

John James Game Plan

EXPLORING GAMES AND RACKETEERING:

- 1) What is it that happens over and over again?
- 2) How does it start?
- 3) Then what happens?
- 4) What happens next?
- 5) How does it end?
- 6) How do you feel when it ends?
- 7) How may the others feel when it ends?

Definition of a Game: A game is a series of complimentary ulterior transactions followed by one of the players switching ego states, leading to a moment of confusion, followed by a familiar feelings and thoughts which reinforce the player's life script.

Games are a way of exchanging high value strokes, and often get called Dramas, a mini version of the life script. Games are a way of both avoiding intimacy and are often a way of attempting to gain intimacy.... they have advantages and disadvantages!

If two people are involved in a process which involves exchanging ulterior complimentary transactions but neither switch ego states then they can be said to be **Racketeering**.

Racketeering is a process of exchanging familiar and safe strokes from a familiar role... two parties can continue this for a life time! The married couple never face up to their need for intimacy, instead they get along fine while never addressing their underlying fears that the other may one day leave them. Every night they go through the same routine: She cooks, he washes up, they watch TV, and don't ever talk, thus both avoiding their deep feelings of loneliness.

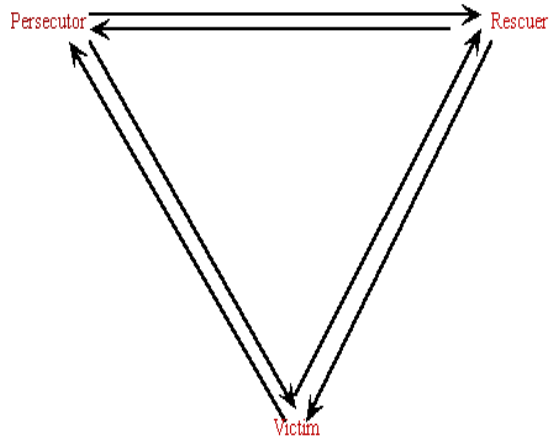
If they do attempt to talk they fear the other may get upset, but never check this out, they decide to take the familiar route to the TV. To move into intimacy one of them will have to risk breaking the familiar pattern.... at that point intimacy is possible, however, due to fear it is also possible that a game may ensue. As the other party fears abandonment and so escalates their fears into an argument, which does not address their fears, but the consequence is that the first person retreats to the familiar pattern, and a return to the racketeering.

Rackets is a term used for familiar feelings which are acceptable to the script and yet which may not be the authentic feeling associated with any situation. As one client said recently to me: I will see my the person I want to be my lover again tonight, I fear her, I fear losing contact with her, but that is not acceptable so I giggle and act as if I am shy... I actually feel embarrassed... and end up apologizing for my blushes. She laughs and I feel even more inadequate.

There are three popular ways of illustrating Games

The Karpman Drama Triangle: Steve Karpman one of Berne's colleagues was writing in the Transactional Analysis Bulletin (1966) about how drama roles get acted out within fairy stories drew what has become perhaps the best known diagram from TA. I have seen it within a health promotion booklet, and within a Gestalt book, neither crediting Karpman nor TA! In a game the players start in their familiar favoured position, when one of the players switches roles the game is completed.

This simple diagram demonstrates how we occupy one of three roles:



VICTIM: Hopeless, helpless, and powerless, beyond the reality. "You can make me feel bad or good".

RESCUERS: Appear nice and helpful. "I can make you feel good". A person is rescuing when he/she:

- Is doing something he doesn't want to do
- Is doing something he was not asked to do Is doing something he can't do
- Is doing more than 50% of the work
- Is not asking for what he wants

PERSECUTOR: "I can make you feel bad". People frequently take up the persecutor role in order to avoid being the victim.

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE GAME This illustrates the ulterior transactions taking place.

THE FORMULA 'G' Berne, in his book 'What Do You Say After You Say Hello' says that only transactions which fit this game formula are games and any other series of transactions are not games. **Con + Gimmick = Response > Switch > Cross up > Pay off**

- Con = the hook which invites the person into the game, E.g. "Please help me".
- Gimmick = the interest in the hook. E.g. "Oh yes, I'm a good helper".
- Response = there may be several rounds of racketeering involved with the hook and gimmick, but the problem is not solved.
- Switch = the first and second person switch ego state and position on the drama Triangle.
- Cross up = the immediate sense of unease when the person realises the fact that they have been had.
- Pay Off = always enhances the script, and original life position.

When working to resolve games discover why the person is playing the game and invite them to get their needs met in a straight way. That is without the ulterior transactions.

Names of and degrees of Games Berne named many games, most of these could be summed up as either Kick me or Kick you, and possibly kick them... A classic example is where a husband complains to his wife that if it were not for her then he could..... That game is a "If it were not for you" The competition is to see who is going to get kicked... both players will play from their favoured life position of being either one down and getting kicked or one up and kicking the other. Each game reinforces the script and life positions of the players, these outcomes are described as a first, second or third degree pay off.

- **A first degree pay off** is one which leads to amusement, along with possibly mild embarrassment.
- **A second degree** game is where the players really do not want others to know about it... there is shame and a desire to cover it up.
- **A third degree** pay off is where there is serious damage done to the players, and ends up in court or hospital or worse.

WHY PLAY GAMES?

- To further the script, maintain life position on the OK Corral. To satisfy stroke needs and excitement needs.
- To satisfy need for time structure and to maintain predictable patterns of behaviour.
- Games avoid responsibility and intimacy.
- An important role for games is to keep others around for strokes when the racketeering process is running out.

The 6 advantages of Games:

1. Biological advantage: gaining attention and stimulation, which are essential for our well being.
2. Existential advantage: Confirming the life position.
3. Internal psychological advantage: Defending against internal fears and old unwanted feelings.
4. External psychological advantage: the avoidance of a feared situation by playing the game.
5. Internal social advantage: Providing players with pseudo-intimacy.
6. External social advantage: This is relating to the opportunity to talk with others, outside of the game about the game.

To stop the game: confront the Discount which maintains the game.

Therapy and Planning for Change

ASSESSMENTS: During the assessment phase much good therapy can be done. However it is not directly seen as change work until you have agreed a contract for change and the client has closed their escape hatches.

- Outcomes to be aimed for (Treatment Contract)
- Type of therapeutic interventions (group/individual)
- The script / Racket System, Game analysis and other diagnostic assessments.