology and a method to improve communication. The theory outlines how we have developed and treat ourselves, how we relate and communicate with others, and offers suggestions and interventions which will enable us to change and grow. Transactional Analysis is underpinned by the philosophy that:

- people can change
- we all have a right to be in the world and be accepted

Initially criticised by some as a simplistic model, Transactional Analysis is now gathering worldwide attention. It originally suffered much from the popularised writings in the 1960s. Also, summarised explanations, such as this, which can only
touch on some of the concepts in Transactional Analysis, led their readers to believe that there was very little to it. Theoretical concepts within the Transactional Analysis world are constantly being challenged and developed making it a rich dynamic process. Berne died in July 1970 at the age of 60. However, Transactional Analysis has not stood still and continues to develop and change, paralleling the processes we encourage in ourselves and others.

**Transactional Analysis - contracting**

Transactional Analysis is a contractual approach. A contract is "an explicit bilateral commitment to a well-defined course of action" Berne E. (1966). Which means that all parties need to agree:

- why they want to do something
- with whom
- what they are going to do
- by when
- any fees, payment or exchanges there will be

For example, we want the outside of our house painted, we need to find a person who will paint it and who will give us a quote for doing it. If we agree the quote, and we like him or her enough, we will no doubt employ them. We will agree a date and time, perhaps check they are insured, and choose the colour of the paint and off they go.

Sometimes contracts will be multi-handed with all parties to the contract having their own expectations. If these expectations are all congruent then fine, if not then discussing everyone's expectations will lead to greater understanding and therefore to a clear contract.

Contracts need to be outlined in positive words i.e. what is wanted, rather than what is not wanted. Our minds tend to focus on the negative and so this encourages failure. For example, how many times do we look round when someone says to us "Don't look now but.......", the same is true when we set up contracts which start "I don't want to do ............ anymore".
We have contracts about employment, how much will we be paid and when, what holidays we are due, what deductions there will be etc. In order to ensure placements are effective then different, but similar, details are required. Naturally, these details will vary dependent on the setting in which we work.

All parties need to state what are they are prepared to do. Are they able and willing to undertake what is being asked, is this appropriate? Does it fit within any statements of purpose and function? Is it legal? Do they have the competence to deliver this? Do they want to? What does each party want of the others?

In summary contracts need to be: measurable, manageable and motivational. Measurable means that the goals need to be tangible. That each party involved in the contract will be able to say in advance how they will know when the goal has been achieved. The goal will be specific and behavioural and clearly defined. The contract will also need to be manageable and feasible for all those concerned.

'Contracting' in Transactional Analysis, and indeed many other aspects of TA, provide a helpful way to understand the psychological contract in employment and similar organizational relationships.
**Transactional Analysis - ego states**

**Transactional Analysis first order structural model**

Berne devised the concept of ego states to help explain how we are made up, and how we relate to others. These are drawn as three stacked circles and they are one of the building blocks of Transactional Analysis. They categorise the ways we think, feel and behave and are called Parent, Adult, and Child. Each ego state is given a capital letter to denote the difference between actual parents, adults and children.

- **P** - Parent Ego State
  - Behaviours, thoughts and feelings copied from parents or parent figures

- **A** - Adult Ego State
  - Behaviours, thoughts and feelings which are direct responses to the here and now

- **C** - Child Ego State
  - Behaviours, thoughts and feelings replayed from childhood
**Parent ego state**
This is a set of feelings, thinking and behaviour that we have copied from our parents and significant others. As we grow up we take in ideas, beliefs, feelings and behaviours from our parents and caretakers. If we live in an extended family then there are more people to learn and take in from. When we do this, it is called introjecting and it is just as if we take in the whole of the care giver. For example, we may notice that we are saying things just as our father, mother, grandmother may have done, even though, consciously, we don't want to. We do this as we have lived with this person so long that we automatically reproduce certain things that were said to us, or treat others as we might have been treated.

**Adult ego state**
The Adult ego state is about direct responses to the here and now. We deal with things that are going on today in ways that are not unhealthily influenced by our past.

The Adult ego state is about being spontaneous and aware with the capacity for intimacy. When in our Adult we are able to see people as they are, rather than what we project onto them. We ask for information rather than stay scared and rather than make assumptions. Taking the best from the past and using it appropriately in the present is an integration of the positive aspects of both our Parent and Child ego states. So this can be called the Integrating Adult. Integrating means that we are constantly updating ourselves through our every day experiences and using this to inform us.

