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EDITORIAL SECTION

Editors' Note

"Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all" - Erik Erikson

This quote by Erikson captures our theme, 'Relationships' very aptly. It's been a year since we launched the first issue of the SAATA journal and writing this note led us to reflect on our own processes, thoughts and experiences and how we relate to each other as a team. The concept that came to our mind was the stages of development in the Group Imago (Berne, 1966).

While we all knew each other professionally and personally, coming together as a team with a certain goal brought with it the fantasies around what the new roles meant, whether and how we would be stroked for our contributions and the anxiety of our work being compared to TAJ. In this stage of the Provisional Imago, we related to each other according to the projections we had made of the other for ourselves. Across the final stages of launching the first edition and editing the second, we found ourselves struggling to align our work with each other's (we were really good at masking this to the rest of the world!) and this stage was the Adapted Group Imago, characterized by role confusions - 'Is this my job?', 'Was I supposed to edit this?', 'I thought he/ she would do it' and agitation - 'Can I take a break from all of this?', 'Why don't you be clearer and not assume?'. This was followed in quick succession by the Operative Group Imago where the process matured, we had better clarity on our roles and expectations of each other and we were willing to talk with our Adult awareness about our processes. This was made

easier because we also shared a personal equation with each other, where trust and intimacy already existed.

Working on the third edition has had the semblance of the Adjusted Group Imago, with team members being accommodating, calling out tasks that need to be done, backing up each other, holding the space for each other's frustrations and collaborating on each other's tasks. We expect it will continue to evolve as we develop our opinions and vision for the journal and are confident that we should now be able to ride the roller coaster and even enjoy it!

In this edition, apart from the second part in our series on ethics in TA practice by Suriyaprakash, we bring you the essence of relationships in three different contexts: Srinath Nadathur writes from an organizational perspective on difficult conversations in subordinate-superior relationships, Deepak Dhananjaya shares his insights as a therapist into a gentler way of integrating allower messages and Geethan reflects on moving from a self-centred to a relationship-centred self, proposing a new model for us to work with. With each edition, we are faced with difficult decisions and tasks related to what topics we can (or not) include, reviewing and recommending changes that authors need to make, and working with the authors to meet our deadlines. A big thank you to all contributors for accommodating our requests, understanding our perspectives and engaging with us constructively on this. To the others, put those thoughts to words and write in to us with your contributions for the next edition, the theme for which is **'Working through Conflicts – internal and external'**.

Ragini Rao and Smita Chimmanda Potty,

Co-editors, 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 (<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.
- Practice APA standards for referencing, citations and bibliography.
- Quote the original authors of the concepts.
- Provide English translations to any vernacular quotation that are made in the article.

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.

Letter to the editor

Hello SAATA journal team,

This is my response to reading Srinath's article in your journal.

I have to admit when I first read his post regarding an article he had written about transactional analysis, I dismissed it as something technical. But something made me get back and click on the link to read through it and am glad I did that.

We all famously and rigorously carry a facade of strength which comes crumbling at the face of illness to either us or our loved ones. To say Srinath's own reasoning of why he carried this facade and how it came to pieces was moving is to mince his experience. This acute sense of self and level of introspection and becoming aware of one's own emotions is a laudable achievement. It brings so much perspective and helps us to prioritize.

While I'm glad that Srinath has found his way with your group, his retelling of the journey through this article has made many of us think and for that I'm grateful that he penned this.

The article touches a raw nerve since he opted to share his personal experience without fear. Thank you SAATA journal and Srinath for choosing to share and help so many of us struggling in the sidelines of life.

Best

Meera Ramanathan.

Theme for January 2017 Issue

“Working through conflicts – Internal & External”

New Section: Case study

We welcome submission of case studies in any of the transactional analysis field (psychotherapy, counselling, organization and education).

Deadline for submissions: October 15th 2016.

Email : journal@saata.org

Please follow the [guidelines](#) before you submit.

Editorial Board

Volume 2, Number 2, August 2016

Deepak Dhananjaya

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Smita Chimmanda Potty

Guest editor

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TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

Ethics in Transactional Analysis Practice

C. Suriyaprakash, PhD

Introduction

As transactional analysts we face ethical questions in our daily practice. Some are easily answered by explicit processes like contracting, whereas some are too complex to find *the* right answer. This contrast brings to the fore the need for different approaches to ethical thinking – some are normative, which could be governed by a code of ethical behaviour, while many require deep contemplation considering various perspectives. In this paper I have outlined the structure of the ethics and professional practices as followed in the International Transactional Analysis Community and the rationale behind the structure.

