



# TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS AND EGO STATES

Hannah Alexander-Wright

# WHAT IS A TRANSACTION?

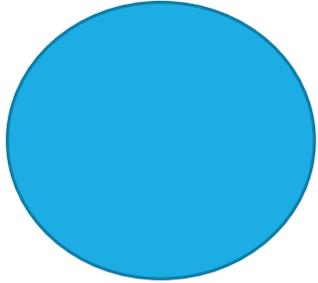


Transaction stimulus... transaction response

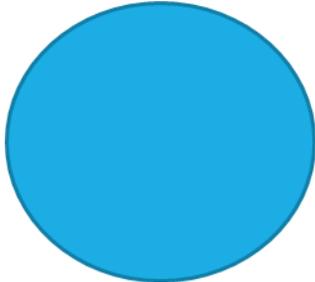
# BREAKING THE RULES OF TRANSACTIONS



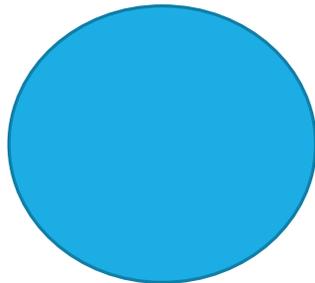
# EGO STATES



Parent: caring, protective, critical, telling off



Child: excitable, curious, petulant, genuinely friendly



Adult: logical, rational, neutral, problem- solving

# PARENT, CHILD, ADULT



**Parent:** collection of recordings of external events experienced as a child – be nice to others, sit properly at the table, don't tell lies



**Child:** recordings of internal events associated with external events experienced as a child – emotions and feelings – the horse made me feel scared, the car journey made me feel sick



**Adult:** weighs up both experiences and emotions from Parent and Child to come to conclusions about the world – I saw the dog bite the postman so I'm not going to pat that dog.

# EGO STATES IN A NUTSHELL

Parent: Taught concepts (external)

Child: Felt concepts (internal)

Adult: Learnt concepts (observed and reasoned)

# SAME STIMULUS, DIFFERENT RESPONSE

## **Adult to Adult**

Adult: Where are my shoes?

Adult: By the back door.

## **Adult to Child**

Adult: Where are my shoes?

Child: You always blame me for putting them where you can't find them!

## **Adult to Parent**

Adult: Where are my shoes?

Parent: Why don't you leave them somewhere you'll find them?



# MORE EXAMPLES

(C) Me: Hey, let's sneak off early from this presentation and go to the pub!

(P) You: No. We're here to learn about Management and you need to finish your session.

(C) You: Yay! I promise I won't tell!

(A) You: Why don't we finish the session and then go at the end of the day?



# MORE EXAMPLES

(A) Me: You're late for your lesson!

(A) Student: I'm so sorry, there were problems on the tube.

(P) Student: It says that I can come in between 9 and 9:10 and it is 9:09.

(C) Student: So? I'm the customer, aren't I? I've paid for these lessons!



# MORE EXAMPLES...TALKING TO YOURSELF

Me: Sarah just called, I didn't get the job.

(P) ...I'm not surprised. I wasn't prepared and shouldn't have gone for it in the first place.

(C) ...It's not fair, I never get what I want at work.

(A) ...I'm disappointed but I gave it my best shot.





# FIND THE ADULT: THE THEORY

In conflict situations, finding the Adult stimulus among the Parent and Child stimulus and responding only to the Adult stimulus will get the most harmonious outcome, for example:

Dear Amanda,

I cannot believe that you were late for the 5<sup>th</sup> time this week – don't you have an alarm clock? Your contract states that you must be at work at 8:50am Monday to Friday? If there is a problem then you must tell me before 8:45am so I can arrange cover.

Susan

# THE AGENT EMAIL

**Dear School,**

**My student is in a homestay and there's been no running water for 5 days. I will be contacting the British Council and taking legal action if this is not resolved now. Don't you care about your students?**

**Claudia**

1. How do you feel?
2. Can you identify the Parent, Adult and Child sentences?
3. How do you normally deal with emails like this and what tips or tools can you think of that would help with difficult emails?

