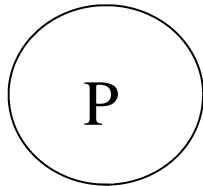


## Transactional Analysis (Communication)

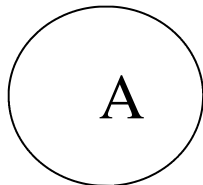
**Transactional analysis** is a psychoanalytic therapy wherein social transactions are analyzed to determine the ego state of the patient (whether parent-like, childlike, or adult-like) as a basis for understanding behavior. This basically means we all communicate using these modes.

In transactional analysis, a person can be taught to alter the ego state as a way to solve emotional problems and communicate with others for effectively.



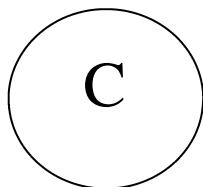
### PARENT EGO STATE

Behaviours, thoughts and feelings copied from parent figures



### ADULT EGO STATE

Behaviours thoughts and feelings that are a direct response to the here and now situation



### CHILD EGO STATE

Behaviours, thoughts and feelings replayed from childhood

Further to this, the parent type can have two presentations. A **CRITICAL** parent or a **NURTURING** parent. Often, these mirror our own parents, and sometimes, we may operate in both modes depending on the situation, or one mode may be mostly dominant most of the time.

A child type of mode can have a **FREE-CHILD** or **OBEDIENT-CHILD**. Whichever mode you most operate in, when in your child mode, is probably the one which was supported by your parents when you were a child, therefore this got developed well.

## Parent, Adult, Child Ego States Transactional Analysis Communication aid

Example of ego states.

Jane is driving along a road crowded with traffic. Second by second she is observing the position and speed of other vehicles around her. She is looking out for road signs. She controls her own car in response to what is going on around her. Jane is in the here and now. Jane is in her *Adult ego state*.

Just then, another driver passes Jane and cuts in sharply in front of her. For a fraction of a second, Jane feels frightened that the two cars are going to collide. She flashes a glance in her mirror, sees the road behind is clear and slows slightly so that a crash is avoided. All the time she has stayed in her adult ego state. Her feeling of scare was an appropriate response to the here and now danger, helping her body to react more quickly in order to avoid collision.

Now, with the other driver vanishing up the road ahead, Jane shakes her head and purses her lips in disapproval. Turning to her passenger she says 'Drivers like that ought not to be on the road'! At this moment Jane has moved to her **Parent Ego state**. When she was little she had often sat by her father whilst he was driving and watched him showing disapproval at other drivers, shaking his head and pursing his lips in this way.

A minute or two later, Jane pulls off the road at her office. Looking at her watch, because of the heavy traffic, she is late for an important meeting with her boss. Her heart sinks for a moment, she feels panic stricken. Now Jane has shifted in to her **child ego state**. She has contacted old memories of arriving at school late and feeling scared of the punishment she imagined she might get from her school teacher. Her feeling of panic is a response to her old memories, not to anything that is likely to happen in her grown up situation.

At this moment, Jane is not consciously aware that she is re-playing her childhood. If however you were to ask her, 'does this situation remind you of anything in your childhood'? She might then bring that old schoolroom scene back to conscious memory. Alternatively she might have buried those painful recollections so thoroughly that she would not be able to remember them immediately.

As she now re-experiences her childhood feelings and thoughts, Jane also shows some behaviours which she first showed all those years ago as a schoolgirl. Her heart races. She lifts her hand to beside her mouth, and her eyes widen. From close up you would be able to see that she has broken out into a cold sweat.

Then after a moment or two, Jane thinks to herself, 'wait a minute! What am I getting scared of? My boss is a reasonable woman; she will understand why I am late. Anyway we can make up the lost time by taking a bit off the coffee break'. Jane is back into her **adult ego state**. Her passenger sees her relax and take her hand away from her mouth. Jane's face breaks into a smile and she laughs. Her laugh is the laugh of a grown up woman that she is. It sounds quite different from the nervous giggle of a scared child.

At any given time, a person experiences and manifests his or her personality through a mixture of behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. Typically, according to TA, there are three ego-states that people consistently use: parent-like, childlike, or adult-like.

This way of communicating works well when everyone helpfully stays within the expected mode during a 'transaction' (communication). It works badly and arguments or bad feeling happens when modes do not match.