The Enigma Called Ethics

Professional ethics is widely rule-based (Suriyaprakash, 2016). Rule-based ethics has several approaches, namely egoism, utilitarianism, altruism and duty-based. Each approach is principally concerned about one stakeholder. While egoism is self-centred, altruism is concerned about others, at times even at the expense of self. Utilitarianism settles for the larger good for the larger numbers. Duty-based ethics or deontology places values and principles at the centre and not with the stakeholders. When there are so many approaches and no specified direction to the one best approach in a given scenario, a professional requires a robust structure to think ethically, which takes into account the interests of all the stakeholders and at the same time does not compromise on the values and principles. The International Transactional Analysis Community attempts to achieve this through the “Ethics and Professional Practice Guidelines”

adopted by the International Transactional Analysis Association (ITAA) and the European Association of Transactional Analysts (EATA). Both are similar in their basic values and principles, with minor differences in the operational aspects. For the sake of ease and to minimise confusion to the reader I have referred to the ITAA's ethical guidelines throughout this paper.

History

ITAA had followed a code of ethics for a long time, till as recent as 2009, which was a set of rules in the form of do's and don'ts. It had its utility but its scope of effectiveness was highly limited. For e.g., The first 3 clauses of the code read as follows:

1. ITAA members acknowledge the dignity of all humans, regardless of their physiological, psychological, sociological, or economic status.
2. It is the primary protective responsibility of ITAA members who are providing contractual services to offer their best possible services to clients, trainees, and supervisees and to act in such a way as to cause no intentional or deliberate harm to any client, trainee, or supervisee.
3. ITAA members who use transactional analysis should strive to develop their clients' awareness of and functioning from a position of dignity, autonomy, and personal responsibility.

(For full draft of the code refer ITAA, 2014)

While such a code is essential to identify unethical behaviour and if needed, to confront the members who violate them, it does not help us to think through complex scenarios when we

need to take a call on an ethical issue. We need a broader based model for ethical thinking. The recent all new ITAA (2014) Code of Ethical Conduct and ITAA Ethics Procedures Manual provides us such a framework.

Values

“The ITAA Code of Ethical Conduct is mediated by the tensions between comprehensiveness, on the one hand, and specificity and prescriptive detail, on the other” (ITAA, 2014). Underlying any ethical question are the values that govern the thinking and choices of the individual. Declaring a broad set of values that are aligned with the humanistic and existential philosophy of transactional analysis is the first step in clarifying the foundation of the ethical framework. The fundamental values adopted by the international transactional analysis community are based on the human rights as included in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. They are:

- A. Dignity of human beings
- B. Self-determination
- C. Health
- D. Security
- E. Mutuality

Ethical Principles

In order to identify clear behavioural manifestation of the values, we need specific principles that would guide our priorities and choices. These are indications of “how to behave so as to promote

the well-being, development, and growth of the individual.” The ethical principles directly derived from the values presented earlier are:

- Respect
- Empowerment
- Protection
- Responsibility
- Commitment in relationship

Target Groups

One of the criticisms of the earlier code of ethics was that it was aimed at the service provided to the clients - especially by a therapist to his/her client. However, we need to acknowledge that training and certification is recognised in three other fields, namely counselling, education and organizational development. Apart from that, as professionals our ethical conduct is not only towards our clients but also towards other stakeholders we relate with. Therefore, it is necessary that we expand the scope of the code to include these target groups as well. The target groups identified in the ITAA code are:

- Clients
- Self as practitioner
- Trainees
- Colleagues
- Human environment/ community

When faced with an ethical dilemma, we need to consider the underlying value and the ethical principle derived from it and choose the attitude to assume and decide how to behave as a responsible member of a professional community.

Refer the manual for a brief definition of these principles and aspects to be taken into consideration while making choices pertaining to the situation on hand.

A Grid for Ethical Assessment

The principles provide a framework to analyze and understand an ethical situation from various perspectives. However, it does not give us the answer to specific ethical issues we face, for which we need a tool to navigate the landscape of ethical thinking. The grid given below offers a visual model of the complexity involved in an ethical issue when we apply the guidelines for ethical thinking.

