My Time is More Precious Than Your Strokes: New Perspectives on Time Structure

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Abstract
This article takes issue with a frequent assumption in TA—that time is structured mostly in terms of strokes. Basic concepts of Existential Pattern Theory and Therapy (EPT) are summarized to demonstrate that we are influenced unconsciously by three distinct drives—the Survival, Expressive, and Quiescence Drives—with time structured in terms of stroke economy only under the Survival Drive. A significant amount of time is also required under the influence of the other two drives, both of which operate with rules other than those of work for survival purposes or those related to stroke economy.

Various brief examples are given to illustrate how inchoate feelings of discontent and various disturbing symptoms are often due to the fact that the influence of the three drives is not adequately balanced. In addition, a longer example shows how inappropriate projections and difficulties may occur in a relationship because of differences between the partner's needs for time under each drive and how EPT can help them identify these differences and thus to resolve important misunderstandings.

In working with couples, therapists often hear comments such as:

"He/she doesn't give me enough time."
"He/she takes too much of my time."
"I don't have enough time for myself."

"I don't want to use my time this way."
"I want more quality time together."
(says one)
"I need more freedom to structure my own time."
(says the other).
"We love each other, but time together is often a strain."
"He/she doesn't have enough respect for my time and keeps me waiting, comes late, doesn't take the time to call, forgets that my time matters."

Such statements represent discomfort, anger, and a sense of restricted options about the use of leisure time, particularly in relation to partners. According to survey data on time use accumulated over two decades, "A typical American’s 41.8 hours of leisure per week break down as follows: 16.3 hours socializing with friends or family, 12.1 hours watching television, and the remaining 13.4 hours on all other leisure activities" (Blinder, 1991). It would seem that average Americans (and others in the Western world) have plenty of time to dispose of, in addition to time required for tasks that are necessary for making a living. Why, then, are there so many conflicts among partners about how they manage their leisure time?

Berne (1961) demonstrated that personal time must be measured in ways other than by distinguishing between work time and leisure time. He showed how individuals structure time in accordance with specific needs for particular strokes. Thus "work" time may include more satisfactory transactions, for certain individuals under certain circumstances, than does "leisure" time, or vice versa.

Then, if people complain about what happens to their time with partners, is it always because they do not manage their stroke economy properly? Is it a matter of power, control, secret rejection, inability to love or be close? Has
there been too much dependence by one on the other, or is racketeering involved? To work with complaints such as those above, a therapist might look at how the partners in a given couple structure time together in terms of strokes. Some therapists might then move on to script issues.

However, not all emotional time can be defined in terms of stroke economy. Quite apart from whatever patterns of stroke transactions are preferred by each person, there are additional needs for structuring time than those based on stroke economy. These needs manifest themselves differentially for each person at different times during the day and in their lives overall. Yet the fact that such different needs are not defined and recognized consciously, even by the individuals involved, often leads to misunderstandings or, worse, erroneous interpretations of pathology by one about the behavior of the other.

Case Example. John and Mary were happily married for many years. Now that their children are away at college, Mary works full-time at the job she previously held part-time. She is upset because she feels John is increasingly withdrawing from her. Every evening, after dutifully doing the dishes and exchanging a few pleasantries with her, he hurries down to the basement, where he tinkers for hours. He assures her that he is developing certain inventions that will eventually make them rich. Mary does not see why John exerts himself in this way because they are well off financially. She feels they are missing out on spending what she refers to as quality time together now that they are spared distractions and arguments with the children. Although they enjoy good sexual relations, Mary wonders whether John spends so much time in the basement to avoid sex with her. She feels rejected, so she builds up anger at him; now it is often she who rejects him when he shows tenderness or makes amorous advances. She asks him repeatedly whether he no longer finds her attractive or whether he is holding back anger at her for mysterious reasons; he insists that this is not the case, that he feels good about himself and about her, and indeed he is pleasant and loving when they are together.

Mary also engages John in discussing what she calls their lack of communication. At such times John appears contrite; he acknowledges that perhaps he neglects her, but insists that he needs much time for his inventions, although he regrets that she does not understand this. He says he often feels guilty when he comes up from the basement and finds her asleep in front of the television because she tried to wait up for him. However, Mary fails to talk him out of spending so much time on his own. "Let’s go to a football game!" she urges. She does not particularly care for football, but she knows John enjoys it; surely he will appreciate her participation in an activity he likes and will want to reciprocate and initiate additional joint activities. Yet when they return home after the game, John is impatient to head for his basement; he acts as though he has done her a favor by going to the game! Since she is familiar with basic TA concepts, she evaluates John’s behavior negatively as withdrawal to avoid intimacy. She feels lonely and deprived of strokes; furthermore, she believes John, also, sets it up to be similarly deprived.