*Nb. It is NOT necessarily a bad thing to respond from your child mode if the transaction is appropriate despite the phrase 'childish' being used as a negative*

## Transaction Examples

### Complementary Example

If in parent mode we say to our partner

**PARENT to CHILD**

**CHILD responds to PARENT**

*'Oh you've done it again– forgot to put the bins out'* (parent to child)  
and the partner says

*'Oh sorry, I promise I will try not to forget again'* (child to parent)

Here we have a complimentary transaction. The parent is addressing the child in their partner and it is the child within them that answers back. This complements each other.

\* \* \*

### Crossed Transaction

A crossed transaction is when a particular ego state is addressed but it is answered from a **different ego state**.

**PARENT TO CHILD**

**CRITICAL PARENT TO CHILD**

*'Oh you've done it again, forgot to put the bins out'* (PARENT TO CHILD)

*'Well I've been very busy today, unlike you so perhaps it's about time you pulled your weight and doing something for yourself you can start with the bins'* (CRITICAL PARENT TO CHILD)

This is a crossed transaction. This can cause arguments and resentments to build in a relationship.

\* \* \*

### **More about Parent, Adult and Child states in more detail.**

- **Parent** a state in which people behave, feel, and think in response to an unconscious mimicking of how their parents (or other parental figures) acted, or how they interpreted their parent's actions. For example, a person may shout at someone out of frustration because they learned from an influential figure in childhood the lesson that this seemed to be a way of relating that worked.
- **Adult** a state of the ego which is most like a computer processing information and making predictions absent of major emotions that could affect its operation. Learning to strengthen the Adult is a goal of TA. While a person is in the Adult ego state, he/she is directed towards an objective appraisal of reality.
- **Child** a state in which people behave, feel and think similarly to how they did in childhood. For example, a person who receives a poor evaluation at work may respond by looking at the floor, and crying or pouting, as they used to when scolded as a child. Conversely, a person who receives a good evaluation may respond with a broad smile and a joyful gesture of thanks. The Child is the source of emotions, creation, recreation, spontaneity and intimacy.

## **More Kinds of transactions Examples**

### **Complementary transactions.**

Example 1:

- A: "Have you written the report?" (Adult to Adult)  
 B: "Yes - I'm about to email it to you." (Adult to Adult)

Example 2:

- A: "Would you like to skip this meeting and go watch a film with me instead?"  
 (Child to Child)  
 B: "I'd love to - I don't want to work anymore, what should we go and see?" (Child to Child)

Example 3:

- A: "You should have your room tidy by now!" (Parent to Child)  
 B: "Will you stop hassling me? I'll do it eventually!" (Child to Parent).

### **Crossed transactions**

Example 1a:

- A: "Have you written that report?" (Adult to Adult)  
 B: "Will you stop hassling me? I'll do it eventually!" (Child to Parent)

This is a crossed transaction likely to produce problems in the workplace. A may respond with a Parent to Child transaction. For instance:

- A: "If you don't change your attitude, you'll get fired."

Example 2a:

- A: "Is your room tidy yet?" (Parent to Child)  
 B: "I'm just going to do it, actually." (Adult to Adult)

This is a more positive crossed transaction. There is however the risk that A will feel aggrieved that B is acting irresponsibly and not playing their role, and the conversation will develop into:

- A: "I can never trust you to do things!" (Parent to Child)  
 B: "Why don't you believe anything I say?" (Child to Parent)  
 ... which can continue indefinitely.

### **Ulterior transactions**

Further differences can include speaking with Parent words using child body language or speaking in child like tone from child mode, but parental body language and of course, other variations.

When the crossed transactions are jointly understood by the people involved then things can go very well. However, sometimes, especially during conflict, among strangers or people who are not on the same wavelength, this can be confusing and cause problems and misunderstandings or be part of manipulation and controlling patterns and can mean you are being un-clear in your communication.

For instance:

#### **POSITIVE**

A: "I need you to stay late at the office with me." (Adult words), body language indicates sexual intent (flirtatious Child)

B: "Of course." (Adult response to Adult statement), winking or grinning (Child accepts the hidden motive).

#### **NEGATIVE**

A: 'I need you to stay late at the office with me' (adult words, body language indicates sexual intent (flirtatious child)

B: (not on the same wave length), feels uncomfortable, possibly frightened, insulted, shocked, bored of hearing this, powerful but dismissive or angry etc. 'Stop hassling me!' (Child to child- does NOT accept hidden motive)