



## **Transactional Analysis**

This is a branch of social psychiatry. It is a grand way of saying "looking at social intercourse" i.e. how we communicate with each other. It also forms a part of the world of psychotherapy and can be useful at giving an insight into how people communicate with each other.

### **Background**

Evidence shows that a child deprived of handling over long periods will suffer emotionally (emotional deprivation) with the ultimate consequence being death.

Concept: "Stimulus hunger" - most favoured forms of stimuli are those resulting from physical intimacy. (cf. everyday life)

In adults the associated phenomenon is that of "sensory deprivation" which can lead to severe mental health problems. This term also includes "social deprivation".

Consider: solitary confinement of prisoners, which can ultimately lead to compliance with a particular regime.

These deprivations can lead to biological changes in the body itself, for example apathy, depression leading to loss of appetite - malnutrition. Ultimately this spiral leads to death!

Conclusion: stimulus hunger has the same relationship to survival as food hunger. (It could be useful here to compare this with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.)

### **Summarising at this stage:**

"If you are not stroked, your spinal cord will shrivel up." (Berne 1964)

After childhood, when the child is separated from its mother, there exists a dilemma for the individual in psychological terms in as far as their striving for the attainment of 'strokes'. This is something for which the individual is continually striving but there are barriers to these physical acts. The barriers to the desired intimacy could be any or all of:

- Social
- Biological
- Psychological

These strokes are the key to basic survival and are therefore clearly linked to human growth, both physically and intellectually.

Compromise: we learn to accept more subtle forms of stroking, such as a nod of recognition or verbal praise. However the craving for physical contact is unabated.

Concept: our childhood "stimulus hunger" is transformed into the adult "recognition hunger". (Compare this with Maslow again!)

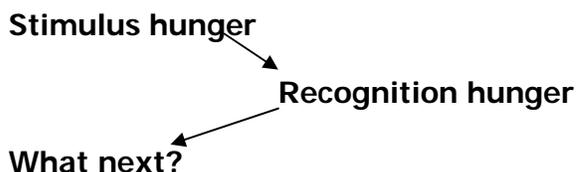
Individuals learn to compromise in different ways so that the kind of strokes, the quality and quantity of them is different for everyone. This leads to the variety in social intercourse to which we are accustomed. Mostly we seek positive strokes (reward, praise etc) but in the absence of positive strokes some people will accept negative strokes (reprimands for behaviour etc), the conclusion being that any stroke is better than none at all!

Consider: The classroom environment and the observed behaviours of students. Does the idea of "stroking" shed any light on the way students are behaving? Can you identify positive and negative strokes, and those members of a group seeking either?

### **Stroking**

- This is the general term for intimate physical contact. There are many forms such as hugging, patting, pinching etc.
- These physical forms have analogues in normal conversation.
- Colloquially a stroke is any act that implies recognition of another person, be it positive or negative.
- A stroke is a fundamental unit of social interaction.
- An exchange of strokes is termed a transaction
- A transaction is the unit of social intercourse.

Conclusion: experiments have shown that any social intercourse has biological advantages over no intercourse at all.



### **Structure hunger**

Each individual seeks to have some kind of structure to their waking hours. The theory of TA argues that all social living has the function of giving mutual assistance to this goal.

There are 3 aspects to this "structure" and each is usually achieved through some form of social "activity".

#### **1. Material programming:**

This is closely associated with the realities of life e.g. job of work. There are limited opportunities in terms of social exchanges that can lead to stroking. It does offer most

people the chance to seek "strokes".

## **2. Social programming**

These are ritualistic procedures - often called "good manners" or etiquette. Parents teach children the correct rituals e.g. greetings, eating, courting, mourning ext. and also how to execute topical conversation with tact and diplomacy.

Usually formal rituals come before semi-ritualistic topical conversation e.g. in Britain, it is very often the topic of latter items are then termed "pastimes".

