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EDITORIAL SECTION

Editors' Note

Two years back we started out with an ambitious goal to increase the awareness and practice of Transactional Analysis in the South Asian region. With this intention, we have published 3 issues and this is our 4th issue. Every issue has been a learning experience for us and we have been committed to continuously improving the standards of the journal. Our reach has extended to atleast 620 readers across different countries on the map. We consider this a very good start and hope to keep the graph climbing.

We owe significant credit to the authors who contributed to these past issues. Their thoughts, experiences and perspectives have added immense value to the journal, because of which it appealed to a diverse and international readership. SAATA as an organization is welcoming and inclusive of practitioners from different parts of the world and journal is no different.

While we intend to release an issue every 6 months, we are yet to sustain the momentum on it owing to logistical issues we are still sorting out and hence there is delay in this issue. We deeply regret this delay. We are also making a change in the month of the next issue that is July and not August. This issue focuses on "Working through conflicts – internal and external" and we have an interesting array of insights to offer. Dr. Peter Milnes from Australia presents a thought provoking take on life positions and the OK corral, proposing a 9 life positions matrix, Srinath completes his 2-part series on feedback, and Smita shares her experience of working through her conflicting messages around success. While we focus on publishing the journal, we hope you enjoy the read and continue to send us feedback on how to make the journal better. We

also appeal all the trainers and trainees to share the journal with other communities like mental health professionals, the HR fraternity, OD consultants and those in any related domains, so we spread our roots as a Transactional Analysis community.

We have seen the journal attract sufficient attention now and crystallize an identity among readers. We thought this the right time to christen it with a new, distinct name that had a nice ring to it. So here we present SAJTA, the South Asian Journal of Transactional Analysis! This name will be used from next issue.

Wish you an enriching reading experience!

Deepak Dhananjaya,

Managing Editor, SAATA Journal.

Guidelines from the Editorial Board

From our experience in editing the SAATA journal thus far, we have put together some guidelines for contributors to future editions of the journal:

- Write on topics – experiences, opinions, research - which can be explained using primarily transactional analysis concepts

- Keep sentences short and precise. Where there are multiple ideas, construct them as two or more sentences.

- Use simple and easy-to-understand words. Remember that your audience may not be transactional analysis literate or even use English as their first language.

- Avoid the use of casual phrases, expressions and slangs unless quoting verbatim.

- Follow APA style of formatting, references, citations and bibliography (http://www.apastyle.org/).

- Review the paper for redundancy where the same idea is expressed multiple times.

- Double-check transactional analysis terminologies and their definitions, e.g. names of games, components of script, drivers, injunctions etc.

- Quote the original authors of the concepts.

- Provide English translations to any vernacular quotation that are made in the article.

- Total word count should be less than 2000 words.

- The article should not be published anywhere before.

- Figures should be grouped as one image. Label figures and tables.

- Submit the article in word format.

- As part of our learning, we have now decided to only accept single part particles that align to the theme of the issue. Multi-part series will only be considered on a case by case basis depending on the relevance and timeliness of the topic

We hope this is useful as you all contemplate contributing to the journal. For queries, feedback and suggestions, write to us at journal@saata.org.

Theme for July 2017 Issue

"Boundaries in relationships"

Deadline for submissions: June 15th 2017.

Email : journal@saata.org

Please follow the guidelines before you submit.

Editorial Board

Volume 3, Number 1, January 2017

Deepak Dhananjaya

Ragini Rao PTSTA (psychotherapy)

Smita Chimmanda Potty

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

In Conflict with Success

Smita Chimmanda Potty

I dream often of unbridled success, of the kind that leaves behind a legacy, that future generations recall with fondness and admiration. And if not that, then even of moderate success – the kind where my impact will be felt by the people around me, the community, my friends and family for some time to come. And for a few years into my adulthood, it seemed like no one could stop me from achieving my dreams. Except maybe myself.

The challenge became quite evident when I joined a large MNC and for the first time, found myself in a very competitive environment. It was not enough to do one's job well, but one had to outdo the others at it! It was not long before I was frustrated about what I decided were unfair practices and behaviors around me. These I concluded, were what kept me from reaching the pinnacles of success waiting for me: Co workers who 'shamelessly' pom-pomed their efforts as ground breaking work (my P_2 (Berne, 1961) message around humility balked at this), those who 'cozied up' to seniors and ensured a page in their good books, those who claimed credit for work they exaggerated greatly, those who were smooth talkers who could spin a fancy tale about their achievements.

All this was beneath me I insisted. I continued to gripe about the unfairness of the system and the people who governed the system and those who 'gamed' it. To process my struggle with this part of my life, I had to delve a little into my early life experiences and parental messages that I had woven into my script.

Success, as a student, had a simple interpretation: If I studied hard and earned high scores, I was worthy of appreciation and it held the promise of a bright future. If I scored the highest in class or in any particular subject, it was a matter of familial pride. If I could do all of this with minimal effort, I might also get compared to the genius in the family and it was an attestation of the superior intelligence in our genes. If I did this consistently, I might even become the teacher's favourite! My script decision (Berne, 1972) read, "Work hard and succeed to get attention"

On the flip side, it was shameful when I couldn't make it to the top 5 in class. Failure was unacceptable and threatened to bring shame to the whole family. And it was humiliating if one had to haggle with or cozy up to the teacher to be given more marks! Finally, if I wasn't successful in achieving the goals that had been set for me, then I had only myself to blame. And blame myself I did, for a long time into adulthood.

The Impasse messages:

- Work hard and succeed to get attention Vs. Shame, embarrassment, self-doubt that keeps me from doing things to succeed (promoting myself, negotiating for more).

