

# A Summary of Transactional Analysis Concepts I Use

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Excerpted from "How Did You Become a Transactional Analyst?"  
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**"How did you become a transactional analyst?"** I am often asked that question when I tell people what I do. I answer that originally my training as a therapist was in Freudian psychoanalysis and included eight years of personal psychoanalysis. I practiced as such for 14 years, treating both children and adults. Increasingly, the process seemed overly ponderous, time consuming and therefore not cost effective for patients, but I could find no better techniques.

Then, in 1965, I read Dr. Eric Berne's (1961) *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* and soon after I took time off from my practice in Chicago to go to California to train with the late David Kupfer at the then recently founded Transactional Analysis Training Institute in Carmel. While there I also had many stimulating contacts with Berne and personally experienced what many, including myself, call the life-saving value of "TA". On returning to Chicago I transformed my practice to Transactional Analysis, started doing workshops to teach this method, and have been a dedicated transactional analyst ever since, although nowadays, partially retired, I limit myself to conducting workshops in various countries.

Inevitably, after finding out how I became involved, there follows a question such as: "And just what is Transactional Analysis?" Sometimes the questioner is just curious; at other times he or she is considering making a referral or perhaps signing up for a workshop or joining a TA Association. To some, I give a long answer, covering a good deal of information, with others I summarize briefly.

It occurred to me it might be of use to those interested in either a long or a short version of my answer to write it down in one place, which is what I have done in this article. Whether you read carefully through the entire article or just focus on a few sections, I hope this will be of use to those who are interested in the question of what Transactional Analysis is and how it is practiced.

## To Answer Your Next Question

Like many other therapies, Transactional Analysis therapy is primarily "talk therapy". We work on the basis of a specific body of theory originally developed by Dr. Eric Berne and elaborated in various ways by others of us in the field since Berne's premature death in 1970.

Berne was a practicing psychoanalyst before he developed the theory and practice of Transactional Analysis. Originally it was used in psychotherapy or treatment, as he called it, particularly in group treatment, but it soon became clear that it was also useful in a wide variety of fields, including counseling, organizational work, and education.

Although Berne's first published book, *The Mind in Action* (1947) offered a simple description of basic psychoanalytic concepts, he became increasingly critical of psychoanalytic therapy. As a result, he began the San Francisco Psychiatry Seminars (which eventually became the International Transactional Analysis Association), to teach his own approach. He also spelled out his theory in his basic books, "Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy," (1961), "The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups," (1963), and "What do you say after you say Hello?" (1972) the latter of which was published posthumously. By now, about 40 years later, through many books and journals and conferences around the world, several generations of transactional analysis practitioners have debated and added much to the Berne's basic theory and practice.

For my part, I have dared to offer some major modifications of Berne's concepts, particularly regarding what he called "games" and "scripts", as well as developing a new view of what he referred to as "rackets" and racketeering. I discuss these later in this article, but before I do, I want to summarize the concepts and techniques that I consider indispensable to working as a therapist using transactional analysis. I will do so as simply as I can, so some of the theoretical material I will present here may suffer from some oversimplification and even some distortions, although I stand behind it.

Since Berne called himself a “better Freudian than the psychoanalysts” (E. Berne, personal communication, August 1965), I will begin by mentioning some general psychological assumptions based on Freud's discoveries. They were revolutionary in their time, more than 100 years ago, but are now so much a part of common discourse that they may seem obvious. However I will list them hereunder because they underlie all “talk therapy”. However you may want to skip to the next section for tenets of TA.

### Underlying Tenets from Freud

1. However rational, conscious, and capable of exerting will power human beings may be, they are nevertheless highly influenced, (often even governed) by instincts and/or drives that “energize” their thoughts and feelings and often determine their behavior.
2. These instincts and/or drives usually affect us outside of conscious awareness. They operate in the unconscious, which, as the name implies, differs from consciousness of self, or the “ego” (I, me,) that represents our identity.
3. To the conscious ego, Freud added the “super-ego”, which corresponds to conscience, and the “Id”, a cauldron of diverse untamed instincts and drives operating unconsciously. These keep affecting the individual, even as the ego seeks to control them, or to “sublimate” (transform) their manifestations into more socially acceptable channels. (e.g. the wish to murder and “cut up” people may be sublimated by becoming a surgeon who saves lives by “cutting up” patients.)
4. Classic psychoanalytic treatment focuses on bringing unconscious thoughts and feelings to consciousness so the client can gain new insights about seemingly unacceptable feelings or thoughts. The hope is that incapacitating symptoms are allayed when repressed wishes of the id are made conscious, but this is easier said than done and usually necessitates extensive analysis.
5. Originally Freud posited two basic drives, the self-enhancing survival drive of the ego, and the pleasure seeking sexual drive of the id. As a good Darwinian, Freud was impressed by how all creatures are driven by sexuality to create the next generation. . Later Freud became convinced that there is also a death drive. Rather than posit three drives, he lumped together the self-enhancing survival drive with the sexual drive and called it “libido’ or the life