Mary’s evaluation is accurate about herself, but not about John. According to Existential Pattern Theory and Therapy (EPT), how people use time satisfactorily for themselves is far more complex than can be defined under the categories of withdrawal, rituals, activities, pastimes, racketeering, games, or intimacy, even if the category of play is added (Cowles-Boyd & Boyd, 1980). Specifically, there are blocks of time in our lives and in the here-and-now when survival issues, bodily needs, relationships, conditioning, and, consequently, strokes appear irrelevant, while other needs take high priority.

To provide a context for considering these other needs, some concepts from Existential Pattern Therapy (EPT) that are pertinent to time structure will be presented. (The theory has already been summarized elsewhere in the context of other subjects [English, 1987, 1988]).

Existential Pattern Theory and Therapy (EPT)

It is a basic assumption of EPT that people are affected by three distinct drives, or motivational forces, that are related to the total evolutionary processes of life on this planet. The influence of these drives motivates us both consciously and unconsciously in the course of our lives and in the here-and-now. The aim, function, and manifestations of each drive are different. They often operate in seeming contradiction to one
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another, although they are also interrelated by being aspects of our total life force. Sometimes the influence of two drives may combine, excluding the third. At any given moment an individual can be motivated by only one drive, or by a combination of two, but not by all three. When the motivational force of the third drive surfaces, it may take the foreground, singly or in combination with one of the other two. As a result, the influence of one or both drives which were previously in the foreground will recede into the background. Thus there occurs a continuous flux of internal influences which wax and wane in each individual like the tide at the seashore. Just as the tide functions differently in one body of water in comparison to another, and also operates differently at different times within each body of water, there are great differences between individuals in terms of how long and how intensely one person will tend to function under the influence of a particular drive or combination of two, rather than under the influence of the third. Also, there are many variations for each individual at different times and places, for the impact and the alternation of influence of these drives within a person is also affected by both internal and external circumstances and stimuli.

Because each drive influences each individual in terms of its own specific aims, each has the capacity to evoke particular feelings, yearnings, and behavior manifestations that buttress its goals.

The names of the three drives are:

1. The Survival Drive
2. The Expressive Drive
3. The Quiescence Drive

The Survival Drive

As its name implies, the aim of this drive is the survival of the individual. Its function is to insert Survival conclusions into the mind and organism of each individual at each stage of development (English, 1977). Most skills needed for the survival of a grown human being are not determined genetically, as in the case of reptiles. The higher the creature on the evolutionary scale, the longer it is dependent on parenting and learning during childhood. Therefore, in human beings the Survival Drive actively establishes Survival conclusions during childhood and keeps adding new ones throughout life. They are internalized serially, first in the Child, then in the Parent, and lastly in the Adult of each person. The Survival Drive is also involved in reinforcing conclusions from previous stages of development, often combining them with newer ones, while developing behavioral strategies that correspond to whatever Survival conclusions, value systems, and additional perspectives are internalized.

Although the mechanisms whereby Survival conclusions are internalized are similar to the ways injunctions may be accepted in that they are associated with strokes, in fact, a person’s life course is determined by genetic factors in combination with thousands of successive internalized Survival conclusions rather than by just one or two injunctions (English, 1988). Most Survival conclusions are essential for healthy survival, although certain archaic conclusions may cause problems later in life, and the individual may require therapeutic help to neutralize or modify them. For instance, Survival conclusions about keeping clean or being careful when crossing the street are important, although in combination with others they might lead to obsessive behaviors or phobias.

The Survival Drive is related to bodily needs and functions, such as breathing, hunger, thirst, and elimination. It is also related to basic survival anxiety because humans sense, already at birth, that their survival depends on their being cared for. This is why strokes are indispensable as messages of reassurance that caretaking will be available, and this is why they determine the internalization of most Survival conclusions. Additional feelings that are specific attributes of the Survival Drive and that contribute to establishing or maintaining Survival conclusions are: fear, dependent love, concern about being acceptable to others, greed, shame, and also reactions such as anger, jealousy, envy, or hatred. Manifestations, such as rackets or behavioral racketeering, originate because of survival anxiety, on account of which a child learns to repress the expression of prohibited feelings and then to seek strokes to compensate for such repression.