- Pride is a bad thing Vs. a deep desire to stand out and be acknowledged

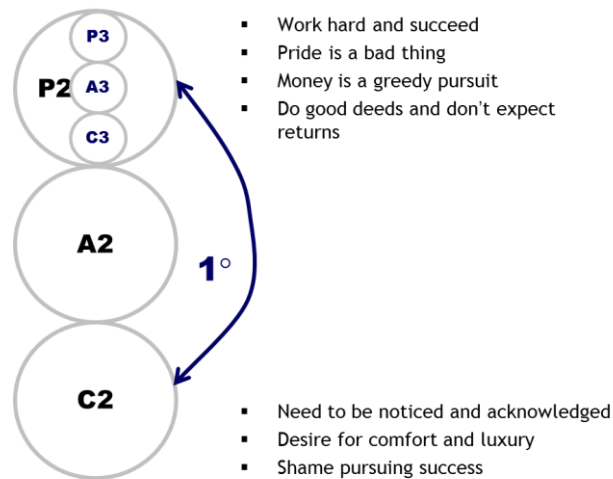- Money is a greedy pursuit Vs. desire for comfort and luxury

Figure 1: First degree Impasse (Mellor, 1980)

When I extended these beliefs to my adult life, there were many interesting manifestations of

how these Parental contaminations (Berne, 1961) played out:

- It frustrated me that there were no clear 'pass-fail' indicators in my work life. I would

   work hard and long hours and it could account for nothing if my evaluator imagined the

   goal post to be different (and said, "be more proactive, take more initiative, improve your

   influencing skills" and so on). I began to resent such a system of performance

   management

- I was irked that some colleagues shared more than just a professional relationship with

   their seniors and this seemed to get them plum assignments and favourable appraisals. In

   my own worldview hued with a black and white system of fairness and objectivity, such

   coincidences seemed sinister

- I refused to 'curry favours' by networking with the powers to be, doing them any favours,

   or by holding my fire when I disagreed with them. In my all-out style, I was forceful,

   vocal and stubborn in holding on to my positions once I had decided on them (Script

Beliefs read: "One should not let themselves be taken for granted". "I have to fight to get what I want")

- I would let go opportunities that seemed trivial and routine, that held no promise of new learning. It didn't matter that they offered high visibility, potential for greater responsibilities and even more money. These often seemed like a cop out to my "Try Hard" because I believed that success couldn't come so easily and any such success was hardly worth it.

- Further, I believed that pursuing greater wealth was immoral and unethical, taking away from the pursuit of good, meaningful work.

As a TA practitioner, it didn't take me long to see how I had set up my racket system (Erskine and Zalcman, 1979) to keep myself performing at a sub optimal level – by selectively

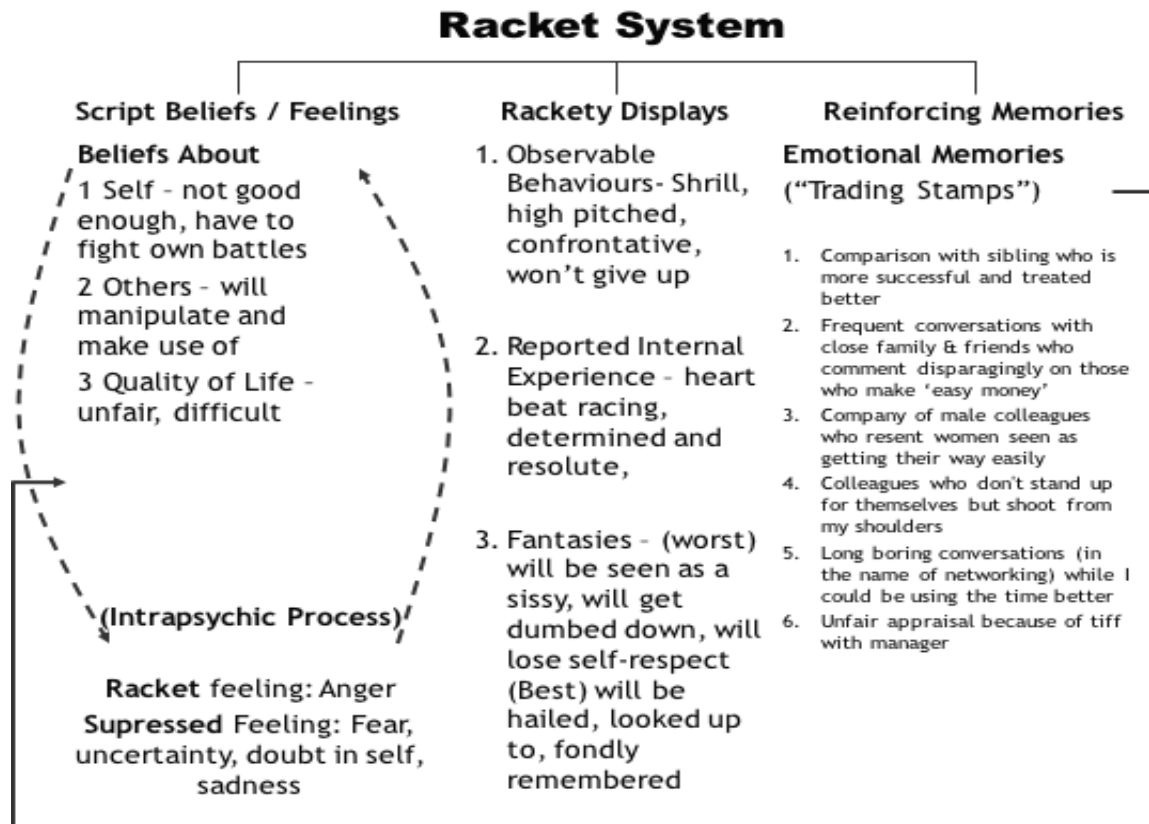reinforcing beliefs that rejected and sabotaged opportunities that came my way

Racket System

Script Beliefs / Feelings	Rackety Displays	Reinforcing Memories
Beliefs About	1. Observable Behaviours- Shrill, high pitched, confrontative, won't give up	**Emotional Memories** ("Trading Stamps")
1 Self – not good enough, have to fight own battles		1. Comparison with sibling who is more successful and treated better
2 Others – will manipulate and make use of	2. Reported Internal Experience – heart beat racing, determined and resolute,	2. Frequent conversations with close family & friends who comment disparagingly on those who make 'easy money'
3 Quality of Life – unfair, difficult		3. Company of male colleagues who resent women seen as getting their way easily
(Intrapsychic Process)	3. Fantasies – (worst) will be seen as a sissy, will get dumbed down, will lose self-respect (Best) will be hailed, looked up to, fondly remembered	4. Colleagues who don't stand up for themselves but shoot from my shoulders
Racket feeling: Anger **Supressed** Feeling: Fear, uncertainty, doubt in self, sadness		5. Long boring conversations (in the name of networking) while I could be using the time better
		6. Unfair appraisal because of tiff with manager

