



## TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

Transactional Analysis gives us a simple and practical method for understanding human behaviour. It also provides a useful tool for examining frustrations, confusions or ineffective communication.

Have you ever said to someone, "Don't talk to me like a child"?

Another familiar phrase is, "Let's talk man to man", with the inference that one or both parties has not spoken honestly, candidly or without fear - and maybe for a very good reason. Not getting into a 'man to man' conversation may be an act of self-preservation, and may also entail that you act and talk in a submissive or child-like way. One, of say two, antagonists adopting the more senior and intimidating role in a confrontation will usually mean that both will avoid a potentially dangerous situation

The 'leadership' style of management involves accepting responsibility for the outcome of any given task, but at the same time bringing staff forward in respect of increased knowledge and experience gained through your leadership. With this preferred style this also means knowing when to have an 'adult to child' relationship, or an 'adult to adult' one.

### 1. Adult to Child

Adult: "That report must be on my desk tomorrow morning."

Child: "But I have to go out tonight."

Adult: "I don't care, I want it by tomorrow morning or else."

### 2. Child to Child

Child 1: "I'm going to be in trouble if you don't have that report ready by tomorrow."

Child 2: "It's not my fault, you never helped me."

Child 1: "It's not my job and you never asked for help"

### 3. Adult to Adult

Adult 1: "Can you have that report on my desk tomorrow morning?"

Adult 2: "A bit of a problem, I have to take my wife out tonight for our anniversary"

Adult 1: "If we both come in an hour early tomorrow will we be able to finish it?"

Adult 2: "Yes"

Adult 1: "Good, see you then and have a great night"

The obvious approach to the 'report on my desk' scenario would be No 3 (Adult to Adult) as this ensures the participation and effort of the subordinate member of staff in the task. No1 (Adult to Child) is also acceptable depending on the individuals involved. The crux of this issue is that you are aware of the method you use: i.e. if you use 'Adult to Child' without consciously adopting such a manner you would have little respect for the staff involved.

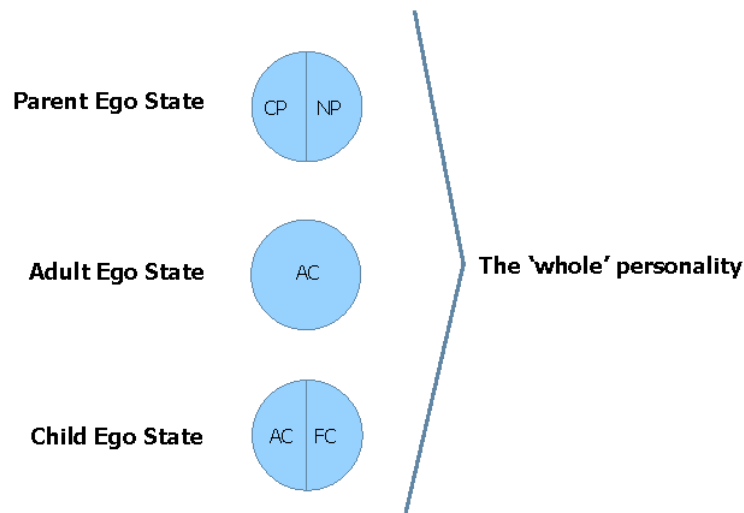


We all want to be asked to do things, to have a say, to input something to the task and to be respected as an individual. However, many managers have little time for effectively conveying or delegating business tasks. Early mornings, desk-bound lunches and 'stopping late' in the office means little time for quality communication or presentation. It is very difficult to 'free up' time in an under-resourced environment. By using the right words with an encouraging presentation (Adult to Adult) it will take the same time as dictating a key task in an 'Adult to Child' manner, with vastly different outcomes in performance and inter-personal relations.

TA is based on the following premise:

- People learn at an early age ways of feeling and behaving that tend to become habitual, regardless of their continued appropriateness.
- Feelings cause behaviour.
- Feelings and behaviour can be controlled.
- You can help other people to modify their feelings and behaviour.

## Ego States



## The Parent Ego State

The parent ego state is characterised by attitudes and language that are to do with authority, such as parents, teachers, bosses, etc. When we are in the parent ego state we are likely to be using attitudes and language that are to do with:

- setting limits
- advising and guiding
- admonishing and criticising
- protecting and nurturing
- perpetuating traditional behaviour and attitudes
- prescribing rules



The language used will be judgmental, e.g. 'don't', 'must', 'should', 'can't', 'good', 'bad', 'ought'.

The **critical parent** subdivision will involve behaviour, language and attitudes that are suggested by the title, for example frowning and the accusing finger, judgmental and condescending views of others and words like 'ought', 'must', 'terrible'.

The **nurturing parent** subdivision will involve behaviour, language and attitudes that are suggested by the title, for example a smile, the arm around the shoulder, obvious caring about someone else's well being, a concern with growth, and language which is encouraging, such as 'Well done', 'That's really good' and 'I'm proud of you'.

### The Child Ego State

This reflects the child that remains in all of us. The behaviour, attitudes and language are those we used and experienced as young children. The child ego state is thus characterised by such things as having fun, entering into things with energy and abandon, being uninhibited by complexities, but also by responding to authority figures by being polite, compliant and rebellious.