## **3. Individual programming**

This occurs as people become better acquainted, and leads to the occurrence of "incidents" in conversation. These may appear to be accidental but they actually follow definite patterns with a sequence dictated by rules and regulations. These "rules" are of course unspoken. These rules remain hidden unless one party breaks them, in which case there may be a verbal or symbolic cry of "Foul!"

These sequences are based on our individual differences rather than on how we have been socially programmed, and these are termed "games" in psychological terms.

It has been postulated that the whole of an individual's life revolves around "playing" variations of different games.

- **Note: Games & Pastime**

In this context "games" are not simply the ones associated with fun and recreation. They can include such serious things as cannibalism, suicide, criminal activity etc. In all cases human emotion is regulated in some way, such that incorrect emotional responses leads to social "sanctions" being imposed e.g. society deems joking at a funeral to be inappropriate.

"Pastimes" and "games" are substitutes in our everyday living for real intimacy. Here they can be thought of as preliminaries to real intimacy characterised as forms of 'play'.

Intimacy occurs when individual programming becomes intense and social programming (and other restrictions) gives way. Real intimacy is the only completely satisfying answer to the 3 types of "hunger".

Conclusion: the ultimate satisfier would be loving sexual intercourse.

### **Summarising:**

- Stimulus & recognition hungers have to be avoided in order not to incur sensory & emotional deprivation, which can lead to biological deterioration.
- Structure hunger has to be avoided so that boredom does not set in. Colloquially: "the Devil makes work for idle hands"

### **Moving on...**

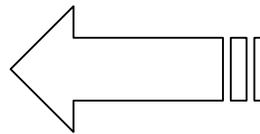
A solitary individual will structure time in one of two ways:

- Fantasy
- Activity

[NB: as teachers we know that an individual can remain solitary even when in the company of others.]

If 2 or more people come together then are more options for activities that can be used to structure time:

1. Rituals - least complex
2. Pastimes
3. Games
4. Intimacy - most complex



**Each one forms a matrix for the others**

The goal of each member of the group is to achieve as many 'satisfactions' as possible from interactions with others. The more accessible an individual is, then the more opportunities for satisfaction. Some of these satisfactions may appear to be odd or even self-destructive, to the outsider and so a term such as "advantage" may be better.

**Consider:** A disruptive student in a class. What "advantages" do they achieve?

This leads to the view that the advantages of social contact are related to the following factors:

1. Relief of tension (Primary internal advantage)
2. Avoidance of noxious situations (Primary external advantage)
3. Procurement of stroking. (Secondary advantage)
4. Maintenance of the "psychic and somatic equilibrium" (Berne 1964). (Existential advantage.)

It can be enlightening to examine transactions in terms of advantages gained for each party in a group.

## Summary

The most gratifying forms of social contact are 'games and intimacy. The latter is usually a private matter (and rarely prolonged), whilst games are the most significant form of social intercourse.

(Details given later)

## Ego States

Observations of people undergoing psychotherapy show that at different times people exhibit behavioural changes which are after accompanied by changes in their emotional state. In any individual therefore a set of behavioural patterns can be said to correspond to a particular state of mind. Individuals have other sets of behaviour / emotion patterns which are separate from one another.

- Concept: ego states whit in an individual
- Definition: an ego state is a system of feelings accompanied by a related set of behaviour patterns

These ego states are psychological realities for the individual, and it has been found that each person has a limited repertoire of 3 such ego states:



(Exteropsychic) states resembling those of a parental figure.



States directed towards objective appraisal of reality and autonomous decision-making (neonsvchic)



States representing relics of those fixed during childhood (archaeopsychic)

**All 3 states exist in each person, but they are distinct states.**

**NB:** The ego states are written with a capital letter (P, A, C) whilst the biological equivalent uses all lower case letters. This is a widely accepted convention in transactional analysis.

At any moment in a social aggregation a person will exhibit a particular ego state, and further, it is possible for them to shift between states. The ability to shift between states varies from person to person.

**Question:** Are there lessons here for group control or in dealing with disruptive behaviour?

It is possible to look at transactions between people and make certain diagnostic statements:

***" That is your Parent"***

You are in the same frame of mind as one of your parents, and you are reacting in the same way.