In general, any and all behavior related to the acquisition and exchange of strokes is related exclusively to the operation of the Survival Drive and not to the operation of the two other drives. Thus, it is only when an individual is under the influence of the Survival Drive that there is interest in using time for stroke transactions and
that concepts about stroke economy and time structure in terms of strokes apply.

**The Expressive Drive**

The goal of the Expressive Drive is the survival of the species, even at the cost of the survival of some individuals. However, this broad aim is seldom conscious, even when a person functions under its influence and engages in high risks.

Obviously, the survival of a species is due in part to procreation, so an important function of this drive is to promote sexuality (Freud, 1915/1957). However, biological procreation alone would not have sufficed to maintain the human species, which would have been exterminated long ago by more powerful creatures had humans not developed the ability to discover, invent, and transmit culture beyond the next generation. Such “pro-creative” activities evolved because the Expressive Drive promotes feelings and attitudes of playfulness, curiosity, adventurousness, risk-taking, and interest in experimentation. These lead directly or indirectly to discovery, invention, and often, to the need to demonstrate or teach others regardless of practical rewards and/or strokes. If unexpected strokes are forthcoming, they may be welcomed, and thus a certain activity may be pursued under the combined influence of both the Expressive and the Survival Drives. However, when the Expressive Drive is intensely active on its own, it motivates with total imperviousness to strokes; in fact, at such times strokes may be experienced as seductive, controlling, and inhibitory, regardless of the intent with which they are offered.

Thus, while the Expressive and Survival Drives may combine to foster satisfactory results, they may also be at odds and generate internal or external conflict in an individual: for instance, between the wish to do something exciting that has no practical value—like hang-gliding—and a cautionary Survival conclusion against doing something dangerous. Similarly, the influence of the Expressive Drive in one partner, who wishes to engage in a dangerous activity for fun, may conflict with a request from the other partner who is under the influence of the Survival Drive and is fearful about participating, but resents being left out.

During childhood the Expressive Drive manifests itself in the child’s motivation to crawl, touch objects, see, babble, scream, talk, walk, climb stairs, run, and experiment with everything new. Thus it promotes the kind of learning that must be acquired in addition to the imitative learning sponsored by the Survival Drive. Later, the child might climb a tree, or experiment playfully with objects and ideas, without conscious concrete purpose. This behavior corresponds to that which led his ancestors to discover and invent; it also corresponds to behaviors of creative individuals, as well as to that of people who may consciously pursue the dictates of their Expressive Drive with full knowledge of the risks to their own lives. For example, Amelia Earhart courted danger by trying to fly across the Atlantic Ocean; she drowned, but was a forerunner for Charles Lindbergh, who had similar motivation and whose success led to significant progress in aviation. Madame Curie discovered radium and pursued her research even after she recognized the dangers of radiation; she died of cancer as a result, but she contributed greatly to humanity. When Israel was attacked by Syria during what became the Seven-Day War, a number of Israeli soldiers volunteered to storm the Golan Heights under a barrage of enemy fire, knowing that they themselves would be killed but that they were helping their state to survive.

Even when such exalted purposes are not being served, under the influence of this drive, concern for individual safety is disregarded in favor of adventure or fascinating causes, however senseless they may appear to the rational mind. On a day-to-day basis, the Expressive Drive simply supports playfulness, self-expression, articulation of all feelings and impulses, curiosity, imagination, and aspirations for freedom. It also supports love of offspring, be they children, members of a community, or creative achievements. Aggressiveness is also a necessary attribute of this drive, in its etymological meaning of “going toward.” However, the impulsive behavior and active self-expression thus fostered may be experienced by others as malicious, dangerous, harmful, hostile, arrogant, exhibitionistic, selfish, and irresponsible. Indeed, a person’s sense of responsibility will function very differently according to whether it is manifested in terms of the Expressive, Survival, or Quiescence Drives.

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Combination and/or Clashes Between the Influence of the Expressive and Survival Drives

Already during childhood it is possible to note how the influences of the Survival Drive and the Expressive Drive may combine harmoniously under certain circumstances, but clash under others. For instance, Jeanie scribbles with a crayon on her coloring book under the influence of her Expressive Drive. "Great!" says father. Jeanie did not start scribbling to obtain strokes, but her father’s approval for this activity supports it, so it becomes satisfactory both for her Expressive and Survival Drives. Presumably she will enjoy coloring on a number of future occasions. If she receives extensive approval for this activity, she may become even more motivated to spend time coloring. However, one would hope that she would not be programmed to color mechanically for the sake of strokes rather than for self-expression, for that might be regrettable with regard to future creativity.