drive, as opposed to the death drive, which Berne later named “mortido”. For Freud, mortido included aggression which he believed represents a way to deflect and turn outwards the attraction of death.

6. Whether we posit a battle in the unconscious between the ego-enhancing drive and the sexual drive, or between libido and mortido, or between the superego and the id, the important psychological issue is that there can be constant unconscious conflict going on about what feelings and thoughts may be brought to light or manifested as behaviors. Conflicts often relate to the super-ego's high standards and the ego's inability to distinguish between awareness of forbidden wishes and the feared likelihood of enactment of these wishes. As a result, we are likely to repress, and then deny, awareness of certain “forbidden” impulses, particularly those related to the sexual drive. However, some dim awareness of such “forbidden” feelings may appear in various forms of “acting out” and/or in fantasies, thus generating additional feelings of shame or guilt and further internal conflicts. Such conflicts may cause various psychosomatic ailments or symptoms such as anxiety, panic, phobias, and so on.
7. In disguised form, “unacceptable” wishes may appear in dreams or slips of the tongue or incidents of forgetfulness, offering clues about unconscious conflicts.
8. One of Freud's essential contributions was showing the extent to which we are influenced by childhood experiences: - how such experiences are not forgotten, but stored and usually combined with various feelings such as fear and shame. We resist bringing painful or scary childhood memories and fantasies to consciousness in order to avoid experiencing terrible feelings in the present, and instead rely on a whole system of psychological defenses to maintain repression.
9. Freud's work also led to the currently accepted recognition that just as we go through certain stages of physical and mental development before reaching adulthood, (e.g. there are specific age-periods at which a child can walk or talk, comprehend abstract concepts, enter puberty, etc.), so are there stages of emotional development that we must master in order to move on to emotional maturity.
10. Thus, it is no longer disputed that childhood experiences and fantasies play an important part

in determining the character and emotional stance of each individual, and that these must be considered, along with genetic factors, in treating seemingly intractable psychological disorders such as panic, anxiety, irrational phobias and sexual and relational problems in adults.

### Tenets of Transactional Analysis

Like Freud, Berne acknowledged that the self is not fully rational and conscious. However, while fully recognizing the importance of developmental stages and the impact of caretakers' messages during childhood, he was more concerned with a "here-and-now" practical approach to treating personality and communication problems than with establishing the historical origin of symptoms.

**Ego States.** Berne saw that in addition to the Freudian id and super-ego, the conscious self, or ego, - that we each experience as "me" - is itself not one unit. Actually, we each operate with at least three co-existing systems, or "ego-states," as he called them. He gave them the colloquial names of: "Parent", "Adult", and "Child".

Berne (1972) defined ego states as "coherent systems of thought, feeling, manifested by corresponding patterns of behavior" (p.11). Actually I prefer to substitute the words "body language" for "behavior," because the impulse for the corresponding behavior is not always evident, although it is experienced internally. The important issue about Berne's discovery of ego states is that each ego state is a distinct system of interacting feelings, thoughts and potential behaviors that differ from those of the other ego states.

This idea represents a significant departure from other theories and therapeutic approaches, which may distinguish between feelings, thoughts and behaviors, but fail to recognize that there are at least three different actively operating systems within which different kinds of thoughts and feelings may combine to determine behaviors in at least three potentially different ways.

For instance, there are times when I can almost hear it when I say to myself: "You are an idiot to have done (or said) that!" or "You're brilliant to have thought that". This kind of dialogue may also take place non-verbally, for I may feel pangs in my stomach when a part of me feels scared of someone in authority, another part

feels like lashing out against that person, and still another says "stop!" Then who is it that represents "me" in relation to others, and who is it who communicates with whom?

