



Transactional Analysis



Transactional Analysis

- Formulated by Eric Berne in the early 1960's.
- Some clinicians classify as an almost purely cognitive theory with a linkage to psychoanalysis.



Major Methods of Understanding and Predicting Human Behavior

- Structural Analysis – understanding what is happening and predicting human behavior.
- Transactional Analysis – describing what happens between two or more people.
- Game Analysis – understanding transactions between individuals that lead to bad feelings.
- Script Analysis – understanding the life plan that an individual is following.



Structural Analysis

- Each person is considered to have three functional ego states:
 - Child, parent, and adult.
- Ego state – a “consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding pattern of behavior” (Berne, 1964).



Child Ego State

- First to develop.
- The part of the personality characterized by childlike behaviors and feelings.
- Consists of two subdivisions:
 - *the natural (free) child – the part of the person that is spontaneous, impulsive, feeling-oriented, and often self-centered and pleasure-loving.*
 - *the adaptive child – the compliant part of the personality that conforms to the wishes and demands of parental figures.*



Parent Ego State

- Incorporates the attitudes and behaviors (*dos, shoulds, and oughts*) of parental figures.
- Outwardly expressed through prejudice, criticism, and nurturing behavior.
- Consists of two subdivisions:
 - *the nurturing parent* – *the part of the person that comforts, praises, and aids others.*
 - *the critical parent* – *the part of the person that finds fault, displays prejudices, disapproves, and prevents others from feeling good about themselves.*



Adult Ego State

- Not subdivided or related to a person's age.
- The objective, thinking, data-gathering part of the person.
- The adult is rational and organized.



Focus of Transactional Analysis

- A major focus of TA is determining which ego state(s) a person is using.
- The different ego states may operate simultaneously.
- Although TA does not favor one ego state over another, the theory stresses the importance of being able to balance responses when necessary and appropriate.



Transactional Analysis

- May occur on three levels:
 - Complementary Transaction
 - Crossed Transaction
 - Ulterior Transaction



Complementary Transaction

Both persons are operating from the same ego state (child:child) or from complementary ego states (parent:child or adult:parent).



Crossed Transaction

- An inappropriate ego state is activated, producing an unexpected response.
 - **Crossed transactions hurt.**
 - When they occur, people tend to withdraw from each other or switch topics.



Ulterior Transaction

- One in which two ego states operate simultaneously and one message disguises the other.
- Appear to be complementary and socially acceptable, even though they are not.



Game Analysis

- Games - Ulteriorly motivated transactions that appear complementary on the surface but end in bad feelings.
- People play games to:
 - Structure time.
 - Achieve recognition.
 - Make others predictable.
 - Prevent intimacy.
- Because intimacy involves risks, games keep people safe from exposing thoughts and feelings.



Types of Games

■ **First-degree games**

- Played in social circles with anyone willing to participate.
- Generally lead to mild upsets.

■ **Second-degree games**

- Occur when the players go after bigger stakes.
- Usually in more intimate circles.
- End up with bad feelings.

■ **Third-degree games**

- Usually end up in tissue damage
- The players usually end up in jail, the hospital, or the morgue.



Individuals and Game-Playing

- Individuals who play games operate from one of three positions:
 - Victim
 - Persecutor
 - Rescuer



Script Analysis

- Berne believed that everyone makes a *life script* (life plan) by age 5.
- Determines how one interacts with others.
- Based on interpretations of external events.



Permissions and Injunctions

■ Permissions

- Positive messages given to a child.
- Do not limit people in any way.

■ Injunctions

- Negative messages.
- More powerful.
- May become the basis for destructive scripts.



Strokes and Stamps

- Verbal or physical recognition for certain behaviors.
- Negative strokes may be better than no strokes.
- Strokes result in the collection of either good or bad feelings, known as **stamps**.
- When enough stamps are collected they cash them in on behaviors.
- *Healthy people give and receive positive strokes most often.*



Common Negative Script Patterns

- Never scripts – a person never gets to do what he or she wants because the parent forbids it.
- Until scripts – a person must wait until a certain time to do something before he or she can have a reward.
- Always scripts – a person tells himself that it is necessary to continue doing the same thing.
- After scripts – a person expects difficulty after a certain event.
- Open-ended scripts – a person does not know what he is supposed to do after a given time.



Drivers

- Miniscripts within people's lives that focus on minute-by-minute occurrences.
- Common miniscripts:
 - “be perfect”
 - “be strong”
 - “hurry up”
 - “try hard”
 - “please someone”



Roles of the Counselor

- Must act as a teacher and explain to the client the language and concepts of TA.
- Contracts with the client for specific changes and helps the person achieve them.
- Does not rely heavily on formal psychological tests, although a counselor does assess client functioning.
- Assessment is done to determine how a client is spending time and from which ego states the client is operating.



Goals

- Identify and restore distorted and damaged ego states.
- Develop the capacity to use all ego states.
- Use the adult ego state with its reasoning powers.
- Alter inappropriate life scripts.
- Adopt a position of “I’m OK, You’re OK.”



TA Techniques

- Treatment contract
- Interrogation
- Specification
- Confrontation
- Illustration
- Confirmation
- Interpretation
- Crystallization

Almost all techniques in TA involve some combination of questioning, confrontation, and dialogue.



Multicultural and Gender Sensitive Issues

- TA has an appeal in many cultures, especially with diverse populations.
- TA also seems to be an appropriate theory in working on gender sensitive issues.
- TA emphasis on empowerment and contracts strengthens the position of women in TA therapy.



Strengths and Contributions

- Uses terms that are easily understood and clearly defined.
- Can be used in a number of diverse settings.
- Easily and effectively combined with other more action-oriented counseling.
- Puts the responsibility of change on the clients.
- Goal-directed.
- Has a worldwide association that sponsors certifications, conferences, and publications related to the theory.



Limitations and Criticisms

- Limited in its effectiveness when used alone.
- Criticized for its simplicity, structure, and popularity.
- Does not emphasize the authenticity of the counselor.
- The research behind the approach is relatively weak.
- The approach has not developed much since Berne's death in 1970.