- Assumption: everyone has parents (or substitutes) and this state can be activated under certain conditions.
- Colloquially: " Everyone carries their parents around inside them"

***"That is your Adult"***

You have just made an autonomous appraisal of the situation and are now stating these thought processes in an appropriate manner.

- Assumption: every person is capable of objective reasoning if the appropriate ego state can be activated.
- Colloquially: " Every has an Adult"

***" That is your Child"***

The manner or intend of your reaction is the same as it would have been when you were very young.

- Assumption: everyone was once younger than they are now and so carries relics of their younger days, which can be, activated under certain conditions.
- Colloquially: " Everyone carries a Child around inside them."

**Notes on Ego States:**

1. The term 'childish' is never used since it has connotations with undesirable behaviour, which has to be stopped. "Child like " is acceptable since it is more biological.

The child is the most valuable part of the personality as it contributes charm, pleasure and creativity. If the Child is confused or unhealthy then this must be rectified otherwise it could be detrimental to be individual

2. There is no such thing as a 'mature' or ' immature' person. In some people the Child may take over inappropriately, often unproductively, whilst in others the Adult takes control. If the Child surfaces when the Adult loses control, then there can be disconcerting.

3. The Parent exists in two forms:

**"Do as I do"** - directly active; the person responds as one of their parents would respond, usually based on observational experience.

**"Don't do as I do; do as I say"** - indirect influence; the person would react in a way that they think their parents would wish them to respond.

4. The Child ego state has two forms also:

**Adapted Child;** modifies their behaviour under the influence of the Parent. Behaviour is then as the parents would want it to be; compliant or precocious, withdrawing or whining etc.

So, Parental influence is a cause, and the adapted Child is an effect.

**Natural Child;** is a spontaneous expression of rebellion or creativity. (Alcohol intoxication will exaggerate this!) This has the effect of disengaging the influence of the Parent.

### **Summary**

Each ego state is vital in its contribution to the balanced personality, leading to survival and growth of the individual. They must be maintained in a healthy balance and each one must be respected.

Child ——— Here resides intuition, spontaneous drive, creativity and enjoyment.

Adult ——— Necessary for survival. It allows us to process complex situations and take effective decisions. At a subconscious level it mediates objectively between Parent & Child.

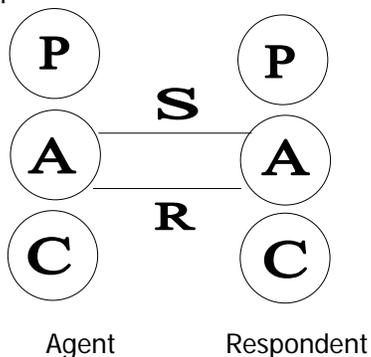
Parent ——— Firstly the function is to allow an individual to function as an actual parent, thereby promoting survival of the human race.

Secondly, it makes some responses to situations automatically, saving time and energy. Routine, trivial matters are dealt with by the Parent (because "*That is the way it's done!*") allowing the Adult to deal with important issues.

## Analysis of Transactions

Transactions are the unit of social intercourse. When people congregate it usual for someone to start to speak - this is then the transactional stimulus (S) and leads to an associated transactional response (R). Simple analysis is concerned with identifying which ego states are involved in the transaction.

Simplest form of transaction = Adult ——— Adult



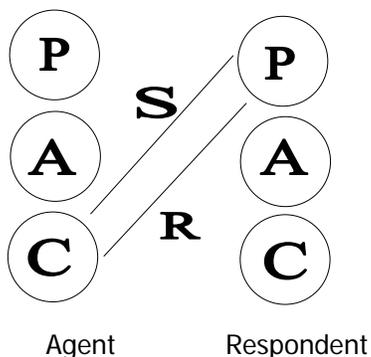
### Example:

S: "Would you pass me the kettle please?"

R: "Yes: here it is"

This is a **complementary transaction (Type 1)**

The next simplest form of transaction = Child ——— Parent



### Example:

S: " Would you have an apple to eat?"