A transactional analyst will say that it was my Parent ego state who was addressing my Child ego state by criticizing her as an "idiot" or by praising her as "brilliant". And then, perhaps, my Child wanted to lash out in anger, but my Adult suddenly said "Stop and think!" In so doing my Adult was asking me to check out reality rather than allow my Child to react against someone just because of anger at my Parent.

My Child ego state (the word Child is capitalized when referring to as an ego state, by contrast to a reference to a chronological child) represents all the children I used to be, pictures or whom you might see in a series of snapshots taken of me as I was growing up. These children thought, felt, and acted over the years and continue to exist within me, not only as memories, but, most significantly, as systems of thinking, feeling and acting in the "here-and-now". Just as I did when I was little, my Child today may sometimes seek approval and adapt to what seems like an expectation of me, and at other times my Child may feel angry at an expectation and rebel.

My Parent ego state developed as I was growing up, taking on ideas, ways to behave, and values (including prejudices) from my different caretakers and the culture around me. This conglomerate often determines my values today, what I "should" be, or how I "should" act. Thus my Parent ego state may be supportive of my Child or that of others, or highly critical, according to values and ideas I have internalized. Lastly, in terms of development, my Adult grew out of experiences with "reality" and my increasing ability to reason and check assumptions with facts. (I put the word reality in quotes because some of reality is determined by the prevailing culture.) Ideally, this Adult can help me deal rationally with others so that I function well in the world. Theoretically, I could be "mature" all the time by using my Adult. (This is the assumption in psychoanalysis, where the goal is to reach total maturity.) In truth, however, it is not possible to achieve total maturity all the time; - nor is it desirable, for the world would be a dull place if peopled only by computer-like individuals. So, while it is important to learn how to call on one's Adult, especially in times of crisis, for me it is equally important to use both my Child and Parent. In fact, it is mostly thanks

to my Child that I developed the sense of self that connects me to my genetic roots and my potentials in life.

**Strokes and Transactions.** The human infant is born helpless, ill equipped to attend to his/ her survival. Berne used the term "strokes" for units of care, as first registered by the infant on being held and caressed. What he demonstrated is that we continue to need both actual strokes and symbolic strokes throughout our lives, which is why and how we are interdependent. Whether it be the actual touch of a handshake or the symbolic "touch" of a smile, or even of a telephone call, we continue to depend on strokes from others for a sense of existence. In fact, this underlies all communication among people. As Berne put it, we "transact" with others by exchanging strokes, just the way we might exchange goods in the market place for mutual benefit.

If you consider that each one of us operates interchangeably out of three different ego states, which ego state of mine is it that may transact with any one of yours? How can I be sure to reach the ego state in you that I hope to address in order to obtain the strokes I want in exchange?

For instance John might say to Susie, "Here, let me show you the way" when he comes upon her wandering in confusion in the hallway before a meeting. His helpful comment might be met with a grateful response, yet the following week the same offer will be met with a frown and indicating "mind your own business!" Why? In both instances he was operating with a "rescuing" Parent, (although perhaps his Child also wanted to relate to Susie). But whereas the first time Susie had been worried about being late and so responded with her Child, the second time she was in Parent, busy with her thoughts and resentful of the interruption. So, much to John's dismay, she responded with her Critical Parent ego state instead of from the Child ego state he expected.

Transactional analysis gets its name precisely from the idea that unsatisfactory transactions between people, - or what we call "crossed transactions" that are frustrating to one or both parties - can be "analyzed" without having to resort to an analysis of total personalities. Thus, misunderstandings can be clarified, especially when both parties want to foster a relationship or partnership of any kind.

What my Child wants and expresses, or what my Parent values do not necessarily correspond to what others like or approve of, and their response to me may lead me to feel vastly misunderstood or to react in ways that may anger or hurt others. Then they, in turn, may react in ways that may hurt or anger me, and so on. In most instances we can recognize when, how or why specific transactional patterns go wrong (or continue to go wrong). We can thus help clients to understand better what occurs in others or themselves in different situations and to make better choices to further their goals.

I will not go into detail here about how different transactions can be analyzed (as "parallel", "complementary", or "crossed") or how we distinguish between "here-and-now" transactions and those that are habitual for a particular individual who seeks help, so he or she keeps setting up the likelihood of frustrating crossed transactions.