On another day, while Jeanie is not being watched, she has great fun tugging at the bookshelf and seeing books come tumbling down, until a horrified parent appears on the scene and grabs the bookcase just as it is about to crash. Perhaps a Survival conclusion is set up right then, with negative strokes about not touching bookshelves; it is more likely that Jeanie’s Expressive Drive will stimulate her again, as soon as she has the chance, to test how the laws of gravity apply to bookcases. Eventually she might get hurt and thereby acquire a Survival conclusion about such activity, or else repeated cautionary instructions from her parents will operate as sufficient strokes to set up the necessary Survival conclusion before she gets hurt. Behavior for the sake of experimentation is not necessarily rebellious, even if it is repeated; it represents behavior under the influence of the Expressive Drive. However, if, after repeated interventions by parents ("how many times do I have to tell you—leave those books alone!"), a child continues with the same behavior without finding new sources of excitement, then such behavior may, indeed, represent rebellious behavior for the sake of strokes.

It is no wonder that parents have difficulties with the "terrible twos." At this stage of development conflicts between the motivational urges of the Survival Drive and those of the Expressive Drive are most evident, in that they are played out at an age when children cannot evaluate realistic consequences, yet need to experiment. In addition, it is no wonder that emotional rackets begin between ages two and five, when parents may be baffled about dealing with feelings, impulses, and behaviors stimulated by the Expressive Drive, although the child lacks sufficient physical control and/or the vocabulary for articulating feelings and impulses comprehensibly (English, 1971). There is frequent tension between the Survival Drive’s emphasis on internalizing instructions and prohibitions tendered by parents or the environment, and the inner thrust for uncontrolled free expression stimulated by the Expressive Drive.

Such tension is often experienced in later life in the form of inner conflicts between ego states about decisions or behavior, where one drive is experienced in one ego state and the other in another ego state. (There is no exact correspondence between drives and ego states. Each one of the drives may manifest itself through any one of the three ego states, which means that a multidimensional model must be conceptualized with three drives and three ego states that do not overlap.)

The Quiescence Drive

It is not possible to define the aim of the Quiescence Drive as concretely as we can with the two other drives. In a deep-rooted way, the Quiescence Drive connects us to the Earth—or maybe to the Universe. Ever since astronauts provided photographs that show our total, fragile planet as it sways in space, it has become easier, at least in the West, to conceptualize without religious metaphors that there exists an essential inborn human aspiration to transcend everyday experience. This represents a tendency of the Quiescence Drive. It influences the development of cosmic consciousness, both as an inner feeling of being part of a wider universe and as a yearning to participate in the life of the planet. The deep-seated existence of cosmic consciousness has been well recognized in the East for thousands of years, as is demonstrated by ancient Vedic texts (Forem, 1973). There is a living tradition about such consciousness known in India as Ayurveda (from two Sanskrit roots, meaning "life-knowledge") (Chopra, 1987). Numerous Western poets, such
as Wordsworth, Blake, and Thoreau, have offered similar descriptions of cosmic consciousness, where chronological time and linear space become immaterial. Blake describes the feeling as: “to hold Infinity in the palm of your hand; and Eternity in an hour” (as quoted by Chopra, 1987).

The Quiescence Drive also relates us regressively to the non-life which preceded our appearance on earth (whether as a species or as newborn infants). Freud’s original description of the Death Drive (Freud, 1920/1955) as a regressive connection to how human life evolved from minerals, plants, and other animals corresponds to an aspect of the Quiescence Drive. However, it need not be thought of in a linear, morbid manner, as driving to death, although death is, of course, the end of life on earth. The Quiescence Drive helps people accept this fact. The influence of this drive does not have to be seen, as Freud saw it (Freud, 1920/1955), as the source of murderous impulses motivated by the desire to deny personal mortality. Of course, it can promote death under certain circumstances: for instance, when an exhausted mountain climber goes to sleep in deep snow. But then each of the two other drives can also lead to death—the Survival Drive because of harmful Survival conclusions or self-defense and the Expressive Drive because of risk-taking. Leading to death cannot be considered the primary function of the Quiescence Drive, although it can facilitate peaceful death. This might apply to an unstroked infant, dying of marasmus and returning to its pre-birth condition, or to someone who has reached old age after a productive life on earth. Principally, this drive can relate an individual to stillness, quiet, and repose while awake and even highly conscious. Simple meditational practice can help us benefit from the influence of this drive.