R: " Here you are, be careful"

This is a **complementary transaction (Type 2)**

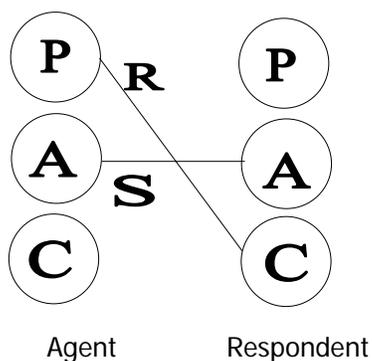
In both cases the stimulus yielded an appropriate predictable response, following a natural order for healthy relationship.

Just as with stimulus - response learning, transactions tend to continue as a chain.

**Notion:** the first rule of communication is that communication will proceed smoothly if all transactions are complementary. (So, if transactions are complementary then communication can continue indefinitely.)

- This rule is independent of the nature and content of the transactions.

Conversely, communication is impeded whenever a crossed transaction occurs. The most common being the **Type1 crossed transaction**:



### Example

S: " Perhaps we should look at why you couldn't submit your assignment? (Adult-Adult)

R: " It's not my fault; I couldn't do it!" (Child - Parent)

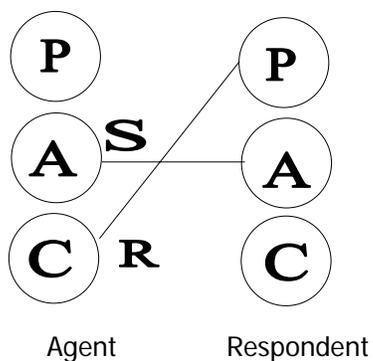
One appropriate Adult - Adult response might be:

R: " Yes, that would help me sort out my options"

In such a case the transactions have crossed and meaningful communication has ended, until either:

- the agent has become a Parent in response to the respondent's Child, or
- the respondent's Adult has been reactivated as a complement to the agent's Adult.

The converse is a **Type 2 crossed transaction**, in which an inappropriate response is made but this time the respondent acts as a Parent:



**Example**

Consider a science class where students are observing a demonstration;

Student: S: " Why does that happen?" (Adult - Adult)

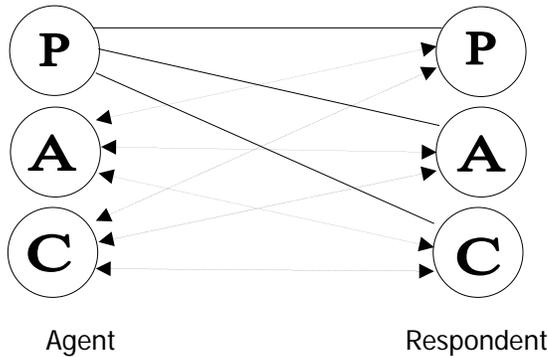
Teacher: R: " No, I won't answer that until you put your hand up..." (Parent - Child)

Clearly the teacher's response was inappropriate and the effect on meaningful communication about the subject is probably obvious!

Consider: How would you feel if you participated in a class in good faith, to be met with such a 'petty' response from the teacher? (Pedagogy versus andragogy perhaps?)

**Summary**

There are 9 possible vectors of transaction between an agent and a respondent:



Simple complementary transactions occur in superficial working or social relationships. They are easily upset by simple crossed transactions. Overall, these are the most common types of transactions, which occur in rituals and pastimes.