# THE AGENT EMAIL

**Dear School,**

**My student is in a homestay and there's been no running water for 5 days. I will be contacting the British Council and taking legal action if this is not resolved now. Don't you care about your students?**

**Claudia**

Dear Claudia,

I am very sorry to hear about Fernando's situation. I shall call the host family this morning and speak to Fernando at break. I will call you at 3pm GMT to let you know what is happening.

Best wishes, Hannah

# DEALING WITH EMAILS

- Take your time in replying
- Break it down - find the Adult
- Ask other people how they would respond
- Be careful not to misinterpret the email - cultural differences / CAP LOCK SHOUTING
- There isn't a font called Sarcastica

# THE FACE-TO-FACE

You have forgotten to tell your director of studies about a group of 25 Taiwanese teenagers coming to your school in three days' time. You emailed him and he's come over to confront you about it.

**DOS: "Why didn't you tell me before? What can we do about this with just three days to go? I've told you before, it takes at least a week to organise the teacher and rooms for a group this size. I can't do anything now, I'm too busy. You'll have to tell your agent that they can't come and it's your fault".**

1. How do you feel?
2. Can you identify the Parent, Adult and Child sentences?
3. How do you normally deal with confrontations like this and what tips or tools can you think of that would help with difficult face-to-face conversations?

# THE FACE-TO-FACE

**DOS: "Why didn't you tell me before? What can we do about this with just three days to go? I've told you before, it takes at least a week to organise the teacher and rooms for a group this size. I can't do anything now, I'm too busy. You'll have to tell your agent that they can't come and it's your fault".**

**I am very sorry. I promise I won't forget to tell you again. As soon as I get a group booking, I'll email you.**

**Let me help you. I can talk to the Resources Assistant and secure rooms now. Can we work together and sort this out?**

# DEALING WITH FACE-TO-FACE CONFLICT

- Own up to a mistake if you made one--apologies go further than arguing
- If relevant, go find a quiet place to have the conversation so it's not in the middle of the office
- Ask your colleague to take a seat (this changes the body language and the dynamic of the confrontation)
- Use silence and let them talk (show you're listening)
- Make notes of what's being said
- Find the Adult--this is very hard as the compulsion is to react and to defend but remember that solving the problem is the priority



# THE GIVE AND TAKE

Sick dog

Washing machine

# THE EMAIL

**Dear Charlie,**

**It is not convenient for me to start work at 8:30am next Monday I'm afraid. As you know (because you wrote my contract) I am contracted to start from 9:30am. I attach a copy of my contract for your information.**

**Best wishes**

**Clara**

1. How do you feel?
2. What would you like to write back?
3. Channel your Adult and write back.

# WHEN YOU'RE NOT SAYING WHAT YOU ARE SAYING (BUT I HAVEN'T FIGURED THAT OUT)

You're a salesperson and you want to sell an expensive car to a flashy-looking man.

**Salesman: This car is amazing, but it's a little out of your price range sir...**

*I'm going to use my Parent ego state to elicit a child response which will make him buy!*

**Flashy man (responding with Child ego state): No, I can afford it! I want to buy it now!**

OR

**Clever man (responding with Adult ego state): You are right sir. Thank you. I shall go to another, cheaper garage. Many thanks!**

# WHEN YOU'RE NOT SAYING WHAT YOU ARE SAYING (AND I KNOW YOU'RE NOT)

Consider this conversation that seem to be Adult to Adult, but in fact they're Child to Child:

You want to come in for a cup of coffee?

Yes, I'd love a cup of coffee...



# CONCLUSION

Be aware of your ego states and those of others

Identify the right time to use / respond to / ignore certain ego states

Find the Adult and respond to the Adult in difficult situations

Read more on this fascinating subject:

I'm Ok, You're OK by Thomas A. Harris

Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships by Eric Berne

The Ego States by Catherine Holden