Figure 2: Racket System (Erskine and Zalcman, 1979)

Personal Work direction

My own process began through my script work and initial re-decisions on success and money. As with many, I wondered how it might help to just rewrite my script decisions, because my beliefs were still in conflict with the proposed actions. Urged by my therapist, I did it anyway. The ones relevant to this topic are listed below:

- I will pursue success on goals I set

- I will showcase my efforts and achievements

- I will make money to meet my needs and desires

This remained at the back of my mind as I pursued personal work in other directions and formats. It was in one session of psychodrama that I allowed myself to grieve over lost opportunities - my early career desire to pursue research which I gave up in pursuit of financial independence – something I hadn't forgiven myself for. It helped me assuage the yearning and sense of loss and accept it as a part of me that might not completely ever go away. Psychodrama (Moreno, 1920) as a deconfusion (Berne, 1961) technique, helped me experience the loss in its intensity, to understand that the decisions I took were what I felt were best for me then (and to not look at it as a mistake), and embrace myself in this form. These were the permissions I needed to feel OK about myself. I further redefined what success meant for me, through a visualization exercise that helped me 'see' what felt good for me, what outcomes I would like for myself and how that experience might be. I articulated what I saw and hoped for and that became the goal I would anchor my hopes and efforts in.

I also looked in a detailed manner at my Parental contaminations, to separate the here-and-now reality (organizations have complex structures and hierarchies where personal efforts and achievements have to be showcased to be noticed) from the Parental values and structures that guided my actions ("Pride is dangerous – Be humble", "Work should speak for itself", "Do good deeds and don't expect rewards"). I was able to see the impasse between the P_3 pressure to achieve success so I can feel accepted and belonged and the C_1 shame using the (not-so-approved-of) ways to do that. In a particularly intense piece of personal work I did, I was able to let go of my archaic definition of success and reimagine how it might be to pursue an alternate

goal (of working with non-profits), to move it from the fantasy it was (which kept me in the 'Poor Me' mode), to think through the practicalities and actionables. While I can't say I have developed a great sense of ease with self-promotion, I no longer look at it as evil and a wasted effort!

I found enough evidence for my updated beliefs as I recalled memories that I had discounted to keep my racket system going. As I recounted other positive experiences, as I imagined what it would be like to be led by mu updated beliefs, my autonomy system began to take shape:
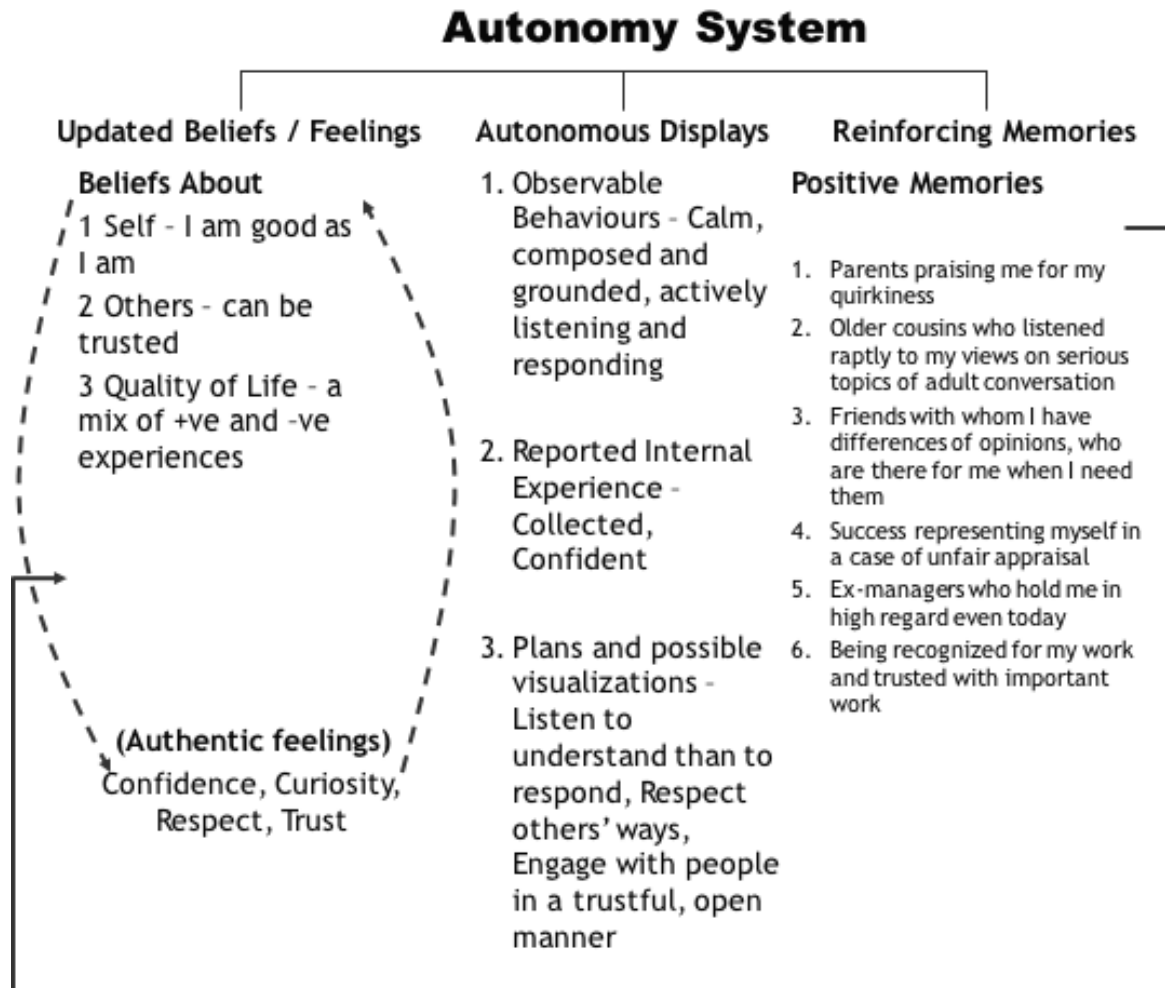
Autonomy System