However I do want to add here that strokes are not always experienced as "positive", like pleasant caresses or "negative", like blows, and that what I may like when I am in one ego state I may dislike in another, or under different circumstances, as in the example of Susie above. There are also "crooked strokes" that seem positive, but have negative effects, thus generating what other schools of therapy call "double bind" consequences.

Ultimately, any kind of strokes may be preferable to none, for otherwise a person may feel "discounted", like a piece of unimportant furniture. Some individuals can become quite provocative when they feel discounted, and they may seek to obtain attention at all costs. There are also people who actually prefer to invite negative or crooked strokes, because such input corresponds to the kinds of strokes they were raised on and thus feel like "homemade soup." Even though it may contain some poisonous ingredients, it is reminiscent of what they were "fed" in childhood. It may take some time for them to develop a taste for healthier forms of nourishment.

One reason why it is useful to work with clients in groups rather than in individual sessions is that in a group it is easier for both the client and therapist to recognize helpful or harmful patterns of transactions. However, for practical reasons, treatment, counseling or coaching can also take place in individual sessions.

## Treatment Considerations

**Contracts.** An essential first step in transactional analysis treatment is to establish a "contract" with the client's Adult. This may be accomplished quickly or require several sessions, depending on how upset the client is and how willing he or she is to use his or her Adult to determine, with the therapist, what the goals of treatment can be rather than maintain unrealistic magical expectations that can never be met. Sooner or later, it is important for therapist and client to spell out what both seek to achieve, and how they intend to go about it. (In what follows I will use the pronoun "she" for therapist or counselor, and "he" for client.)

**Character Type.** What I call a person's "character type" is based on his preferred ego state. Roughly, I distinguish between two types of individuals, with subdivisions for each: namely Type I, or "Undersure", and Type II, or "Oversure".

Type I tends to want help and guidance even in situations where he is clearly able to decide for himself. Thus, he tends to function a great deal in the Adapted and/or Rebellious Child ego state.

Type II spends more time in the Parent ego state than in Child, insisting on his values and/or view of the world, and giving advice either as a Rescuer" or Critical Parent.

The basic character type tends to get established in childhood, usually between the ages of 2 – 6.

Persons who develop a Type I character have usually experienced a good deal of domination from caretakers, either in a critical, or in a suffocating, "loving" manner. As a result, they learned that they were better off obeying, adapting and/or depending on the leadership or control of others than seeking to become independent. When they are assertive, it is likely to be in the form of rebellion.

Persons who develop a Type II character have had to take on much more responsibility, during childhood than was appropriate for their age (e.g., with sick or non-functioning parents) or they were pushed to excel and show off beyond their own intrinsic needs. They feel valuable only when "rescuing" or getting others to follow them.

Neither one of these character types is good or bad per se, unless the person lacks flexibility and rigidly tries to keep functioning most of the

time in accordance with his type rather than allowing Adult assessment of a given situation and other people. Such individuals are functioning primarily according to type on a "third degree" level, which is pathological.

**Transactions according to type:** In the course establishing a contract, I seek to determine for myself, as therapist, at least tentatively, what the client's character type is, because it is crucial for identifying patterns of harmful, repetitive transactions.

Obviously Type I and Type II persons are likely to engage in what we call "complementary" transactions, whereby Type I will seek advice (Child to Parent of the other) and Type II will be glad to give advice (Parent to Child of the other). So, for a while, an Undersure and an Oversure person may get along beautifully.

Eventually, however, either one or the other may not be as motivated to function according to type as is the other. So there may come a time when Undersure, whose Child expects support from Oversure, may be disappointed because Oversure may be using the Critical Parent instead of the Rescuing Parent or, - worse! Oversure wants to use his own Child (or Adult) for a change. The result is a crossed transaction. Similarly Oversure, eagerly dispensing advice to Undersure, may feel "discounted" (i.e. not sufficiently appreciated) if Undersure responds rebelliously or wants to use his own Parent for a change. It is easy to imagine any number of variations of the painful frustration can occur for either type when seeking to communicate with the other in a way that once seemed satisfactory but now fails to generate the desired responses. If either partner or both operate at a "third degree" level, crossed transactions can lead to very dangerous behavior. Communication can become just as bad or worse between two persons of a similar type if they operate on a "third degree" level. After enjoying much agreement for a while, two Type II persons may eventually become too competitive, or two Type I persons may feel let down by the other at crucial times, and sink into depression.

