How Did You Become a Transactional Analyst?

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Abstract

In response to questions she is frequently asked about transactional analysis, the author briefly describes how she became interested in TA. In the process of presenting the theoretical material she now depends on for her work, she summarizes Eric Berne's basic material, some underlying tenets from Freud, and some concepts she has added to transactional analysis.

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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 I trained in Freudian psychoanalysis, including 8 years of personal psychoanalysis, and practiced using that model for 14 years, treating both children and adults. Increasingly, the process seemed overly ponderous, time consuming, and therefore not cost effective for clients, 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 had many stimulating contacts with Berne and personally experienced what many call the lifesaving value of "TA." On returning to Chicago, I transformed my practice to transactional analysis, started doing workshops to teach it, 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 the International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA). To some I give a long answer covering a good deal of information; with others, in the course of a conversation, 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 with 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 both laypeople and professionals who are interested in the question of what transactional analysis is and how it is practiced.

To Answer Your Next Questions

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. Berne was a practicing psychoanalyst before he developed the theory and practice of transactional analysis. Originally, it was used in therapy or treatment (as Berne called it), 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 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 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." I will discuss those later in this article, but before I do, I want to summarize the concepts and techniques that I consider indispensable in working as a therapist using transactional analysis. I will do so as simply as I can, so some of the theoretical material I present here may suffer from over-simplification and even some distortions, although I stand behind it.

Since Berne called himself a "better Freudian than the psychoanalysts" (E. Berne, personal communication, November 1965), I will begin by discussing 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 list them here because they underlie all talk therapy.

Underlying Tenets from Freud

1. However rational, conscious, and capable of exerting willpower 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" that represents our identity.

3. To the conscious ego, Freud added the "superego," 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, although this is easier said than done and usually requires 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 and represents a turning around of murderous aggressive wishes.

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 about what feelings and thoughts may be brought to light or manifested as behaviors. Conflicts often relate to the superego's high standards and the ego's inability to distinguish between awareness of forbidden wishes and the feared likelihood of enacting those 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., specific age periods at which children learn to walk or talk, comprehend abstract concepts, enter puberty, etc.), so there are 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 superego, the conscious self or ego—that which we each experience as "me"—is itself not one unit. Actually, we each operate with at least three coexisting 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 and 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 one is a distinct system of interacting feelings and 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 nonverbally, 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 would 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 an ego state, in contrast to referring to a chronological child) represents all the children I used to be, pictures of 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, who 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 out assumptions against 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 or 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 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 marketplace for mutual benefit.

However, 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 I 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 comment might be met with a grateful response, yet the following week the same offer will be met with a frown and something like "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 from her Child, the second time she was in her Parent, busy with her thoughts and resentful of the interruption. So, much to John's dismay, in the second case 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 does 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 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. However, I do want to add

that strokes are not always experienced as positive (e.g., pleasant caresses) or negative (e.g., 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. There are also "crooked strokes" that seem positive but have negative effects, thus generating what other schools of therapy refer to as "double-bind consequences."

Ultimately, any kind of strokes may be preferable to none, for otherwise a person may feel discounted, rather 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 negative or crooked strokes because such input corresponds to the 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 it can be useful to work with clients in groups rather than in individual sessions is that in a group it is easier for both 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 establishing 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 might be rather than maintain unrealistic, magical expectations that can never be met. Sooner or later, it is important for both 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: Type I

or "Undersure" and Type II or "Oversure." Type I tends to want help and guidance even in situations in which 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 a Critical Parent. The basic character type tends to get established in childhood, usually between the ages of 2 and 6.

Persons who develop a Type I character have usually experienced a good deal of domination from caretakers either in a critical or 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 be independent. When they are assertive, it is likely to be in the form of rebellion.

Persons who develop a Type II character had to take on much more responsibility during childhood than was appropriate for their age (e.g., with sick or nonfunctioning 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 according to type on a third-degree level, which is pathological.

Transactions according to type: In the course of 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) and Type II will be glad to give advice (Parent to Child). 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. 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 Parent for a change.