Updated Beliefs / Feelings	Autonomous Displays	Reinforcing Memories

Beliefs About

1 Self – I am good as I am

2 Others – can be trusted

3 Quality of Life – a mix of +ve and -ve experiences

(Authentic feelings)
Confidence, Curiosity, Respect, Trust

1. Observable Behaviours - Calm, composed and grounded, actively listening and responding

2. Reported Internal Experience - Collected, Confident

3. Plans and possible visualizations - Listen to understand than to respond, Respect others' ways, Engage with people in a trustful, open manner

Positive Memories

1. Parents praising me for my quirkiness
2. Older cousins who listened raptly to my views on serious topics of adult conversation
3. Friends with whom I have differences of opinions, who are there for me when I need them
4. Success representing myself in a case of unfair appraisal
5. Ex-managers who hold me in high regard even today
6. Being recognized for my work and trusted with important work

Figure 3: Autonomy System (Stewart and Joines, 1987)

When I look back today, ~1.5 years hence, I feel I have come a long way and made some significant shifts:

- In my professional space, I am content doing what I do, I have given myself permission to enjoy my work regardless of a tangible metric of success and I pursue with vigor (I used to call it 'shamelessly'!) what I think I deserve.

- I have begun to appreciate competitiveness (and all the behaviors that come with it) as a tool to aid optimal performance. I believe I can be competitive and ethical about it and that not everyone plays underhand shots. I use it to peg my goals at a level that makes me stretch and achieve more

- I believe that making an honest representation of my achievements is not bragging. I have learnt to speak about my work, to bring it to the attention of people who matter and to avoid underplaying any of it

- While I do not completely enjoy workplace networking, I have learnt subtler ways in which to make and maintain connections with people and build my credibility among people who matter.

TA has given me the terminology and the understanding of my intrapsychic workings and relief from my endless loop of worry, anxiety, frustration and self-recrimination for not 'making it'… yet.

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TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

Effective exchange of feedback to enhance working relationships – Part 2

Srinath Nadathur

Abstract

This is the second part of a 2-part essay, where I explore the use of Strokes (Berne, 1964) and Stroke Economy (Steiner, 1971) to effectively exchange feedback in a professional environment. In part 1 (Nadathur, 2016), I described the constituents of Feedback as follows:
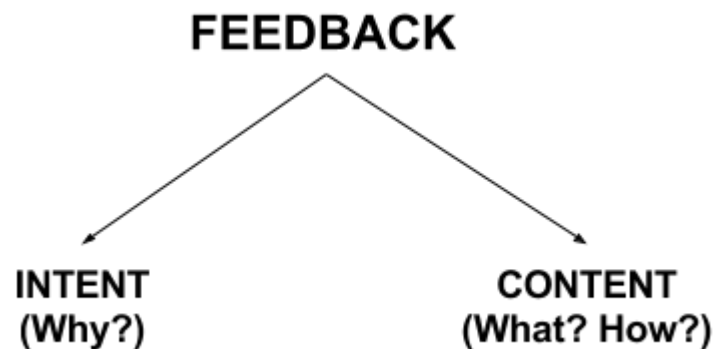
Figure: Feedback

I used the OK Corral (Ernst, 1971) as a tool to understand the intent of a feedback, and discussed through examples, how the intent plays an important role in deciding the outcome of the feedback exchange process. In the context of the team I was coaching, I introduced the OK corral through examples and helped participants draw their Corralograms (Ernst, 1982). This was a reflective exercise where participants shared the quadrants they operate from during a typical work day. An outcome of this awareness was an eagerness in the participants to know how to

operate from the I'm OK, You're OK quadrant (Ernst, 1971) more often. Content of feedback helps in understanding this.
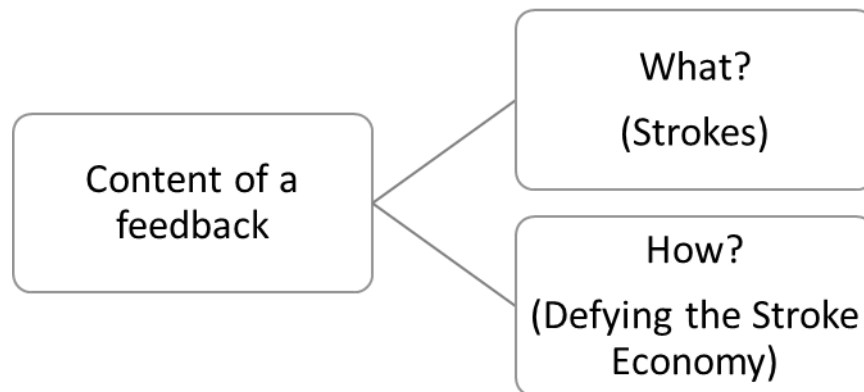
Content (What?)

Figure: Content of a feedback

Content is what gets exchanged between the giver and the receiver. Strokes are helpful in understanding content. Similar to physical hunger for food, all of us have a psychological hunger for stimulus – the need for physical touch. Berne (1964) inferred from Rene Spitz's experiments, that the satisfaction of this need is critical for the healthy development of an infant. As we grow up, the availability of physical touch reduces. We make up for this decrease by seeking other forms of recognition from a fellow human, like a smile, or a hello. In a working context, the feedback we receive from colleagues and supervisors satisfies this recognition hunger (Berne, 1964), helping us feel valued and motivated. Berne (1964) colloquially termed any act recognizing another person's presence as stroking, and called what gets exchanged in such an act as a stroke. Thus, strokes constitute the what? (content) of a feedback.