**A (Sad) Merry-go-Round.** Sometimes, in a relationship, one partner may initiate transactions as a "Victim" and the other may operate as a "Rescuer". However, if either one becomes frustrated, because transactions are not going according to expectations, he or she may switch ego state and suddenly become a

"Persecutor" of the other, after which they may both end up as victims. The words Victim, Rescuer and Persecutor were first used by Karpman (1968) in describing such changes under the name "drama triangle" by analogy to changes of roles in Greek tragedies. The way out of this pattern is with the help of the Adult, preferably that of both participants, and perhaps with the help of the therapist's Adult to analyze both the "parallel" transactions that seemed to go well and the reasons for the shifts that led to crossed transactions. An inexperienced therapist who does not recognize what is going on between the two parties may herself end up as a victim by rashly entering the fray as the unwary Rescuer of one or another of the parties.

**Survival Conclusions.** Human babies and young children lack the kinds of life-saving instincts that keep other animals from recklessly endangering themselves. Toddlers may cheerfully crawl off a balcony or into a swimming pool or a fire unless they are conditioned to appropriate caution by means of messages given with positive or negative strokes ("Darling, watch out!" or "Don't let me catch you going there!") Such cautions get integrated into the Child's implicit memory as "survival conclusions". Later they influence behavior just the way self-protective instincts influence other animals. For instance we would recoil seemingly automatically if someone seemed likely to push us out of a window, although such a reaction was developed during childhood without our consciously remembering exactly when and how we learned it.

Unfortunately, many survival conclusions that may have been useful in the context of a person's childhood family no longer serve the grown individual and may be downright harmful. We call them "archaic" survival conclusions, to distinguish them from the ones that continue to be useful. For example, when John's boss came into his office slamming the door, John felt an almost irresistible impulse to hide under his desk. After he identified the archaic origin of this impulse – learning as a child to hide when his violent father slammed the door on coming home drunk - John was able to use his Adult to maintain his composure after a door slammed, even though he sometimes still felt a little twinge of fear when his boss slammed the door. Archaic survival conclusions can also be set when someone is shamed in childhood. Children are particularly vulnerable to shame during the 2 - 4 year age period, and some people carry

some unnecessary tendencies to be ashamed about perfectly normal wishes or behaviors, for instance in the sexual arena. In many instances, the unwanted symptoms, phobias, anxieties, inhibitions or behavior patterns about which people may come into treatment are related to a variety of archaic survival conclusions carried by their Child, sometimes reinforced and/or contradicted by subsequent remembered instructions integrated into their Parent.

To identify particular archaic survival conclusions that may generate unwanted problems, I seek information from the client to visualize one or another early situations that may have generated such a conclusion during the client's childhood. We might proceed by trial and error, or transactions among the participants of a treatment group or even an erroneous hypothesis will stimulate a long-lost memory, either of the events that caused a harmful archaic conclusion, or of family anecdotes that described what happened. If we are quite clueless, I might use the "hot-seat" technique developed by Fritz Perls (1969). This involves asking the client to temporarily let go of his Adult and to dialogue with an empty chair representing various authority persons from childhood that are now still powerfully integrated into his Parent and/or Child, or are projected onto others. I use the hot-seat technique only occasionally, however, because even though the results can be immediate and quite startling, they are often not maintained sufficiently after the client leaves treatment due to the fact that the client's Adult is not involved in the process. However, with a temporary sub-contract, the Hot Seat technique can be useful to identify lost memories of painful childhood experiences or to work with significant repetitive dreams. Data obtained in this manner can also help the client later to modify harmful archaic conclusions.

**Substitute Feelings and Attitudes.** It is also during the 2 - 6 year age period that children learn words that correspond to their emotions, so they can correctly name and identify a feeling or an attitude (e/g. "I'm scared", or....happy, angry, jealous, sad, etc. Unfortunately in many families certain emotions are mislabeled or discounted; children from such families may grow up either without the ability to recognize some of their own feelings or emotional reactions, or believing that certain feelings are monstrous, while the manifestation of other feelings or attitudes will gain them approval. For instance, a child may be told when his dog dies: "at