Feelings and attitudes associated with the Quiescence Drive include: the kind of totally relaxed experience that can be had when lying under the sun on the beach or in a meadow, “oceanic,” philosophical or meditative contemplation, cosmic consciousness, attunement to nature, and the capacity for true generosity that comes from reducing egotism in favor of a more universal perspective. This drive allows broad-mindedness and trust in others’ ability to take charge without doing so out of dependency. Present day ecological concerns are also associated with this drive, as are attempts to compensate for the misuse of nature that results from excessive development. Internally, the Quiescence Drive often acts as an intermediary between the two other drives if there is an inner conflict, as when a person gets overly excited and stimulated to take risks because of the Expressive Drive while simultaneously experiencing anxiety from internal cautionary alarm reactions from the Survival Drive. The Quiescence Drive might then help a person reach the momentary detachment that permits the Adult to find appropriate options that would take into account the two opposing tendencies.

All species require sleep. Humans sleep about a third of the time. Just as there is movement, combination, and alternation of drives during the waking state, similar changes appear to occur during sleep, in a different rhythm and corresponding to changes in breathing patterns. The Survival Drive requires a certain amount of sleep, during which restorative changes in body chemistry occur. The Expressive Drive brings on dreams during some sleep. However, most sleep seems to be a function of the Quiescence Drive, linking us with all living species, although it is said that certain highly developed people who use advanced meditational practice require little or no sleep (Porter-Steele, 1991, personal communication).

Like the Creative Drive, the Quiescence Drive also structures time in its own way, very differently from the Survival Drive and thus outside the stroke economy. It also requires us to take specific time on our own; sleep alone does not meet the requirements of this drive. People need time just to let go, to look at space, to let thoughts drift, to allow absorption into Nature. Perhaps they must simply look at the landscape, watch waves break against rocks, or see the sun set. This also would be quite outside the stroke economy and does not correspond to what is usually referred to as “withdrawal,” which is often given negative, antisocial connotations, or identified simply as an opportunity for internal dialogues among ego states or self-stroking. The need being referred to here is sometimes described as the need for “space” rather than time, though what is usually meant is time for detachment, for the opportunity to transcend, particularly from involvement with stroke transactions. In instances
where others are included, for example in communing with nature, there may be moments of intimacy that might bring on the influence of the Survival Drive. Temporarily it might combine with the Quiescence Drive, just as fantasies occurring during a peaceful time might temporarily bring on the Expressive Drive. That does not change the fact that the Quiescence Drive structures time in its own way, differently from how time is structured by the Expressive Drive or by the Survival Drive’s stroke economy.

Movement and Balance Among the Drives

In the course of our lives we do not usually concern ourselves with how we allocate emotional energy or psychological time any more than we constantly think of our health when we feel relatively healthy. Our drives take turns and balance each other on their own as part of the general homeostatic process of our lives. Just as we are not constantly aware of which one of the organs of our bodies requires nourishment from our blood supply and do not habitually concern ourselves with how our stomach functions, or our heart and lungs, so does the operation of our drives remain outside our daily consciousness. Nevertheless, just as we can distinguish differences between manifestations of the different organs of our body if we pay attention (stomach feels full, pulse is faster or slower, breathing pattern has changed), so can we note typical differences in feelings, thoughts, and behavior between the manifestations of one drive as distinguished from another, if we know what to look for when we introspect. Also, just as one or another of our organs may cause difficulties in order to draw our attention to it if we fail to take its needs into account, so there can be negative manifestations or disturbances that can be ascribed to a particular drive if the opportunities for it to influence us have been preempted too much by one or both of the other drives.

An internal conflict between the influence of one drive in one direction and another drive in another direction may provoke unexpected switches of ego states accompanied by disturbed feelings, attitudes, thoughts, or behaviors. Other negative consequences of repression of the influence of a drive because of excessive influence by one or both of the two other drives can appear in the form of generalized discomfort, an inchoate sense of deprivation, or a nebulous sense of emptiness which the person cannot well define. There may be various other specific symptoms such as insomnia, exaggerated anxiety, anger outbursts, or blocked thought.

Such phenomena do not appear (or appear only briefly) under normal circumstances, because we habitually use time to rest on account of the Quiescence Drive, use time for play or activity that excites us because of the Expressive Drive, and engage in a variety of transactions for strokes on account of the Survival Drive. When the Survival Drive is active, time is indeed structured in the ways described in transactional analysis. At other times, when the other drives are in ascendance, alone or in combination, time is structured under different rules than those described by transactional analysis.