Woollams & Brown (1978) detailed the various kinds of strokes, which I have put together in the image below.
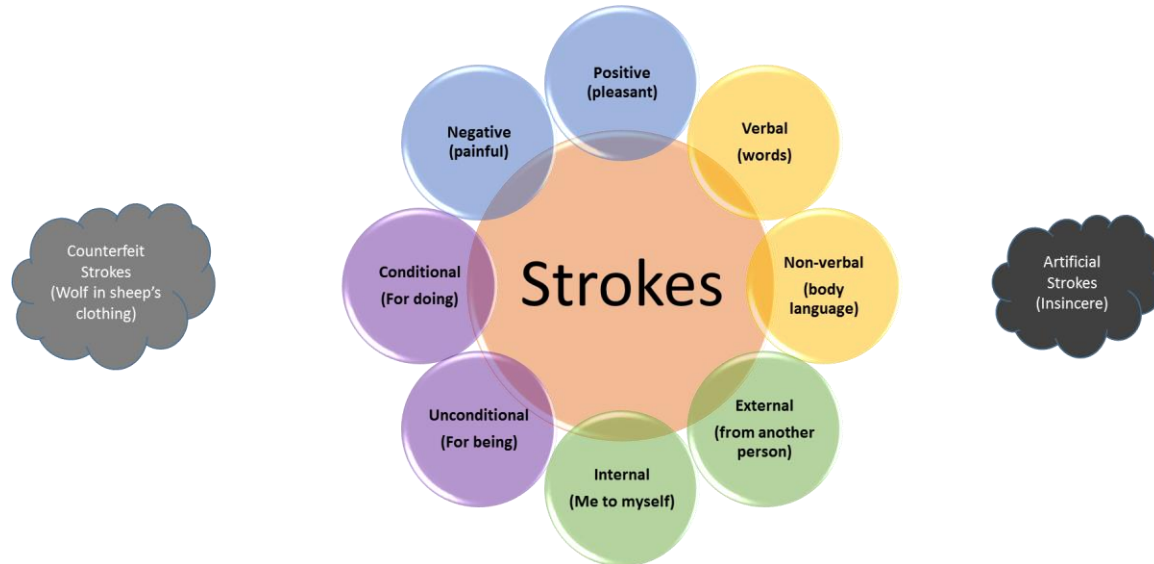
Figure: Various kinds of strokes

A feedback could be a combination of multiple kinds of strokes. Some examples are given below.

Verbal-Unconditional-Positive stroke:

I'm happy to have you on our team!

Non-Verbal-Unconditional-Negative stroke:

Meeting a known person's eye, and turning away without acknowledging their presence.

Verbal-Conditional-Positive stroke:

The proposal you submitted is excellent!

Verbal-Conditional-Negative stroke:

The quarterly report you sent for review had a major error. It had last year's profit numbers instead of this year's!

Artificial stroke:

Everything you do is always the best! – Unlikely to be true.

Counterfeit stroke:

Not too bad, for a beginner (said with a sneer).

While most strokes are useful, some (artificial, counterfeit, unconditional negatives) aren't. This brings us to what constitutes an effective feedback.

Figure: Effective feedback (stroke)

In my discussions with colleagues from the TA community on what constitutes an effective stroke, we identified 3 important components:

1. **Qualifier** – The adjectives that add quality to the stroke.

2. **Data** – The meat of the stroke, provides information.

3. **Impact** – Describes how the giver is impacted by the receiver; personalizes the stroke.

Let's use this construct to analyze and enhance the effectiveness of some examples from above.

1) *The proposal you submitted is excellent!*

- Qualifier = excellent → Positive Stroke

- Data = The proposal you submitted

- Impact = ?

In this example, the qualifier (excellent) indicates that the feedback giver is pleased with the proposal. However, it is not clear as to what made the proposal excellent. Was it the layout, the content, the flow or something else? This leaves the feedback receiver confused as to what "excellent" means, and (s)he is likely to interpret it in ways which the giver may not have intended to convey. Let's add some more adjectives to this stroke to qualify what excellent means.

The proposal you submitted is excellent! It is comprehensive, clear and practical.

Now the receiver knows what excellent means. This is the job of the qualifier - to clearly specify what is being appreciated (or criticized). Having qualified the stroke, let's add some impact to personalize it.

The proposal you submitted is excellent! It is comprehensive, clear and practical. It makes my job of getting customer's approval easy.

When the feedback giver shares the impact the receiver's work has had on him/her, it adds a personal touch to the feedback and helps in strengthening the working relationship. It also provides the receiver a glimpse of what the giver cares about.

Let's take another example to add the missing parts and make the feedback effective.

2) *The quarterly report you sent for review had a major error. It had last year's profit numbers instead of this year's!*

- Qualifier = major error → Negative Stroke

- Data = quarterly report you sent for review, last year's profit numbers instead of this year's.

- Impact = ?

This one's a negative feedback, and the qualifier is amply supported by data. However, the impact is missing, so let's add that.

The quarterly report you sent for review had a major error. It had last year's profit numbers instead of this year's! You and I could face prison-time if this report gets published as-is.

Now, the impact substantiates why this was such a *major* error, and also personalizes the feedback, making it clear and effective.

Content (How?)

Exchange of feedback aka strokes must be a free-flowing phenomenon. However, it is not so due to some of our limiting beliefs and societal conditioning. Stroke Economy, a theory that states there are rules governing the exchange of strokes, explains this phenomenon.

The rules of the stroke economy (Steiner, 1971) are:

Don't give strokes you would like to give.

Don't ask for strokes you would like to get.

Don't accept strokes you would like to accept.

Don't reject strokes you don't want.

Don't give yourself strokes.

For example, many managers I work with are quick to criticize (i.e., give negative strokes), but rarely give positive strokes. They believe that erroneous behavior must be criticized immediately so it can be arrested, while there is nothing special about healthy behaviors for them to be appreciated regularly. They seem to be following the "Don't give strokes you would like to give" rule, making it difficult for subordinates to get appreciation from them. This creates an artificial scarcity of positive strokes in the working environment and the subordinates find it is easier to get criticized instead. Since strokes are essential for survival, this leads to subordinates "inadvertently" resorting to unhealthy behavior just so they can get strokes from the manager. This is similar to how people dying of hunger will even eat rotten food if healthy food is unavailable.

The Qualifier-Data-Impact model of exchanging feedback helps managers be specific about what actions and behaviors they want from their subordinates. It provides a structure to constructively exchange negative feedback, and be specific while appreciating. The receiver precisely understands the feedback's intent and content. In a group context, a useful exercise is to "defy the stroke economy by opening the heart" (Steiner, 1999). It entails a free exchange of strokes, operating from the I'm OK, You're OK quadrant and enhances cohesion by enabling open, honest and respectful communication.