The **adapted child** subdivision concerns behaviour and language that seeks to gain either attention or approval from those in authority. It may be naughty or 'goody-goody' to excess. The person who always says 'Yes' in order to please is in the adapted child ego state, as is the habitual whiner.

The **free child** is not concerned with adult ways. S/he will behave in a natural, unspoilt way that is to do with having fun, exploring the unknown, trusting other people and generally being happy. The free child will use language like 'I want' or 'Because it's there'. Spontaneous emotional outbursts of laughter or crying are associated with this ego state.

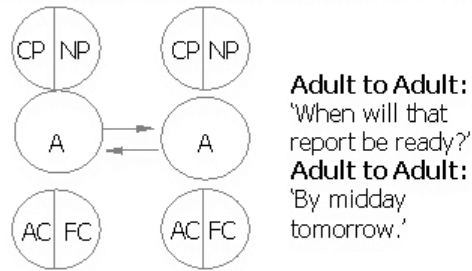
### The Adult Ego State

The adult ego state is rational and logical and does not involve bias or feelings. It has nothing to do with being 'grown up' or mature in the usual sense of the word 'adult'. The adult thinks things through, using available data and comes to decisions. It is an intellectual, perhaps rather detached, ego state.



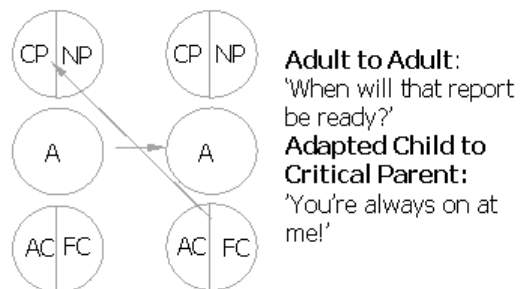
## Example Transactions

An example of a complementary transaction between 2 people:



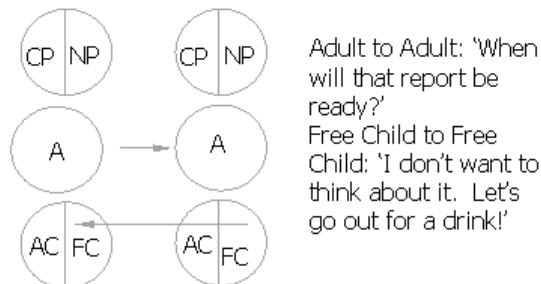
The initiator expects, and received, an adult response.

An example of a crossed transaction between two people:



The initiator expects an adult response but does not get one.

**NB: A transaction such as:**

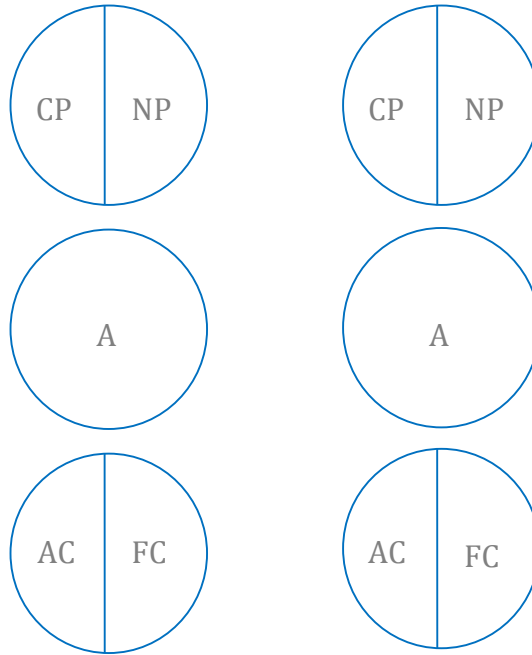


is still crossed (even though the lines do not cross), because the ego states involved in the stimulus and response differ.



### Transactions Exercise

Decide which of the following transactions are *complementary* (i.e. between matching ego states) or *crossed* (i.e. between non-matching ego states). Try also to identify the ego states involved. The following diagram may help you to plot the transactions:



(The first example is worked for you below.)

	Stimulus/ Response	Complementary / Crossed transaction	Ego states
<b>T1</b>	Stimulus: 'When will that report be ready?' Response: 'I don't want to think about it. Let's go out for a drink!'	Crossed	A - A FC - FC
<b>T2</b>	Stimulus: 'How did I do?' Response: 'You did OK.'		
<b>T3</b>	Stimulus: 'Let's throw an office party!' Response: 'Oh, for goodness sake, we're far too busy!'		
<b>T4</b>	Stimulus: 'Shall we work on this idea together?' Response: 'When are you free?'		
<b>T5</b>	Stimulus: 'I'm worried about you.' Response: 'There's nothing wrong with me, unlike some others around here I could mention.'		



	Stimulus/ Response	Complementary / Crossed transaction	Ego states
<b>T6</b>	Stimulus: 'I'm worried about you.' Response: 'I know my work is not up to scratch at the moment. Can I talk to you about it?'		
<b>T7</b>	Stimulus: 'Pull yourself together!' Response: 'How dare you speak to me like that!'		

### FURTHER READING/INFORMATION:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional\\_analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional_analysis)

Eric Berne, (1964), *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships*, Balantine Books

Thomas Harris (1996), *'I'm OK-You're OK'. 'Staying OK'*. Avon books

Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward (1971), *Born to Win: Transactional Analysis with Gestalt Experiments*, Da Capo Press Inc