It is easy to imagine any number of variations of the painful frustration that occurs 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 individuals may eventually become too competitive, or two Type I individuals may feel let down by each other at crucial times and sink into depression.

A (Sad) Merry-Go-Around. Sometimes, in a relationship between a Type I (Undersure) person and a Type II (Oversure) person, the Undersure partner may initiate transactions as a "Victim" and the Oversure partner may operate as a "Rescuer." However, if either one becomes frustrated, he or she may switch ego state and suddenly become a "Persecutor" of the other, after which they may change roles again. As a result, they may both end up as frustrated Victims.

The words "Victim," "Rescuer," and "Persecutor" were first used by Karpman (1968) in describing similar changes of roles 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 the Adult of both participants and perhaps the help of a therapist's Adult—to analyze both the parallel transactions that seemed to go well and the reasons for the shift 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 lifesaving 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 become 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 tried 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 early childhood. Children are particularly vulnerable to shame during the 2-4 year age period, and some people carry 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 and 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 ask the client to visualize one or more early situations that may have generated such a conclusion during 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 describe 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 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 enough in the process. However, with a temporary subcontract, 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 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 other feelings or attitudes will gain them approval. For instance, a child may be told when his dog dies, "Aren't you lucky! Be happy you're getting a bigger dog!" without any recognition that he 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 these 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 continue 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 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 habitual 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. In contrast, Othello, a Type II Oversure character, operates habitually from Parent with substitute attitudes of invulnerability until he becomes convinced of Desdemona's alleged infidelity, at which point he collapses as a convulsive, inarticulate Child. Then, when shamed about this by Iago, he sees no other way than to murder Desdemona and kill himself.

To help racketeers who seek treatment— which many of them do, precisely because of the nebulous feeling that something is going wrong in their relations with others—they must first be supported so they feel safe in the group context. Then, rather than continue to offer them strokes for 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 certain disallowed feelings can be very frightening for these clients. For instance, a client might 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 people 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-1960s, 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, transactional analysis treatment focuses primarily on the here and now without seeking to analyze deeply 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 differs significantly from Freud's (see English, 1998, 2003). The three motivators are the survival motivator, the expressive or passionate motivator, and the transcendence 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 forebearers to the creative inventions, discoveries, and explorations that have enabled our species to survive and become the most powerful on earth.

Lastly, the transcendence motivator functions to maintain our quiet connection to the universe and to help us 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, which he referred to as a "script." Scripts are adaptations of infantile 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 abandoned. Quite the contrary, as I have spelled out elsewhere (English, 1977b, 1988).

On the basis of clinical experience, I believe Berne was correct to emphasize that a child of about 3-6 years of age creates an initial script to guide his or her future. This script is influenced both by inborn tendencies and the child's limited worldview, 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 it the child's genetic sense of how he or she might fulfill inner goals creatively if certain malevolent fairies and cobwebs could be neutralized. Without a script, the 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 a lack of script formation rather than the reverse.

As a person grows, eventually the 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 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 people's inner needs and tendencies and a better sense about the creative processes of their lives, without necessarily planning for particular changes.

Hot Potatoes and Episcripts. 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 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 as "passing on a hot potato" (English, 1969). In addition to transmissions within family groups, hot-potato transmission can occur whenever one partner in a dyad is in a psychologically more powerful position than the other (e.g., teacher/student, priest/parishioner, therapist/client, etc.), 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 "episcripts." Tragic examples of these include the suicide bombers who struck the United States on 11 September 2001 after taking on episcripts from Osama Bin Laden and Palestinian suicide bombers who attack Israel after being episcripted by Yasir Arafat or some zealous cleric.

It is important not to confuse episcripts with scripts any more than one would equate cancerous growths with normal development. Episcripts, 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 transactional analysis 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 Analysis 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 refine his theories fully, although he was still working on them 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 in the rest of the United States and the world, especially throughout Europe, Latin America, India, Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. 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 (for more ideas on how, visit the ITAA Web site at www.itaa-net.org), but I hope this article has given you at least a beginning understanding of what it is all about.

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