In summary, know thy intent (I'm OK, You're OK), share thy content (effective strokes) and open thy heart (defy the stroke economy).

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Srinath works as an Agile Coach, enabling organizations transform to agile ways of working. He has over 11 years of experience in Software Products and Services in various roles ranging from Programmer to Manager to Entrepreneur. A transactional analysis trainee, he can be reached at srinath.gn@gmail.com.

The "Life Position" Matrix: Revisiting Ernst's OK Corral

Dr Peter Milnes

"Life Positions" are intrinsic to Ernst's 'OK Corral' (1971) description of the way individuals perceive themselves and their relationship with others. These elements should be central to analysis of any transaction.

I'm OK – You're not OK (I+, U-) ("I'm a prince, you're a frog" (Berne, 1975:86) GRO – get rid of (Ernst, 1971)	*I'm OK – You're OK* (I+, U+) ("I'm a Prince, you're a Prince" (Steiner, 1974:86) GOW – get on with (Ernst, 1971)
I'm not OK – You're not OK (I-, U-) ("I'm a frog, you're a frog") (James & Jongeward, 1971:38) GNW – get nowhere with (Ernst, 1971)	*I'm not OK – You're OK* (I-, U+) (I'm a frog, you're a prince) (James & Jongeward, 1971:38) GAF – get away from (Ernst, 1971)

Figure 1: The Classic OK Corral

It is surprising that there has been limited development of "Life Positions" in TA literature since Ernst's (1971) publication of "*OK Corral*". White (1994) noted that "OKness" lacked definition in the TA literature and suggested that there appeared to be two different meanings:

- The "Character Life Position" (Berne, 1962; Haiberg, Sefness, & Berne, 1963/1976) that was a deeply ingrained basis for every Game, Script and Destiny (1962/1976:3) and difficult to change (Woolams and Brown 1978).

- The "Surface, Minute-by-Minute Life Position" (Ernst, 1971 & Harris, 1972) that described the various Life Positions chosen by an individual in the course of a single day.

"Revisited OK Corral" shall provide a matrix that integrates both meanings into a nuanced analytical tool. It will show the relationship between "Character Life Positions" and eleven primary, secondary and tertiary "Surface Life Positions".

There are difficulties fitting clients in to the OKs and not-OKs of the classic quadrant matrix. White (1994:269) argued:

> "Although as humans we like things to be balanced and symmetrical, the question is whether a given theory is a good reflection of reality, or whether it is nice and balanced because people like it that way."

Further, the traditional Life Position Matrix can be questioned on the following grounds:

1. The unspoken judgment that "OK" (I+) is automatically 'good'/'desirable' and that "Not-OK" (I-) is 'bad'/'undesirable'. For example, Steiner (1974) 'Pig Parent' injunctions and Berne's (1972) "Electrodes" resulted in a "U-" or a "not-OK Child" (Harris, 1972:43). Steiner (1974) recommended an absence of parental instruction because it produced an

"I+ Free Child" that was creative, sensitive and responsible[a]. This may run counter to many collectivist cultures that revere parental instruction and eschew "instruction-free or injunction-less" parental models.

2. "I+" Life Position can describe people suffering from narcissism or psychopathy. They may feel positive about themselves but are devoid of empathy for others. Psychologically healthy people need to acknowledge their "I-" failings, faults, and limitations because this gives them the ability to apologize, change and grow. A healing element in Alcoholics Anonymous is making "a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves" (Alcoholics Anonymous, Step 4:59). This means owning up to both I+ *and* I-.

3. Our 'I+' and 'I-' Life Positions are on a continuum between self-aggrandizement and self-loathing. Everyday mental health life requires a blend of I+ and I- which is not recognized in the inherently polarizing binary of 'I+' and 'I-' in the original OK Corral.

Berne's original Character Life Positions (deep and long-lasting) needs reconciliation with the varying Surface, Minute-to-Minute descriptions of 'I+' and 'I-' behaviour (Stewart and Joines, 1987:119). White (1985a, 1994) suggested that Berne's "character" positions underlay Ernst's OK Corral of "temporary/ surface feelings":

SURFACE MINUTE-BY-MINUTE LIFE POSITION

CHARACTER LIFE POSITION

Figure 2. Levels of Life Positions

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[a] This rather simplistic and naïve 1960s western countercultural view of the child development was quietly dropped in the in the

The Surface Life Position (above the line) changes many times each day and may reflect the ego state we choose for our transactions (E.g, an I-U+ at work may be followed by an I+U+ interaction with a girlfriend later in the day). Meanwhile, Character Life Positions (below the line) consist of our early Script Decisions, Rackets and Drivers that are permanent, resistant to environmental influence and not easily changed. Our Character Life Positions should be placed on a continuum so that greater nuance replaces the rather bland binary of the classic 'I+/ I-':
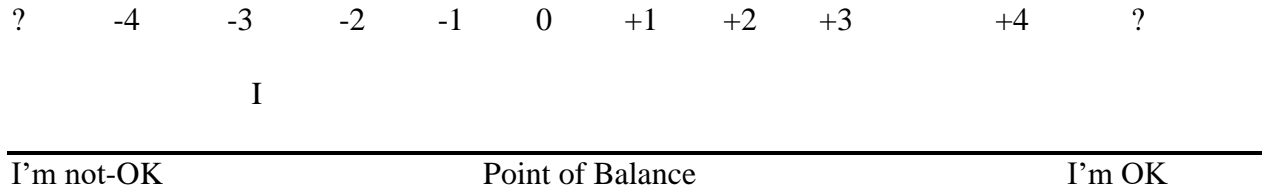

?   -4   -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3   +4   ?

                    I

I'm not-OK   Point of Balance   I'm OK

Figure 3: Continuum in Character Feelings of OK-ness

The genesis of the OK Character Feelings is developed when infants compare their strength, power, and dependency to their parents (Harris and Harris, 1985; Lacan, 1977). Mahler (1965) described an infant's early twilight as either "I?" or "I+" when they see themselves as part of the mother and not as a separate entity. Hargaden & Sills' (2002: 19-22) suggested that permeability between OK and not-OK feelings lead to decisions made about the overall "OK-ness" of self and others. After the first 24 months of attachment and the tri-phasic separation process over the next 18 years (White 1985b), attachment fixations and poor boundaries may lead to decisions

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second edition (Steiner, 1990).

about the 'non-existence' of others' (Piaget, 1926/1929). At the extremes of I+ and I- continuum

meet when individuals who vacillate between extreme narcissism and extreme self-loathing

(White, 1994, 1997) eventually see themselves as irrelevant (I?).