People relate differently to chronological (clock) time according to which drive is influential at a given moment. Awareness of chronological time is highest when under the influence of the Survival Drive. We lose track of chronological time when influenced by the two other drives. During sleep, when the Quiescence Drive is operational, hours may go by without awareness. Or, in reverse, under the combined influence of the Quiescence Drive and the Expressive Drive, a dream which might take fifteen minutes to describe when awake might occur in just two minutes. Or a person might doze off briefly and wake up, or stare intensely at space, believing a longer time has gone by than actually did.

Sometimes much more time might go by than a person is aware of when he or she is deeply involved in a fascinating activity such as painting, writing, experimenting, reading a novel, or even gambling. These are examples of the Expressive Drive structuring time. In some circumstances, perhaps on looking at the clock, there may be a stunned reaction: what? so late? impossible! One, two, or more hours may have gone by; time had “flown.” Or, at other times a person might experience the opposite: “Was it just a few minutes? It seemed like an eternity!” Time “stood still.”

The Survival Drive was temporarily out of commission in both instances—the person was not concerned with food, clothing, shelter, or other bodily needs, literally or figuratively—nor was he or she available for stroke
exchanges. If the person was highly involved and excited, the time was being structured by the Expressive Drive; or, if "spaced out," it was the Quiescence Drive that was active. The person was "beating time to a different drummer," under a different connection to reality than is determined by the Survival Drive.

**Value Judgments and Treatment Issues Related to Drives**

The function of drives cannot be appraised objectively; they just are, like life itself. However, viewed subjectively, the influence of each drive may lead to effective and gratifying or ineffective and disturbing behavior or consequences, according to each individual and the particular context or circumstances within which he or she operates. We feel well only if each one of our three drives has enough opportunity to influence us, alone or in combination with one of the other two. We get out of balance if there is exaggerated dependence on the operation of only one or two drives to the quasi-exclusion of the third, or if two drives combine too tightly. There will then result emotional disturbances such as those referred to earlier by the analogy of how physical problems may be aggravated if signals of pain from a bodily organ are consistently disregarded. Therefore, it is useful to learn to distinguish among the different kinds of manifestations of each drive, just as it is useful to know of differences among bodily functions and their potential connections to symptoms. This can help both for preventive and treatment purposes.

For instance, chronic shortness of breath indicates difficulty with lungs and might lead to questions about smoking or the quality of the air being breathed. Similarly, excessive lack of spontaneity, feeling dull, bored, and passive, leads to questioning whether the Expressive Drive is being subdued too much and why. (Frequently this is because certain archaic Survival conclusions are being reinforced by the Survival Drive, whereupon it may be necessary to identify which ones and how their power might be reduced.) On the other hand, excessive impulsive, uncontrolled behavior is an indication that the Survival Drive is failing to counterbalance the Expressive Drive sufficiently. (Limits set temporarily by the Parent and/or Adult of the therapist may be required in such cases.) Agitation and insomnia are indicators that the Quiescence Drive is not operating effectively; this hypothesis may lead to checking causes and to finding methods for improvement, such as meditational practices.

The Survival Drive often preempts time required by the two other drives, perhaps because individual survival takes precedence in extreme situations in accordance with Maslow's concept of hierarchies (Maslow, 1968). In cases where food, water, and shelter are not the issue, the Survival Drive is still likely to preempt time needed for the other drives more often than is helpful. Probably people are so easily attracted to transacting for strokes because that is what they most needed and wanted in childhood in order to allay basic survival anxiety. Eventually they may find similar transactions irresistible, even to the point of emotional corruption. Time and mental energy are used to barter for strokes under the influence of the Survival Drive, even when such time is urgently needed for the Expressive or the Quiescence Drives.

For instance, there are many cases of artists and writers who produce outstanding work under the influence of the Expressive Drive, laboring for hours and often years without reward, but who develop blocks to creativity after they become famous and are offered adulation. Their Survival Drive influences them increasingly; even as they try to create, they become more concerned with how their work will be received than with expressing themselves. They develop anxiety about potential criticism, or they become preoccupied with how they will be admired. As a result, their Expressive Drive no longer operates sufficiently to support the essential internal time and excitement that originally fueled their work. Nor do they allow the Quiescence Drive to serve them for relaxing, as they may have in the past. This is why it is often said that success corrupts.

Individual variations of time are required by drives. At various periods of their lives, people use a higher proportion of time under the influence of one drive than under the others. Such variations are still consistent with the maintenance of good balance among their drives as long as they do not forcefully suppress the potential influence of a drive by overusing the other two over too long a period. However, the following are examples of cases in which an imbalance ensues because of failure...
to allow one of the drives sufficient time (or "space").