**Ulterior Transactions**

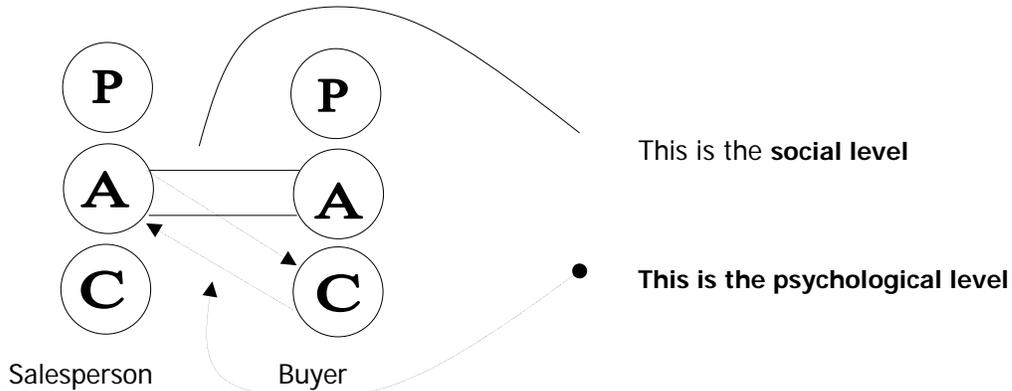
These are much more complex since they involve more than 2 ego states simultaneously. They do however form the basis of games. There are 2 types of these transactions:

**1. Angular Transactions (3 ego states)**

According to Berne (1964) it is salespeople who are particularly adept at this type of transaction.

**Example**

Salesman: " This one is better, but you can't afford it"  
 Buyer: "That's the one I'll buy"



**NB:** at both levels the transactions are complementary

**Analysis:**

Salesman states 2 facts: Adult-Adult at the social level. However, at the psychological level he is aiming at the Child in the buyer.

Buyer decides in whilst in their Child. So in a child-like manner the buyer thinks "Huh! I'm as good as anyone - I'll show him!" and responds (in a fit of pique?) with his Child, and buys the product.

**Consider:** Could this be used in a classroom? (Perhaps to persuade students to do something without telling them overtly)

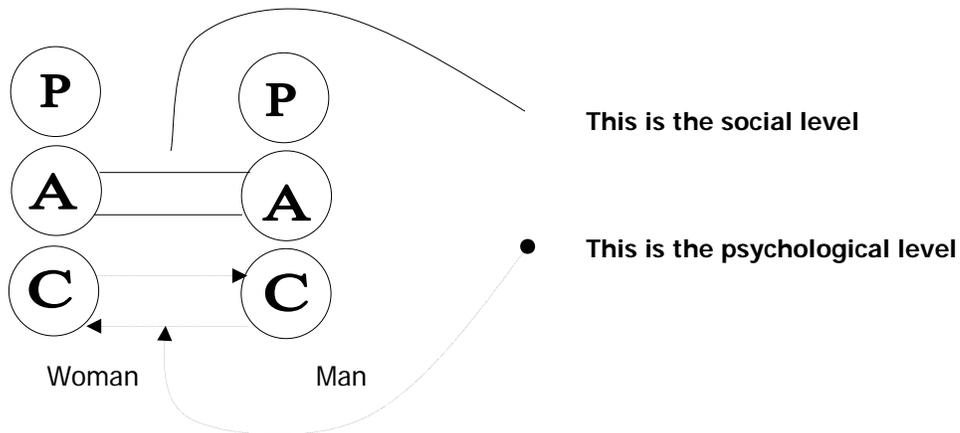
**2. Duplex transaction (4 ego states)**

These occur particularly in flirtation situations

**Example**

Woman: " Come in for a coffee - you can view my etchings."

Man " Yes - I have always liked good copper etchings"



**Analysis:** Social level — an Adult - Adult conversation about etchings  
Psychological level — Child - Child conversation about sex.

On the surface, the Adult is in control, but in games of this nature the Child often determines the outcome.

**Summary**

Transactions can be classified as; complementary or crossed and they can be simple or ulterior. The latter can be further subdivided as; angular or duplex.

## **Transactions used for Structuring Time**

Earlier it was stated that when individuals come together in a group they attempt to structure their time in ways, which lend themselves to psychological analysis. In this section we will examine the basis of some of the recognised structuring processes.

### **1. Procedures and Rituals**

These are the simplest forms of transactions

**Procedure:** a series of simple complementary, Adult - Adult, transaction

They are used for dealing with the realities of everyday living e.g. enquiring about train timetables. It is the processing of objective information to lead to a conclusion, which is the focus. If the Parent or Child interfere then the 'procedure' may be less efficient at dealing with a task.