Surface, Minute-to-Minute Life Positions require more options than the classic binary of

'I+/U+'. When humans feel irrelevant (I?) or others irrelevant (U?), they may be merely

overcome (I?U+) or they could be suicidal (I?U?). White's (1994) also suggested that an extra

"+" or "-" signified the intensity of comparison between self and others. With these additions,

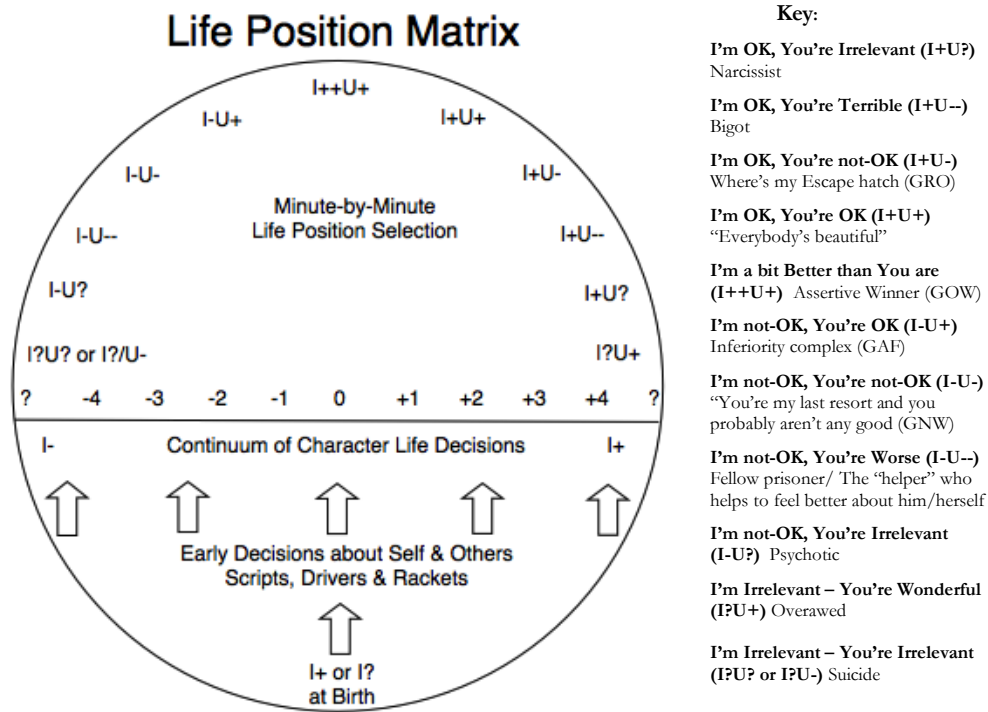the original four Life Positions has been expanded to eleven:

Figure 4: Life Position Matrix

The Matrix Elements:

The circle represents the person from the primal birth point (I+) located at the bottom. "Early Decisions" are represented by the arrows toward the continuum of Character Life Positions from "I-" on the left (?,4,-3,-2,-1) to "I+" (+1,+2,+3,+4,?) on the right. The midpoint "0" represents the "balanced individual" who has sufficient insight into both positive and negative aspects of their personality. This allows for a more intentional selection of the Surface Minute-by-Minute Life Positions. The continuum line separates the deeper Character Life Positions below the line from the Surface, Minute-by-Minute Life Positions above the line.

Using the Matrix:

1. Locate the person's Life Character Position on the continuum. Some may fluctuate between delusions of grandeur (I+ extreme) and self-hatred (I- extreme) to become I? or U? (I'm/You're Irrelevant) in their Minute-by-Minute Life Positions. However, most of us can be placed somewhere between these extremes by using standard depression tests; approximation based on response to the statement 'I spend more time in I+ than I-'; and/or clinical observation of our Scripts, Drivers and Rackets.

2. Attempt to identify the client's three most commonly used Surface, Minute-by-Minute Life Positions (in order of use):

   - Primary – unintentional, habitual (the 'default position'),

   - Secondary – preferred (if thought about), and

   - Tertiary – reactionary ('trying' to do their best – usually from the other side of the circle)

3. Character Life Positions makes selection of Minute-to-Minute Life Positions on the opposite side of the circle more difficult.

4. Discuss the linkage of these Surface, Minute-by-Minute Life Positions to the Character Life Decisions with the client and encourage more intentionality, awareness and consciousness of their interactional *modus operandi.*

5. The aim of therapy is a point of equilibrium (0) in the Character Life Position and the selection of more appropriate, conscious, and intentional Minute-by-Minute Life Positions.

Description of the Eleven Minute-by-Minute Life Positions

~   *"I'm OK, You're Irrelevant" (I+U?)*

This Surface Life Position emanates from an extreme I+ Character Life Position. Having fixated on themselves during the stage of attachment, these narcissistic individuals believe that they are the only ones that matter. While all of us have reason to occasionally assign others to "irrelevance" at times (such as distant relatives at weddings), the habitual I+U? is preoccupied with self and shuts out others. Instead of the traditional Ernst I+U- diagnosis, the I+U? description is far more incisive. White (1994) suggested that "softer non-directive nurturing approaches in therapy are non-productive … because it is easy for them to avoid feeling any impact, and hence the world remains irrelevant". Treatments based on transference can "almost imprint" the therapist's OK-ness on the client" (White, 1994).

~   *"I'm OK, You're Terrible" (I+U--).*

This Surface Life Position comes from an overly secure, black-and-white I+ Character Life Position where others (especially "outsiders") are seen as inferior. Their prejudices (feelings) are based on untrue, partially true or misconstrued information (Freire, 1972) and become a litany of illogical and contradictory beliefs used to justify their racism, ageism, sexism, and fundamentalism. More potent than traditional I+U- life position, time and effort is spent proving the inherent "terribleness" of others. Therapy should break the linkages between prejudicial feelings, constructed beliefs and discriminatory actions. Treatment options can be limited (especially if therapists are counted among the "terrible") but the best treatment involves exposure to real 'others' from the 'terrible' groups so that relationship trump myths.

