

### EGO STATES:

Ego states are a consistent pattern of thinking, feeling and behaviour.

It is the concept that each person has the potential for three fully functioning ego states that separates TA from other approaches.

There are two basic models of ego states; these are the structural model and the behavioural model (formerly known as the functional model).

There has been and still continues to be much debate regarding the relative merits of these two models and much of this debate has been of the nature "What did Berne really mean?" The behavioural model is widely known in simplified pop psychology and is often used as an explanation of what TA is. However simplistic explanations are often misleading.

Both these models are often talked about as if they are real entities, whereas they are both metaphors used in order to explain and to facilitate our understanding of people - you cannot find a persons ego state.

The confusion was caused by Berne providing a clear definition of ego states based on ego psychology from his knowledge and experience of psychoanalysis – These definitions are clearly describing the structural model... however he then gives examples and explains how to diagnose ego states in a way which led to the behavioural descriptions.

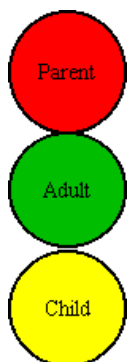
In order to differentiate between the two, remember the following:

STRUCTURE = content..... Refers to the building, i.e. what is in the ego states, what are they? And how are they made up?

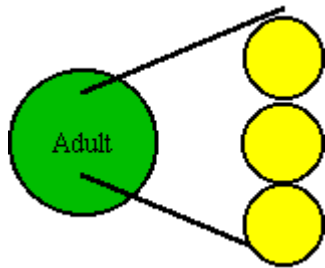
Behaviour = process and is a description of an ego states function and respective ways of behaving.

**DIAGNOSING EGO STATES** - Berne described four ways of diagnosing which ego state a person is in:

- ∅ **Behaviourally:** words, posture, tones, gestures and facial expressions will all give clues as to which ego state the person is in.
- ∅ **Social:** in interactions the other person will respond from an invited complementary ego state giving a clue to the first person's ego state.
- ∅ **Historically:** how things actually were; were you like this when you were....?
- ∅ **Phenomenological:** Berne describes this as the times when, in the here and now, a person actually re-experiences exactly a past event.



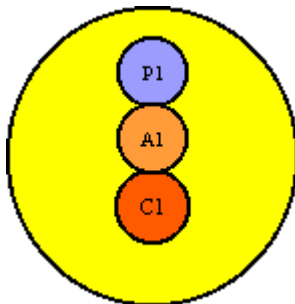
**THE STRUCTURAL MODEL**



**ADULT EGO STATES:** Your Adult ego state is you thinking, feeling and behaving in the here and now appropriately to any stimulus. When we are in our Adult ego state we are in full contact with and are responding to the here and now.

For example; excitedly thinking of new ways of being with your partner; or feeling angry with a person who deliberately is blocking your view of a film, then assertively asking him to move, and if he refuses asking the steward to deal with the matter. Berne called this state of the self the neo-psyche, the new self... however he also used the simple term of Adult.

The diagram shows the second order structure of the Adult, called by Berne the Integrated Adult... When I am responding in the here and now, and it is appropriate to be parent like or child like or grown up like then it can be seen that we may behave from one of the three ego states in the here and now. When we do this it might well be that we are deliberately drawing on material we have within our archaic Parent or Child ego states.



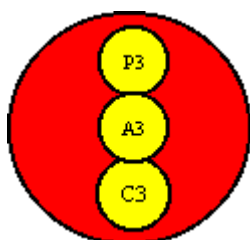
**CHILD EGO STATES:** Whenever we are in a situation we may re-experience feelings or thinking and behave in ways which are echoes of how we have responded in the past to similar situations. By responding in this way to the here and now we are using archaic internal experiences to determine our current thinking, feeling and behaviours, this is a Child ego state. It is as if we are being an echo of ourselves from an early period of time.

This diagram shows the second order structure of the Child ego state, in which the early echo of ourselves already has an early version of an introjected Parent, (P1), and also an echo of an even earlier version of the self (C1). The early Child also had an Adult ego state... this often gets referred to as the little professor!

Berne (Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy - 1961) describes each day as an ego state unit and that we build a series of Child ego states. He described a stack of pennies to illustrate how these can build up. I prefer to think of the rings of a tree, each day a new ego state is developed and tomorrow that ego state will be the latest child ego state to have been developed.

Transactional Analysts therefore analyse people's Child ego states by the way a person responds to the here and now as if it were an event from the past. E.g.: A man becomes fearful when his wife is late home from work and after ten minutes is feeling scared, just like he did when he was a child of four and his mother failed to arrive on time to pick him up from school. The man is not aware of the connection unless it is pointed out to him.

Berne called the Child ego state the archeo - psyche.



**PARENT EGO STATES**

These are borrowed archaic relics from our past; however these are not internal experiences as the Child ego states are. These are introjected relics.

We introjected (swallowed whole) images of our parent figures. Now in some situations we may respond as if we were the parent figure rather than responding directly to the situation. E.g. The mother of the man in the above example shouted at him and told him he was silly, she was frequently late. He now has a child at school and he frequently turns up late to pick the child up from school telling him he is silly if he is worried. When we are responding as if we were one of our parent figures then we are in a Parent ego state we are borrowing their old way of being.

This picture shows the second order structure of the parent ego state.