In this structural model, the Integrating Adult ego state circle is placed in the middle to show how it needs to orchestrate between the Parent and the Child ego states. For example, the internal Parent ego state may beat up on the internal Child, saying "You are no good, look at what you did wrong again, you are useless". The Child may then respond with "I am no good, look how useless I am, I never get anything right". Many people hardly hear this kind of internal dialogue as it goes on so much they might just believe life is this way. An effective Integrating Adult ego state can intervene between the Parent and Child ego states. This might be done by stating that this kind of parenting is not helpful and asking if it is prepared to learn another way. Alternatively, the Integrating Adult ego state can just stop any negative dialogue and decide to develop another positive Parent ego state perhaps taken in from other people they have met over the years.
**Child ego state**

The Child ego state is a set of behaviours, thoughts and feelings which are replayed from our own childhood. Perhaps the boss calls us into his or her office, we may immediately get a churning in our stomach and wonder what we have done wrong. If this were explored we might remember the time the head teacher called us in to tell us off. Of course, not everything in the Child ego state is negative. We might go into someone's house and smell a lovely smell and remember our grandmother's house when we were little, and all the same warm feelings we had at six year's of age may come flooding back.

Both the Parent and Child ego states are constantly being updated. For example, we may meet someone who gives us the permission we needed as a child, and did not get, to be fun and joyous. We may well use that person in our imagination when we are stressed to counteract our old ways of thinking that we must work longer and longer hours to keep up with everything. We might ask ourselves "I wonder what X would say now". Then on hearing the new permissions to relax and take some time out, do just that and then return to the work renewed and ready for the challenge. Subsequently, rather than beating up on ourselves for what we did or did not do, what tends to happen is we automatically start to give ourselves new permissions and take care of ourselves.

Alternatively, we might have had a traumatic experience yesterday which goes into the Child ego state as an archaic memory that hampers our growth. Positive experiences will also go into the Child ego state as archaic memories. The positive experiences can then be drawn on to remind us that positive things do happen.

The process of analysing personality in terms of ego states is called structural analysis. It is important to remember that ego states do not have an existence of their own, they are concepts to enable understanding. Therefore it is important to say "I want some fun" rather than "My Child wants some fun". We may be in our Child ego state when we say this, but saying "I!" reminds us to take responsibility for our actions.
**Transactional Analysis - life positions**

Life positions are basic beliefs about self and others, which are used to justify decisions and behaviour.

When we are conceived we are hopefully at peace, waiting to emerge into the world once we have grown sufficiently to be able to survive in the outside of the womb. If nothing untoward happens we will emerge contented and relaxed. In this case we are likely to perceive the world from the perspective of I am OK and You are OK.

However, perhaps our mother had some traumatic experiences, or the birth was difficult or even life threatening. This experience is likely to have an effect on the way we experience the world, even at the somatic level. In which case we might emerge sensing that life is scary and might, for example, go into "I am not OK and You are not OK either".

Let's take it that the pregnancy went fine, and the birth was easy enough. What then? Well life experiences might reinforce our initial somatic level life position, or contradict it. If we were treated punitively, talked down to, and not held, we may begin to believe "I am not OK and You are OK". This might be the only sense we can make of our experiences.

Let's take another situation. Perhaps we were picked on and bullied as a child. We learnt that the way to get by was to bully others and that way we felt stronger and in control. Our behaviour then comes into the I am OK and You are not OK quadrant. Of course this may cover up our belief that we are really not OK, but nobody sees that. They just see our behaviour, and in fact we may have forgotten all about our negative feelings about ourselves as we have tried so hard to deny the pain of believing we are not OK.

These life positions are perceptions of the world. The reality is I just am and you just are, therefore how I view myself and others are just that "views" not fact. However, we tend to act as if they are a fact. Just like when somebody says "I can't do this, I'm useless". Rather than "I don't know how to do this. Will you show me?" The latter is staying with the fact that they do not yet know how to do it, whilst the former links being useless with not being able to do something.
The OK Corral (Franklin Ernst, 1971)

Franklin Ernst drew the life positions in quadrants, which he called the OK Corral (1971). We have put these into red and green to show the effective and ineffective quadrants for communication and healthy relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am not OK</th>
<th>I am OK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are OK</td>
<td>You are OK</td>
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- **Healthy position**: Get on with Happy
- **Hopeless position**: Get nowhere with Hopeless
- **One-down position**: Get away from Helpless
- **One-up position**: Get rid of Angry

Berne talked about the life positions as existential positions, one of which we are more likely to go to under stress. This is significantly different to the concept Ernst uses, i.e. that we move around them all during the day. Whilst there is some truth in this we could agree with Berne that there will be one major position we go into under stress, with perhaps another position underneath this one. These positions can change as we develop and grow. The difference between Berne and Ernst is important.