Consider:

Can Q&A be used in a classroom to assist the Adult in formulating a 'procedure'?  
(Is this the basis for learning and/or applying knowledge?)

**Ritual:** a series of complementary transactions by the Parent. They occur as a result of social programming, usually by our parent, in earlier parts of our lives. They offer a safe way of structuring time and are aimed at basic reward seeking. Strokes can be gained from rituals in very predictable ways.

**Consider:** two people meeting in a corridor;

1. "Hi, how are you?"
2. "Morning - I am fine thanks; how are you?"
1. "Oh, I am OK"
2. "OK; I will catch you later"
1. "Yes; see you again!"

Strokes occur in this scenario by virtue of being enquired after and being recognised. If this pattern doesn't go through as expected by either party then one of them will be psychologically unsettled - this may cause problems socially?

**Common thread:** both rituals and procedures are stereotyped i.e. they are predictable in the way they will run.

**Comment:** Rituals may be useful in a lesson by setting a healthy tone in which the principle of stroking can be established subconsciously.

### **2. Pastimes**

These are simple complementary transactions, usually starting and ending with a procedure or ritual, but always having just one theme. They structure a period of time through 'chatter' or 'argument' and may even convey information to parties involved. Usually they occur at large gatherings such as parties or the start of a meeting.

They allow all 'players' to seek advantages from the transactions in terms of strokes, related to their idiosyncrasies and dominant ego state.

They are used by the Child as the basis of social selection (friends) although in some people the Adult can be activated to override the Child e.g. a businessman seeking contacts at a party, that he can later follow - up.

An important advantage from pastimes can be the confirmation or stabilisation of an individual's role (person). Stroking or the lack of antagonism to a transaction can help to confirm the role. An individual's role is governed by their mental attitude and may be formed subconsciously during early childhood (ages 1-7 years).

Unless somebody intervenes an individual will seek to stabilise their role through strokes, and will try to twist opposing situations into justifications of their role.

Consider:

- Teaching methods can use pastimes e.g. discussion, Q&A, case study, group work.
- How can we use 'role stabilisation' in our teaching? (challenge views ideas and beliefs through divergent teaching to generate new thoughts).

Pastimes serve to maintain stereotypes unless there is an external influence trying to challenge this.

They can be pleasant if the transactions are executed with people who have benevolent or constructive positions to maintain.

**Consider:** kinds of discussions that occur at parties, for example

### **3. Games**

These are the basis of social dynamics, and are once again used to structure time. They are on an on-going series of complementary ulterior transactions, progressing to predictable outcomes. (Berne 1964). The recurring transactions are superficially plausible but they have a concealed motivation.

The 'ulterior' nature and the fact that there is a "pay off" (psychologically) for both parties usually with a dramatic quality, differentiates them from rituals or pastimes.

**Note:** Angular transactions ——— often used by confidence artists to play elaborate games

Duplex transactions ——— used subconsciously by all individuals and form the most important aspect of social living.

**NB:** the term 'play' is not used in the children's sense: it can be very serious here!

#### **Function of Games:**

In normal daily life there is little opportunity for intimacy, and some forms of intimacy are impossible!

Therefore, games are played as a psychological substitute. Strokes are achieved through games and so they are necessary and desirable for a healthy mentality.

The games we play are governed by our personality and dominant ego state. Part of the "pay off" in games is the stabilising effect on roles. Also, during game play the strokes can be both psychological and physical - leading to biological health of the individual.

**Note:** games usually have their roots during the development of the infant (age 2->8 years). If the individual can be subtly made aware of their child - like behaviour, then any inappropriate behaviour can be altered

**Consider can a teacher in a classroom use this?**

Consider this scenario:

A student asks to go to the toilet. The teacher says "yes". A few minutes later another asks.... This goes on.

- How could the teacher react to amend this pattern of behaviour?
- What advantages ("pay off ") are there for the students in this game?

**Reference:**

Berne, E. (1964) *Games People Play*. London: Penguin Books