the death of his little dog: "Aren't you lucky! Be happy you're getting a bigger dog!" without any recognition that he/she may feel sad and need to grieve. Having been stroked if he seems glad and discounted if he seems sad, the idea that he might be sad at times just does not exist in his consciousness. He may grow up showing cheerful happiness or a "stiff upper lip", whenever grief tries to surface, even at times of severe loss. This is how some people learn to substitute anger for sadness, or sadness for anger or fear, or generosity for greed or envy, and so on. Once such individuals are grown, people around them often sense that there is something phony when they exhibit such substitute feelings. Berne called such feelings "rackets", because he thought that people who manifested what were obviously phony feelings or attitudes were extorting strokes the way gangster racketeers extort "contributions" to false charities. In my opinion, he did not sufficiently allow for the fact that the substitution process develops at such an early age that it is unconscious and not deliberately exploitative. Unfortunately, using the term "rackets" to refer to substitute feelings or attitudes is still part of transactional analysis vocabulary.

**Emotional Racketeers.** We use the term "racketeers" to describe individuals who transact with others by repeatedly displaying substitute feelings or attitudes. Actually, racketeers are quite pathetic, although often annoying, because they are not aware of how they substitute artificial feelings or attitudes for underlying feelings. Since they nebulously sense that something is wrong, without quite knowing what, they may keep exhibiting their phony feelings in transacting with others, all the while hoping for compensatory strokes. This often backfires disastrously. In their desperate quest for compensatory strokes, because they themselves often feel inchoately that there is something wrong with their approach to others, they will often reinforce their character type to a second or third degree. Eventually they are likely to meet with rejection (through crossed transactions), even from partners who may have been supportive initially. Excessive frustration generates inner chaos and provokes sudden, abrupt switches of a racketeer's habitual ego state to the opposite one (e.g. if the usual preferred ego state was Child, a sudden switch to Parent, and vice versa). As a result, there may be unexpected violence if the racketeer operates on a third degree level. Shakespeare offers

classic examples of this process. For instance Hamlet, a Type I Undersure character, after repeatedly feeling that he lacks support from his mother and Ophelia, finally switches from his habitual ineffectual depressed Child ego state to a murderous Parent. Or Othello, a Type II Oversure character, operates habitually from Parent with substitute attitudes of invulnerability and lack of jealousy until he becomes convinced of Desdemona's alleged infidelity, at which point he he collapses as a convulsive, inarticulate Child. Then, when shamed about this by Iago, he sees no other way than to kill Desdemona and then himself.

To help racketeers if they seek treatment, - which many of them do, precisely because of the nebulous feeling that something is going wrong in their relations to others, - they must first be supported so they feel safe in the group context. Then, rather than continue to offer them strokes to their rackets, which many inexperienced therapists do in the mistaken assumption that they should keep offering support, it is important to nudge these clients to recognize what they actually experience under stress and then correctly name unacknowledged feelings or attitudes if or when these are stimulated. To acknowledge harboring certain disallowed feelings can be very frightening for these clients. For instance, a client may feel, "If I allow myself to feel murderously angry, I might do something terrible!" They need help to realize that acknowledging a feeling and naming it does not necessarily mean acting on it, because they can use their Adult to decide on behavior in each instance. This is particularly important for persons whose underlying feelings involve rage, envy, or jealousy, which they may have learned to cover up, even to themselves, with, for instance, "charitable attitudes".

**What about Games?** Berne's (1964) book *Games People Play* was a best-seller in the mid-sixties, perhaps because of the catchy titles of the "games" he listed. I do not recommend this book except for the introductory chapter which summarizes transactional analysis theory, because I think it trivializes behavior and does not distinguish between racketeering and games. After its publication, Berne modified his early definition of games by emphasizing that there has to be a switch of ego state by one or both parties before the final, concluding crossed transaction.

In my opinion it is not necessary to struggle with

details about games. The aforementioned descriptions of Undersure and Oversure third degree racketeers, and how frustration about not receiving the desired strokes for their rackets may lead to a switch of ego state, and, thereby, to a final crossed transaction, (possibly with violence,) adequately describes the process. Different games are simply variations on the Oversure and Undersure kinds of complementary transactions ending with a crossed transaction as mentioned earlier (English, 1977a).

**Unconscious Motivators.** As indicated previously, TA treatment focuses primarily the here-and-now without seeking to analyze deeply into the unconscious. However, it is undeniable that many important choices in life can be motivated by unconscious drives. Their impact must be recognized, particularly when a client deals with major life commitments or changes (e.g. regarding career or marriage) or wonders about having engaged in certain past behaviors that now seem strange.