Within our Parent ego states there remains the Parent, Adult, and Child of our introjected parents... These are represented as three ego states within the Parent ego state.

**Contaminated Adult...** This is a popular model, and yet does not really fit accurately with the structural model of TA... the ego states are drawn overlapping, and the person believes they are functioning in their Adult, whereas they are acting out of their Child or Parent.... Usually there is a double contamination... with both Parent and Child beliefs distorting the reality.

**Behavioural Model** = 'Behaving like a...'

**Nurturing Parent:** warm, loving, comforting, caring, and stroking giving permissions. This is the OK Nurturing Parent. Problems can arise if NP is over protective, rescuing, and smothering. i.e.; the not-OK Nurturing Parent.

**Critical or Controlling Parent:** protective, setting limits, defining values and reality. (The OK Controlling Parent.) CAN BE: critical, punishing, discounting and persecutory. (The not-OK Controlling Parent.)

**Child:** Functionally the child is split between the Adapted and Free Child or Natural Child.

**The Free Child** is the source of energy for creativity, spontaneity, and intuition. The Free Child is being as I want to be. This can be both OK and in some situations not OK.

**The Adapted Child** is the learned adapted ways of surviving; the best the child could develop in order to survive. Can be either conforming or by rebelling against Parent rules. Adapted Child can also be OK or not OK, e.g. saying thank you for a present is an OK Adapted Child response.

**EGO GRAMS** An Ego gram depicts the amount of energy spent in each of the behavioural ego states. Jack Dusay hypothesized that there was always a consistent amount of energy available to an individual, and if you increased the amount of energy used in one ego state then the amount of energy used in the other ego states was reduced. He uses the functional model of ego states to draw this in chart form in ego grams.

**TRANSFERENCE:** initially described by Freud understanding and using transference became the cornerstone of psychotherapy. Transference is: reacting in the here and now as if to archaic events. This is an attempt to resolve the uncompleted business from the past.

- One of the great things Berne did for psychotherapy is make it simple to understand and analyse transference relationships in the here and now through the analysis of ego states.
- If a client responds to a therapist from either a Child ego state or from a Parent ego state then you know that the client is inviting a transference relationship with the therapist.
- If the therapist is coming from Parent or Child then this is therapist transference or counter transference.
- Berne clearly states that scripts and games are transference phenomena.
- One example of a transference process is:- The client as a child introjected his/her parent figures, in the here and now those introjected parent figures are projected out onto a screen in front of the transference object (the therapist) and the client then responds as if this projected image is the reality.

There are many types of transference:

**CONCORDANT:** in which the therapist feels how the client feels.

**COMPLIMENTARY:** in which the therapist responds in a complimentary way to the client's transference.

Transference can be client or therapist in origin and so can counter transference ...

E.g.: The client is agitating and feeling scared. The therapist is seen as an angry Parent figure. (Client transference). Complimentary counter transference might be demonstrated by the therapist either getting angry with the client, for agitating or by deliberately using the transferential invitation but giving a corrective response "You appear to be agitated and I am wondering if you want to be taken care of?"

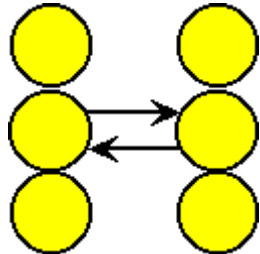
Alternatively the therapist may analyse the transaction by inviting the client to consider which ego state they are in, thus inviting the client into Adult and so clarifying what is here and now reality.

**Transactions.... TA Proper:**

The analysis of transactions between two people forms theory in practice.... once the concept of ego states is understood, what follows on is the understanding of transactions...

Which ego states are people using when transacting with each other?

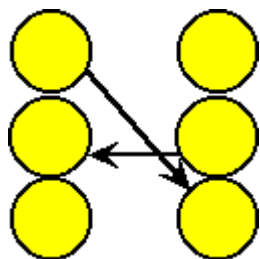
There are three types of transactions and many variations within each of the three types:



**Complementary transactions:** Where the ego state responding is complimentary to the ego state offering the stimulus... when drawn the vectors indicating the transaction are parallel.

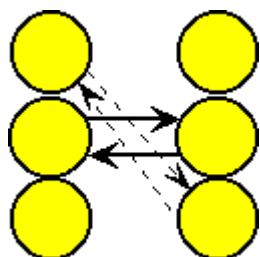
Communication first rule is ... communication will continue if the transactions are complementary!

The diagram is of an Adult : Adult complimentary transaction.



**Crossed Transactions:** Where the vectors in the diagram are crossed: When the ego state addressed is different for the one responding the communication ceases. This is the second rule of communication.

The diagram shows a Parent to Child stimulus is crossed with an Adult response.



**Ulterior Transactions:** There is a social and an ulterior level transaction. The social level is the socially acceptable stimulus... for example, do you know what time it is? Ulterior transactions are by definition out of the persons awareness... it is an unconscious process.

The ulterior level can be either: Parent > Child ... "You stupid boy, you are late!" or Child > Parent... "Please don't be angry; I did my best to get it finished on time". The ulterior transaction is shown as a broken line in the transactional diagram

The meaning will be made clear to the receiver by the use of non-verbal language clues... a wagging finger for example along with a stern look will usually mean a Parent > Child ulterior.

The meaning of the communication will always be at the ulterior level: this is the third rule of communication.