

# Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis (TA) is the name given to a number of related concepts that seek to throw light on the way we, and others, behave and feel. The basic assumptions in TA are that:

1. People learn, at an early age, ways of feeling and behaving that tend to become habitual, regardless of their continued appropriateness.
2. Feelings **cause** behaviour.
3. Even though characteristic ways of feeling and behaving are habitual, we can control them and, if necessary, replace unproductive ways of feeling and behaving with more satisfactory ones.
4. We can do much to help other people, whether they be our superiors, associates, colleagues or subordinates, to modify their feelings and behaviour for the better.
5. Feelings of doubt, indecision, embarrassment, fear and anger drain energy from both individuals and organisations and, in various ways, exact a heavy toll in time and money.

The TA concepts were originally developed by Dr Eric Berne (of “Games People Play” fame) in the 1950’s.

TA is an effective way of understanding and modifying human behaviour. It is intended to give the layman some comprehensive concepts so that he can improve himself and help others to do the same. This process is not intended to be dangerous, or impossible, or to require the help of experts.

## TA and Behaviour

The core TA concept, the bare bones on which everything else hangs, is a system for analysing transactions between people. An important and recurring assumption in TA is that we have learned to behave in certain ways. There are three main codes of behaviour used by everyone, though their predominance varies from individual to individual. These ways of behaving are called ego-states and their development started in early childhood. According to TA theory, experiences are “recorded” in the brain and stored there as if on video tape. Experiences from childhood - what was learnt from and taught by parents or equivalents, perceptions of events and the feelings associated with those events - are captured on the tapes and provide the sources for **current** behaviour. In TA it is assumed that the early learning on the tapes cannot be erased, even if it is no longer appropriate, but it can be updated as we learn from experience.

## “PAC” Refers to Our 3 Ego States

An ego state is a pattern of feelings, experiences and behaviour. We each have three basic ego states. We move between these ego states when we are relating to others.

<b>P</b>	<b>Parent</b>	<i>Life as it is taught</i>
<b>A</b>	<b>Adult</b>	<i>Life as it is thought</i>
<b>C</b>	<b>Child</b>	<i>Life as it is felt</i>

### Parent

The parent ego state reflects life as it is taught by parents and other authority figures. When we act, feel or think in our parent ego state, it is as we have observed our parents to have done in similar situations. It can be critical and dominating (critical parent) or supportive and caring (nurturing parent). It is that part of us which:

#### Critical Parent

- ◆ sets limits
- ◆ disciplines, judges and criticises
- ◆ controls
- ◆ keeps traditions and values
- ◆ makes rules (do's, don'ts, always, never, should, shouldn't, must, ought to's, have to's, goods, bads)
- ◆ is intolerant

#### Nurturing Parent

- ◆ gives advice and guidance
- ◆ is caring
- ◆ is protective
- ◆ is supportive
- ◆ is considerate

### Adult

The adult is the part of us which thinks and works things out by looking at the facts. It is unemotional and is concerned with what is more useful and appropriate.

#### The adult

- ◆ gathers information
- ◆ sorts out alternatives
- ◆ organises and plans decisions
- ◆ solves problems
- ◆ estimates probabilities
- ◆ anticipates consequences
- ◆ thinks before acting
- ◆ evaluates Parent and Child
- ◆ reacts and decides what is appropriate

## Child

The child is the source of our energy and so it is the ego state which has the most control over our lives. For instance, we can think in an adult way of all the reasons why we should go on a diet; but if our child is not committed, i.e. we really feel deep down we should change our eating habits, then we will not stick to our diet.

### The child:

#### Free

- ◆ loves
- ◆ hates
- ◆ has fun
- ◆ is trusting
- ◆ asks for help
- ◆ sense of humour
- ◆ is intuitive
- ◆ manipulates others
- ◆ explores
- ◆ is curious

#### Adapted

- ◆ submissive
- ◆ withdraws
- ◆ unassuming
- ◆ wants to be liked
- ◆ non-confrontational
- ◆ won't say no

#### Temper Tantrum

- ◆ sulks
- ◆ withdraws
- ◆ irrational
- ◆ out of control
- ◆ loud
- ◆ whinge
- ◆ whines

## Questions or Statements Associated with Parent

### Critical

- why haven't you
- you have to
- you must
- you should/ought
- don't tell me

### Nurturing

- let me help you
- don't worry
- well done
- take care
- poor thing

## Questions or Statements Associated with Adult

- you must be feeling .....(*showing empathy*)
- let's analyse the situation
- what are the alternatives?
- what is your opinion?
- I think .....
- I see your point
- let me get this clear
- how do you feel about ...

## Statements Associated with Child

- I feel very ...
- I want ... I wish ...
- now
- if only
- it's mine
- I won't
- Wow, this is great
- Did I do OK
- It's not fair