To address such situations, I have added the concept of unconscious motivators to basic transactional analysis. I use the term "motivators" rather than drives because my definition of these differs significantly from Freud's. (see English, 1998, 2003).

The three Motivators are: The Survival Motivator, the Expressive or Passionate Motivator, and the Transcendence or Quiescence Motivator. Each Motivator has distinct functions and can affect our ego states with its particular attributes, yearnings or feelings.

Specifically the survival motivator functions for individual survival. It stimulates feelings and needs for action to ensure such survival. Therefore it brings on attributes such as hunger, thirst, feeling cold, fear, and need for protection and strokes; it also promotes survival conclusions.

The expressive/passionate motivator functions for species survival. In all animals this occurs thanks to procreation, so sexuality is an important attribute of this motivator. However procreation alone would not have sufficed for the survival of the human species; we would have been annihilated long ago by more powerful animals. Fortunately our species has evolved by adding many more attributes to this motivator. For instance it promotes curiosity and attraction

to adventure and risk-taking. These attributes led our forbearers to the creative inventions, discoveries and explorations that have enabled our species to survive and become the most powerful on earth.

Lastly, the transcendence/quiescence motivator functions to maintain our quiet connection to the universe and to transcend daily life through, for example, spirituality, meditation, and also by sleep. It fosters peacefulness, restfulness, harmony, and detachment from overwhelming anxiety.

**Scripts.** Berne noted that most of us seem to operate with "an unconscious life plan" to which he gave the name of "script". Scripts are adaptations of early childhood reactions and experiences, and although Berne (1961) wrote that "neurotic, psychotic and psychopathic scripts are almost always tragic," he also added that "a practical and constructive script .....may lead to great happiness".( p..116) Unfortunately there has been a tendency among some transactional analysts to forget that Berne indicated that constructive scripts can lead to happiness. They thus sometimes erroneously confuse scripts with dysfunctional archaic survival conclusions. Yet just because someone may be functioning with certain harmful archaic survival conclusions that need to be changed, it does not mean that their entire script should be thrown overboard. Quite the contrary, as I have spelled out elsewhere (English, 1977b, 1979, 1988)

On the basis of clinical experience, I believe Berne was correct to emphasize that a child of about 3-6 years creates an initial script to guide his or her future. This script is influenced both by inborn tendencies and the child's limited world view, which includes exposure to fairy tales, myths, perceptions and misperceptions about the environment and the wishes of caretakers. This initial script primarily serves the child's emerging self as an organizing structure to deal with time, space, boundaries, relationships, activities and ideas about the world and the future. However, like the first draft of a movie script, the early script is but a tentative outline. It continues to be revised throughout a person's life and may develop quite differently from the initial design, with unexpected outcomes that are affected by how the person manages to balance his or her inner motivators in the course of living.

Even a script generated under the worst family circumstances contains within itself the child's



genetic sense about how he or she might fulfill inner goals creatively if certain malevolent fairies and cobwebs could be neutralized. Without a script a child would be operating out of a vacuum of time and space, with no content with which to connect past and future, feeling rootless, like a leaf in the wind. I suspect that this happens with certain confused adolescents and that certain cases of psychosis represent lack of script formation, rather than the reverse. As a person grows, eventually a script becomes a rather complex production, with some scenes that follow sequentially and some that do not, with ups and downs of success and failure, and with magical reversals and assumptions. Thus, scripts contain genetic elements and patterns related to experiences, fantasies and beliefs that

are woven together into the fabric of a personal mythological story with many possible variations and allowances for plenty of improvisations in the course of life. Script analysis requires a different kind of contract from a treatment contract, where the aim is to change harmful existential patterns. In the script workshops I conduct, the aim is to work with clients' fantasies and stories in order to gain a deeper understanding of their inner needs and tendencies, and a better sense about the creative processes of their lives, without necessarily planning for particular changes.

**Hot Potatoes and Episcritps.** Within families or tight-knit groups, sometimes there is a phenomenon like a psychological contagion whereby a disturbing condition, (e.g. anxiety, depression, suicidal wishes, etc.) may be passed from one person to another, or over several generations. This happens sometimes when a potential "donor" of pathology believes, consciously or unconsciously, that he or she can become magically free of troublesome symptoms by passing them on to someone who thus becomes a "vulnerable recipient." At the root of this process are magical beliefs like those that existed in primitive tribes.