Case Study: Insufficient Time for the Quiescence Drive

Alan is a happily married, successful corporation executive. His Survival and Expressive Drives alternate or combine very well. He has plenty of good stroke transactions both at home and at work. He is also involved in a variety of exciting projects and hobbies, both alone and on a team. To keep up with all his activities at work and at home, he denies his need to relax and has convinced himself that he does not require more than five hours of sleep a night. Even on vacation, he arises at the crack of dawn to play golf. Thus he gets good exercise and exchanges plenty of strokes with various partners, but even in those attractive country surroundings he does not allow time for the Quiescence Drive. As a result, there are some episodes which are cause for concern to his wife. On a few occasions he lost consciousness and appeared to have dropped off to sleep at the wheel when driving. He discounts these experiences, claiming that each was an exception that would not happen again. Neurological tests show that they were not epileptic seizures. In addition, sometimes Alan becomes gloomy "for no reason."

These are the potentially harmful ways in which his Quiescence Drive takes the time which he does not allow himself. When Alan is "gloomy," his wife or his friends give him extra attention; indeed, he snaps out of his gloom thanks to the extra strokes, although they are not what will really help him in the long run. After a car accident resulting, again, from fatigue at the wheel, his wife insisted he see a therapist, who wisely identified the problem. After some argument, she managed to convince him that in spite of his busy schedule, he must find time to meditate in safe surroundings rather than be overtaken by the Quiescence Drive at the wheel of his car.

Case Study: Insufficient Time for the Expressive Drive

Susie is also a successful executive who achieved success by dint of hard work. She is well reinforced by internal and external strokes, for she takes pride in the fact that even though she works, she does not neglect her family and community responsibilities. She also makes sure she gets enough sleep, for she knows it is important for her health and energy. Thus her Survival and Quiescence Drives combine well, but at the cost of her Expressive Drive, which she can use only in a limited way at work. There are times when Susie feels that all is not quite well. However, she argues herself out of this feeling. She gives herself extra strokes for how well she manages and reminds herself how much she is appreciated at work and at home.

Susie keeps going with the kind of ambition generated by the Survival Drive. She loves to paint, but feels it is wrong to indulge in such a "waste of time." When she feels deprived or tired she has learned to turn to her family for support, and indeed, she gets plenty of strokes from them. However, just as in Alan's case, sometimes these very strokes are counterproductive because they encourage Susie to abstain from taking the time she needs for herself, painting or enjoying another "useless" activity. Thus, at times, Susie has anger outbursts at work or home "for no reason." Her Expressive Drive comes on in a negative way through attempts at aggression that are quickly stifled by a Survival conclusion that she has "no right" to be "unreasonable." Paradoxically, even her little outbursts of bad temper help her regain some balance among her drives, albeit at a much higher cost than if she would realize where the real problem lies.

In both the these examples, problems were due not to issues related to strokes, but to the fact that a drive other than the Survival Drive was not given sufficient time. Concern with stroke economy is not necessarily the prescription of choice for the kind of inchoate discomfort that is felt by someone when either the Expressive or the Quiescence Drive is not given enough time. In fact, the person may already have invested too much emotional time and energy on stroke transactions because of survival conclusions or greed brought on when one is tempted by too many offers of strokes, as in the case of certain artists referred to earlier.

Case Study: Insufficient Time for Survival Drive

Melvyn is an aficionado of opera. He has a rather dull job which provides him with a reasonable income, although he thinks it "takes
too much time. " Opera brings excitement and fascination into his life. He used to spend all the money and time he could possibly afford either to attend the opera or to listen to his extensive collection of opera records. He developed quasi-professional expertise about fine distinctions between opera performances without any interest in sharing his hobby. He felt that others would not appreciate the music enough and would only distract him. When his Expressive Drive was active he might listen to an opera record and follow it very carefully, noting subtle nuances; or he would conduct the music in his imagination, or sing with the tenor. At other times, Melvyn would go into a trance under the influence of his Quiescence Drive, allowing the music to flow through him until he fell asleep under its spell, waking up only when the alarm signaled it was time to go to work.

Without realizing it, Melvyn was increasingly stroke deprived. His co-workers wondered about his solitary life; he always turned down invitations to dinner because he wanted to devote every spare minute to his hobby. He believed that was the only way he could be happy. Whenever he felt angry and increasingly dissatisfied, he ascribed it to the fact that his job was boring; he did not realize the extent to which he was depriving himself of human contact and, thereby, of the strokes he needed for a better balance. (Of course, childhood experiences played a part in forming him, but this is a separate issue.)