~ *I'm OK, You're not-OK (I+U-).*

On the spectrum of Surface Life Positions, I+U- can range from integrative to pathological. An 'integrated' I+U- allows judgment calls to be made on the worth of others in order to remain healthy. For example, a "get rid of this person" (GRO) in a workplace may be necessary to remain "positive". On the pathological end, this position can be close to I+U--. More commonly it applies to those who "zone out" or look for escape hatches to shut out others (E.g. habitual mobile phone substituting engagement). Treatment for those who cause pain to others by continually choosing "escape hatches" or dismissing others requires a therapist to bring these behaviours to consciousness and then arrange for exposure experiences to confrontational situations, assertiveness training, and/or mental preparation for uncomfortable situations.

Minute-by-Minute Life Positions from I- Character

~ *"I'm not-OK, You're Irrelevant" (I-U?)*

This Surface Life Position emanates from an extreme I- Character Life Position. The I-U? is wrapped up in a "symbiotic-psychotic syndrome" (Mahler, 1965:162). Therapists can be impressed by the combination of extreme self-centredness with self-loathing that accompanies episodes of schizophrenia in the psychotic phase. Similarly, those with borderline personality disorder may loathe themselves but be unable to distinguish between themselves and those with whom they desire a symbiotic relationship. Therapy requires confrontation rather than soft and gentle therapeutic suggestion because gentle therapy may be interpreted as an invitation to symbiosis with the therapist that can be used in their own self-dominated world.

~ *I'm not-OK but You're worse (I-U--).*

White (1994) suggested I-U-- because I-U- or I+U- Surface Life Position was an inadequate descriptor of those with low self-esteem who attempt to lift their OKness *within themselves* by proving their superiority to others (Eg. prison inmates may admit to being 'not-OK' but better than their cell-mates). Therapy requires the confrontation of the futility of the I-U-- Life Position and the need to work on intrinsic rather than extrinsic self-worth.

~ *I'm not-OK, You're not-OK (I-U-)*

Deeply pathological "Get Nowhere With" (GNW) individuals are pessimistic about themselves, experience depression and anxiety and find little enjoyment in life. They

transfer their negative feelings onto their fellow human beings. Instead of putting people down to make themselves feel better (I-U--), they take a dim view of all humanity. Therapy should focus on changing the deeper Character Life Position of I-. There are many treatments for these Life Positions in TA literature. A no-suicide/no-homicide contract is a necessity during treatment.

Minute-by-Minute Life Positions from I? Character

~ **I'm Irrelevant – You're Wonderful (I?U+)** - Overawed

This Surface Life Position may be experienced when encountering a famous person. Even usually confident people may feel themselves to be irrelevant, and then freeze, stutter, babble and/or act out of character. While this may be short-lived and limited to meetings (such as with a film star), it becomes pathological when the belief is developed that everyone else is wonderful compared to one's own insignificance. Lacking confidence and resilience, these individuals sink into becoming close to 'non-persons.' Therapy should focus on building self-esteem and a no-suicide contract is essential.

~ **I'm Irrelevant – You're Irrelevant (I?U? or I?U-)** – Suicide

This Surface Life Position is the ultimate end of negative thoughts about self and others. Life becomes irrelevant. Small self-regard is translated into seeing others as irrelevant (I?U?) and suicide is contemplated. Conversely, a person with little self-regard may be so consumed by negative thoughts about another that an angry suicide note is left for them (I?U-). A no-suicide contract should underpin therapeutic intervention aimed at raising hope in humanity and inspiring the joy of living.

Integrated Minute-by-Minute Life Positions

~   I'm not-OK, You're OK (I-U+ "Get Away From" GAW).

This Surface Minute Life Position is derived from a negative I- Character Life Position. The original OK Corral designated this position as unhealthy but in its milder integrative form it promotes a realistic view of self, allows for praise to be given to others, makes learning possible from those who do 'better', recognizes personal short-comings when in the wrong, notes personal failure and the need to improve, and apologizes when hurt has been done to others. However, in its more intense negative form, it can be a pathological "inferiority complex" (Adler, 1931) where habitual unfavourable comparisons are made between the self and others. Treatment should promote a realistic view of the self while also building self-esteem when I-U+ becomes pathological.

~   I'm OK, You're OK (I+U+)

The traditional view of I+U+ has been assumed in TA literature as the key to healthy and autonomous living. However, this may not always be so – such as when it leads to a failure to be appropriately assertive during times of conflicts and a reticence to ask for 'wants' in contradiction to others. Some may be so considerate that the I+U+ masks a naïve and unreal view of others. In so doing they lack discernment and fail to recognize dangers from others (This is common in religious circles). A fake I+U+ may be a source of games in TA groups that allow people to "put others down in the nicest possible way" and take the high moral ground in sticky, patronizing and judgmental transactions. I+U+ marriages ("We've never had a cross word in forty years of marriage") may mask a non-

communicative and shallow relationship. Treatment should bring authenticity to I+U+ and move a person towards I++U+.

~ *I am a Bit More OK than You are (I++U+) - winner* (Get On With - GOW)

This is the true "winner" Minute-by-Minute Life Position because others are valued (U+) while still allowing space for appropriate assertion and confidence (I++) – especially when there is a conflict of opinion. The I++U+ position includes space for the development of passion and personal meaning (Frankl, 1948) that is the ultimate human quest. Not content to remain in what could be a passive I+U+ Life Position where everybody's opinion is "positively regarded", the I++U+ inspires others, commits to a cause and suggests alternatives. In therapy, some individuals who habitually remain in I++U+ may "burn-out" through over-commitment.

Conclusion

This simple model provides Transactional Analysts with additional tools when working through conflicts and analysing internal 'life positions'. By distinguishing between the 'Character Life Position' from the 'Minute-by-Minute Life Positions, a more nuanced and precise range of descriptors can be identified which empowers clinicians to be better able to obey Berne's injunction to "cure people"!

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