I refer to such transmissions, which have a hypnotic quality, as "passing on a hot potato". (English, 1969). In addition to transmissions within family groups, hot potato transmissions can occur whenever one partner of a dyad is in a psychologically more powerful position than the other, (e.g. teacher/student, or priest/parishioner, therapist/client, etc. and patient, especially if the donor of the hot potato is an Oversure character type and the vulnerable

recipient is an Undersure type. Sometimes the transmission is quite deliberate, in relation to total life-projects, although the donor might deny this. Accordingly, one or more vulnerable recipients might take on specific harmful goals for their lives while believing they are making voluntary choices. Such instances, which are far more complex and harmful than transmissions of hot potatoes, are referred to as "episcritps". Tragic examples of these include the suicide bombers who struck the United States on September 11, 2001, after taking on episcritps to destroy from Osama Bin Laden, and Palestinian suicide bombers in Israel after having been episcritped by Yasir Arafat or some zealous cleric.

It is important not to confuse episcritps with scripts, any more than one would equate cancerous growths with normal development. Episcritps, as the name implies, are taken on from others outside the self, whereas scripts correspond to personal development and blossoming into life.

### Finally, and to Continue . . .

Like Einstein, who stated that a physicist did not understand relativity if he could not explain it to a 12 year old, Berne insisted that transactional analysis should be comprehensible to an 8-year old. Indeed this is why TA can be very useful for child therapy and in educational contexts. However, ultimately it is empathetic sensibility combined with solid therapeutic skills that are the essentials for good practice. Therefore the International Transactional Association has developed high standards for, qualification, training and ethics.

In 1970 Berne died suddenly of a heart attack. He did not live long enough to fully refine his theories although he was working at them continuously until the end of his life. After his death, the very simplicity of basic transactional analysis was misused by some, so that in the public mind it became erroneously viewed as a pop psychology. Fortunately there were already enough competent well-trained transactional analysts to spread it TA in the rest of America and the world, especially throughout Europe, Latin America, India, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and the scholarly TA Journal was maintained as well as many other publications. Sadly, Berne did not live to see this expansion.

To this day I know of no more effective therapy

when practiced by responsible, sensitive practitioners. This has been confirmed by comparative research (Novey, 2002) and, as mentioned earlier, transactional analysis has proven effective in many fields. There are many ways to find out more about transactional analysis. ... However I hope this article has given you at least a beginning understanding of what it is all about.

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Communication Using Transactional Analytic Theory. Transactional Analysis in Therapy. Who Can Benefit from Transactional Analysis? Transactional analysis is used widely in the educational arena, and this method can serve as a vessel through which educational principles and philosophy can be incorporated into the daily lives of students. This type of therapy can be administered to children and adults of all ages, regardless of social circumstances. Key Concepts in Transactional Analysis. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://itaaworld.org/key-concepts-transactional-analysis>. McLeod, J. (2013). Process and outcome in pluralistic transactional analysis counselling for long-term health conditions: A case series. Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy and soon after I took time off from my practice in Chicago to go to California to train with the late David Kupfer at the then recently founded Transactional Analysis Training Institute in Carmel. While there I also had many stimulating contacts with Berne and personally experienced what many, including myself, call the life-saving value of TA. 2014 International Transactional Analysis Association. A Summary of Transactional Analysis Concepts I Use. By Fanita English. in determining the character and emotional. These are used along with other key transactional analysis concepts, tools and models to analyse how individuals communicate and to identify what interaction is needed for a better outcome. Throughout therapy, the TA therapist will work directly on problem-solving behaviours, whilst helping clients to develop day-to-day tools for finding constructive, creative solutions. Below is an exploration of some of the key concepts of transactional analysis that a therapist will use in their work. Ego-states. Ego-states refer to the three major parts of an individual's personality, and they each reflect an entire system of thought, feeling and behaviour. Transactional Analysis is a tool that explains how egos have influence on behavior through communication transactions. This article explains the Transactional Analysis, developed by Eric Berne in a practical way. After reading it, you will understand the basics of this powerful communication skills theory. What is Transactional Analysis? Transactional Analysis (TA) is part of social psychology and was developed by the Canadian psychiatrist Eric Berne in 1958. His goal was to cure people, instead of just making progress in treating them. Transactional Analysis is based on the idea that people's early life experiences determine the decisions they make. These can be both positive and negative decisions that influence their quality of life.