At a certain point, Diana, a recently divorced co-worker who was lonely and who herself liked opera (though not to the extent Melvyn did), convinced him to let her join him a few times when he went to the opera. Thanks to Diana, Melvyn's unacknowledged needs for strokes were met; his angry outbursts at work diminished, and they married.

Perhaps they will live happily ever after, if Diana herself requires as much Expressive and/or Quiescence time on her own as does Melvyn. On the other hand, eventually she may require more time for stroke exchanges with Melvyn than he will be comfortable sacrificing from his hobby, and there may ensue conflicts and complaints from her that Melvyn "neglects" her, or there may be complaints from Melvyn that she is too "demanding." This is because, as was mentioned earlier, there are great differences between one person and another with regard to the quantity of clock time that each needs to allocate for the influence of one drive versus another. A delicate balance must be maintained, not only within each individual, but also between partners, particularly about the use of leisure time. Even normal, well-matched partners may experience difficulties if one needs more solitary time for the Expressive and/or Quiescence Drives, while the other wants more time for stroke transactions.

Returning to the Case of John and Mary

As a result of consulting an EPT therapist, John and Mary, the couple we met earlier, were able to diagnose their situation. They noted that in the past both had given high priority to their Survival Drive. This had been necessary while their children were growing up. John was a conscientious breadwinner, and Mary had been a conscientious housewife and mother. Because they had a good sexual relationship, some of their Expressive Drive needs were met in this way, as well as needs for strokes. This contributed to feelings of "togetherness" as well as quiescence when they slept together. What they had not realized is that, while this helped them maintain good balance within themselves and with each other, the Expressive Drive needs more scope than is provided through sexual relations, however gratifying they may be. While they were rearing children, some of these needs of the Expressive Drive were met by the pleasure, excitement, and challenge experienced with the children. Even conflicts, when their children reached adolescence, stimulated creativity for John and Mary's Expressive Drives as they sought ways to solve problems with their children. Then they also enjoyed relaxing together after dealing with one challenge or another.

Now the situation was different. For Mary there were new challenges at work; she was promoted to a position in which there was much scope for her Expressive Drive. On the other hand, John's job had become even more routine. In the past, as a responsible father he had held off "indulging too much" in his own interests when he came home in the evening, especially as he had had pleasure in roughhousing and sports with his son. Now he needed the long-postponed opportunity to use more of his Expressive Drive by involving himself in
various experiments in chemistry. He did not do so to gain wealth and fame, although that was the rationalization he used to quiet some of the anxiety or guilty feelings generated by his Survival Drive whenever he emerged from the basement or noted Mary’s distress about the quantity of time he spent there. He did not know how else to articulate the passionate need he felt to do so. He himself wondered at the fact that he often lost track of time while involved in his laboratory; sometimes he planned to spend only an hour there and then found that he become so absorbed that several hours had gone by.

Meanwhile, Mary was also dealing with postponed needs, but hers were in the domain of the Survival Drive. She had done a good job of parenting and supporting John whenever he felt discouraged about the routine aspects of his job. Now her Child wanted more strokes for herself. In the past, most good strokes came from the total family and the good recognition she received from the children. Without realizing it, she now wanted John to compensate for the deficit. She could not understand why he did not yearn for as much time together as she did, and felt rejected when he preferred time alone.

Resolution of John and Mary’s Issue. Once they understood the situation, John and Mary developed a variety of options for maintaining what was basically a good relationship without sacrificing one person’s needs or the other’s. The first step was to recognize that each now had different ways to meet the specific requirements of their three drives. Many needs can be combined and met jointly by partners. Then sometimes each partner needs time—often much time—away from the other, and this does not necessarily signify harmful withdrawal into depression or rejection of the other. John now needed freedom to use much of his leisure time alone under the influence of his Expressive Drive without having to justify this. On the other hand, Mary needed more social contact and opportunities for exchanges of strokes. As the anxiety about what was going on between them was removed, Mary volunteered that actually she had wanted to join a group of ecologically minded friends who met regularly several evenings a week both socially and in conjunction with various projects. She had refused to participate because John had not wanted to join, and she thought it would be wrong to leave him alone so many evenings lest they become estranged.

Having recognized the difference in how each functioned in relation to each drive, as well as the areas where their needs did overlap, Mary and John discussed how they could use their leisure time without guilt, projections, or erroneous assumptions about marital rules that were due to old Survival conclusions. This process itself became a joint creative endeavor and offered the opportunity for stroking each other as well, so it was useful for both. The important outcome was that each partner improved his or her own autonomy without damaging their relationship.

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REFERENCES


