

STROKES IN THE CREDIT BANK FOR DAVID KUPPER

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The pain of David's death following the shock of Eric's — that's not what I'll write about now.

David was a great teacher, and a superb therapist. He could zero in exactly on the sensitive spot, confront Games and challenge for basic improvement. Then there would be explicit strokes for straight transactions and risk-taking.

David's legacy is enormous in regard to the lives he has influenced positively. He taught his ideas — and many are now a part of TA teaching or practice — sometimes without our being aware of it, and also without the official recognition given to persons who write more than he did.

One such concept described here, in his name, is that of the internal "credit bank."

The internal "credit bank," as David described it, contains good stored-up strokes inserted into memories of having been praised or appreciated "for free," sometimes under circumstances where the strokes were unexpected.¹

Dividends from strokes in the "credit bank" can be drawn on at times of stress when extra Adult effort is required for tasks that the Child may shrink from as offering poor promise of strokes. With strokes in the "credit bank" the feeling can be, "If I got these unexpected strokes then, I am worthy of strokes now; I can afford the risk to invest in a situation or in transactions which don't guarantee good stroke return, but they just *might*

be worth exploring." This feeling, in turn, can sometimes support taking chances for intimacy, and may actually lead to new, unexpected strokes to be further entered into the "credit bank!"

To write up this idea, David collected "case examples." One such was supplied by Deirdre English, three years ago. She wrote it up, at his request, as follows:

"When I was about 10 years old my mother was driving me home past a movie house where I noticed a 'last day' sign for a movie my friend Amy and I had wanted to see. To my question, mother answered that it did not seem possible to fit in seeing this movie, but she agreed to wait in the car a few minutes while I checked facts.

"I quickly checked the movie timetable, telephoned my friend, and suggested the following plan to my mother: the movie was due to start about 20 minutes before a meeting I knew my mother was to attend downtown. Instead of mother driving me home now she could use the time for grocery shopping, about which she had been pressed. Meanwhile I would wait here and re-telephone Amy who lived near the store; she would meet mother there and mother could drop her off at the movie on the way to the meeting. I gave mother the exact time when the show would end; it corresponded approximately to the end of her meeting, and told her exactly where we would be waiting for her on the way back; this would still get us all home in time for dinner.

¹(This concept is similar to the Nurturing Parent, see page 43. Ed.)

STROKES IN THE CREDIT BANK

"I expected mother might agree, but was surprised when, in addition, she praised me in detail for every step in my 'logistical' planning. She itemized how I had taken into account time, convenience and reality for each person involved. She underlined the fact that the plan would not have been acceptable had I left out any of the details and she praised me for organizing for fun as well as for work.

"'Logistics,' a new word for me then, became an attractive term. I don't remember the movie, but I do remember the strokes. This memory serves me well when I decide to go into some effort with unpredictable results."

The above example is applicable to both education and therapy.

As therapists, we are all too aware of the way in which negative memories generate scary or destructive mental "tapes;" these reinforce each other, creating "debits" that turn to rackets.

The "credit bank" concept underlines

the principle that good experiences can be re-inforced also.

Many patients have been raised on lists of their failings; there are "and also" catalogues. ("You didn't get a good grade, *and also* you didn't come home in time *and also* yesterday you forgot . . . etc.") The "and also" pattern can be used for the positive, to build up a "credit bank" in which strokes are itemized. ("You had a good idea *and also* you presented it well *and also* you chose the right time . . . etc.") This applies particularly to patients who suffer from stroke deprivation.

With a good "credit bank" account, the Child can risk more, so there will be more opportunities for intimacy. With a good "credit bank" a person can be more giving, out of rich expansiveness rather than adaptation.

When David worked, I felt he was able to draw on plenty of strokes from his "credit bank." Now, posthumous thanks for the itemized strokes from him that I treasure in *my* "credit bank."