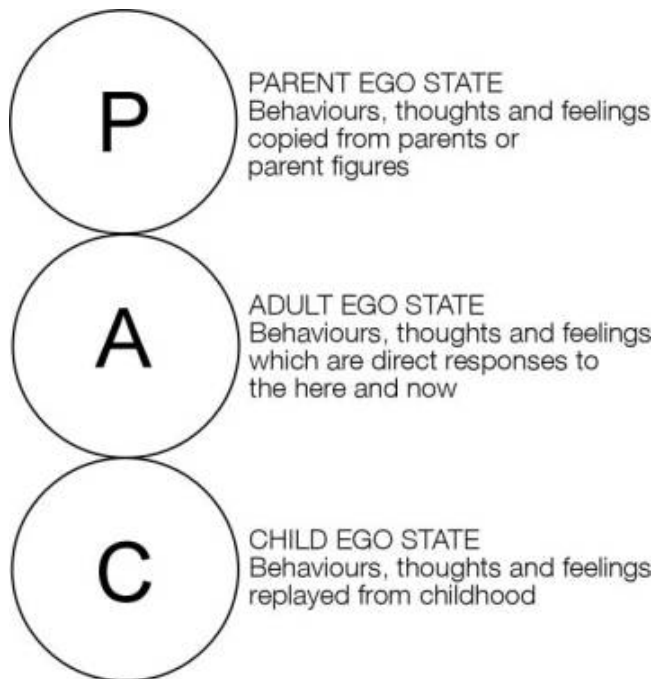


Transactional Analysis

Transactional analysis or TA was developed by Eric Berne, who had studied psychoanalysis. He suggested that people are made up from three 'ego states', positions we operate from.



We spend a lot of our time in one or the other of these states. None is wrong or bad for us – each is useful – but the way each has developed can cause difficulty.

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.

These are similar to the conditions of worth suggested by humanist Carl Rogers.

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. This is where healing and growing in 'maturity' begins for people.

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.

The life script:

The script is a life plan, made when we are growing up. It is like having the script of a play in front of us - we read the lines and decide what will happen in each act and how the play will end. The script is developed from our early decisions based upon our life experience. We may not realise that we have set ourselves a plan but we can often find this out if we ask ourselves what our favorite childhood story was, who was our favorite character in the story and who do we identify with. Then consider the beginning, middle and end of the story. How is this story reflected in our life today?

Another way of getting to what script is may be to think about what we believe will happen when we are in old age. Do we believe we will be alive at 80 or 90 years old, be healthy, happy, and contented? What do we think will be on the headstone for our grave? What would we like to be on it?

Strokes:

In Transactional Analysis we call compliments and general ways of giving recognition strokes. This name came from research which indicated that babies require touching in order to survive and grow. It apparently makes no difference whether the touching induces pain or pleasure - it is still important. On the whole we prefer to receive negative strokes than no strokes at all, at least that way we know we exist and others know we exist. We all have particular strokes we will accept and those we will reject. For example, if we have always been told we are clever, and our brother is creative, then we are likely to accept strokes for being clever, but not for being creative. From this frame of reference only one person in the family can be the creative one and so on. Stroking can be physical, verbal or nonverbal. It is likely that the great variety of stroke needs and styles present in the world results from differences in wealth, cultural mores, and methods of parenting.

The stroke economy

Claude Steiner suggests that, as children, we are all indoctrinated by our parents with five restrictive rules about stroking.

- 🚫 don't give strokes when we have them to give
- 🚫 don't ask for strokes when we need them
- 🚫 don't accept strokes if we want them
- 🚫 don't reject strokes when we don't want them
- 🚫 don't give ourselves strokes

Together these five rules are the basis of what Steiner calls the stroke economy. By training children to obey these rules, says Steiner, parents ensure that "... a situation in which strokes could be available in a limitless supply is transformed into a situation in which the supply is low and the price parents can extract for them is high."

We therefore need to change the restrictive rules to unrestrictive ones:

- 👍 give strokes when we have them to give
- 👍 ask for strokes when we want them
- 👍 accept strokes if we want them
- 👍 reject manipulative strokes
- 👍 give ourselves positive strokes

Strokes can be positive or negative:

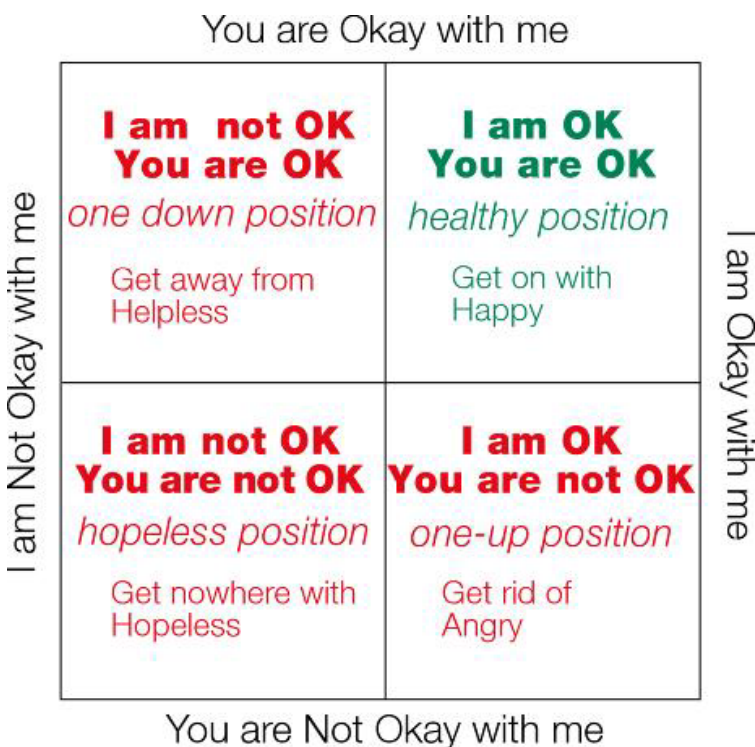
A) "I like you"

B) "I don't like you"

- ④ Strokes can be unconditional or conditional. An unconditional stroke is a stroke for being whereas a conditional stroke is a stroke for doing. For instance:
- ④ "I like you" - unconditional
- ④ "I like you when you smile" - conditional
- ④ As negative strokes these might be:
- ④ "I don't like you" - negative unconditional
- ④ "I don't like you when you're sarcastic" - negative conditional

People often have a stroke filter. They only let in strokes which they think they are allowed to let in. For instance they allow themselves to receive strokes for being clever and keep out strokes for being good looking. One way to think about this to consider being out in the rain. The rain is the strokes that are available to us, both positive and negative. There is a hole in the umbrella and some of the strokes go through and we save them in a bucket to enjoy in lean times. Conversely we might use them negatively to reinforce the negative strokes we give to ourselves. Of course, some just bounce off the umbrella and we might not accept the good strokes that are coming our way. Some might come in but fall straight onto the floor.

The OK Corral



The OK corral is what Berne suggested we look at the world from. This is the way in which we view life itself. If we consider that there is something wrong with us, and that others are not to be trusted and are not OK either, then the world would be a scary place and we are likely to experience life as tough and believe we will only be all right if we keep alert and on the look out for danger and difficulties. These are beliefs about OURSELVES and OTHERS we learn as small children, these are beliefs we can CHANGE!