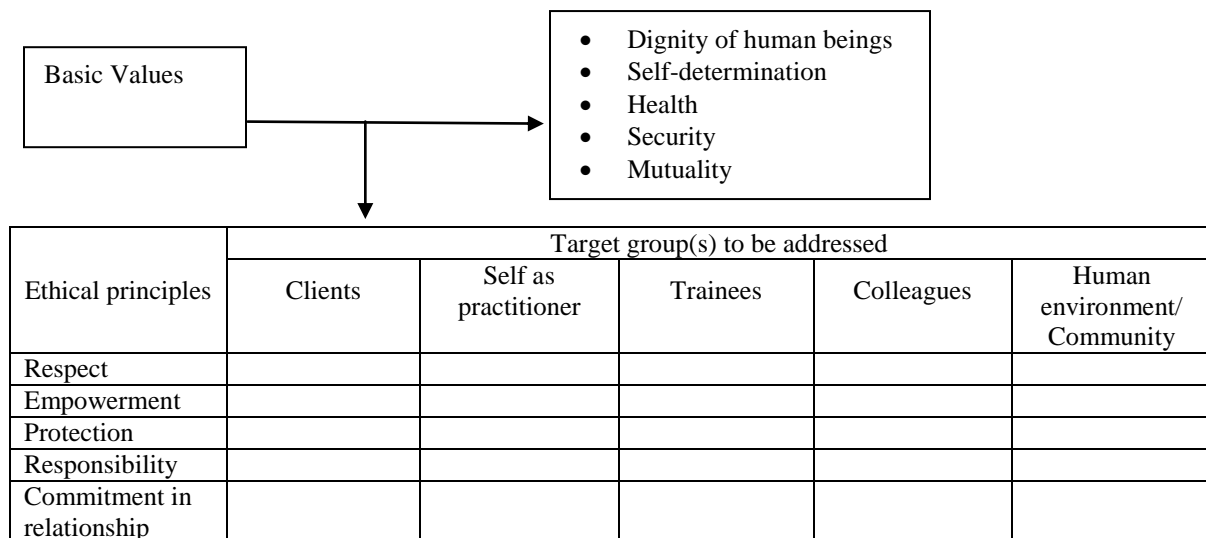


Figure 1 : Basic Values and Ethics

This grid is not meant to be a rigid structure to be followed with a tick-box approach. It is neither required nor recommended, and probably impossible to mechanically tick all the boxes in the grid while applying to an ethical dilemma. We need to evaluate an ethical issue from the

point of each principle and the target audience and evaluate the probable action(s) that would be appropriate from that perspective. It might not be possible to reconcile - “Ethical decisions that are strongly supported by one or more of the above ethical principles, without any contradiction from other principles, may be regarded as reasonably well founded” (Ethics Codes Collection, 2010).

We might not find a solution that would fully satisfy all the principles. At times we might even have to choose one principle over the others. We also need to be mindful that many practitioners might arrive at different decisions for the same issue, using the grid. In addition to the grid as a tool to guide us think ethically, the importance of supervision and/or consultation cannot be over-emphasised under some circumstances. “In addition to these principles and values, members are expected to consider legal, contractual, or clinical issues and ethical concerns in relation to the ethical dilemma under consideration.” (Mc Grath, 1994 as cited in ITAA, 2014).

Conclusion

Ethics is an exciting and complex phenomenon. Ethical dilemmas are subject to various factors while we strive to choose the various courses of action available to us. Even though the human mind longs for an easy prescription to act while facing an ethical dilemma it is impossible to have one. What is needed is a value based framework that gives us a tool to work through an ethical dilemma. The ITAA’s grid for ethical assessment provides such a framework taking into account the values, principles and target audience in an ethical issue. All transactional analysts need to navigate this landscape in their own ways and arrive at their own conclusions of how to behave in response to an ethical issue.

Note: This paper is the second in a series of three papers on ethics. This paper presents practice of ethics in transactional analysis. The next (last) one will be on ethical dilemma.

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Effective exchange of feedback to enhance working relationships

Srinath Nadathur

Abstract

In a professional setting, we deal with feedback every day. Sometimes we play the role of a giver, sometimes that of a receiver, and at other times we are observers. This is the first part of a 2-part essay, where I explore the use of the OK corral as a tool to understand the intent of a feedback. In Part 2, I will delve into how we can use strokes and the stroke economy to effectively exchange feedback in a professional environment.

At the time of writing this essay, I've been working as an agile coach for close to 2 years, helping teams and managers adopt and sustain agile ways of working (Agile Manifesto, 2001). In this journey, I have experienced many challenging situations and used transactional analysis, both implicitly and explicitly, to bring about a transformation in the working environment. One such experience I recently had was with a group of 10 colleagues (including the manager of the group). The context of the work was to "Build projects around motivated individuals." (Twelve Principles of Agile Software, 2001). One of the significant factors that appeared to influence the motivation of the individuals in this group was the working relationship among the members, which was of 2 kinds: peer relationships and subordinate-superior relationships. And the chief instrument that impacted these relationships was **feedback**. Conversations about their daily interactions and the interpersonal issues witnessed in the group revealed three significant areas of concern with respect to feedback:

1. The team had a perception that management readily gives negative feedback, but doesn't appreciate the positives. This lowers the team's morale.
2. The manager reported that feedback shared as an area of improvement is not taken positively by team members. Instead, the manager's intention and fairness is questioned, creating an environment where the team gangs up against the manager.
3. The whole group felt that feedback is misinterpreted regularly, causing confusion and rift among the members of the group.

Having collected this information, I proposed to facilitate a session for the entire group on "Giving and receiving feedback effectively". Everyone agreed it can help improve the working relationships among the group members and hence help them stay motivated. As I began my preparations, I revisited a coaching module on motivation for managers that I had facilitated using the concept of strokes (Berne, 1971) and knew that I could reuse it here. However, though I saw strokes providing a solid platform to understand how to go about giving and receiving feedback, I felt there was something missing. I had heard of the "sandwich method for giving feedback" (Daniels, 2009), so I read about the pros and cons of the same. I also brainstormed with my transactional analysis OD training group on the feedback techniques that worked for them and the pitfalls to be aware of. This exploration opened up a pivotal aspect of feedback for me: "Irrespective of the content of the feedback, if it doesn't come from a space of OK-ness (Berne, 1961), it is likely to be ineffective in delivering the intended result of the feedback." I could now see the entire "feedback exchange process" from a new perspective, with 2 distinct components:

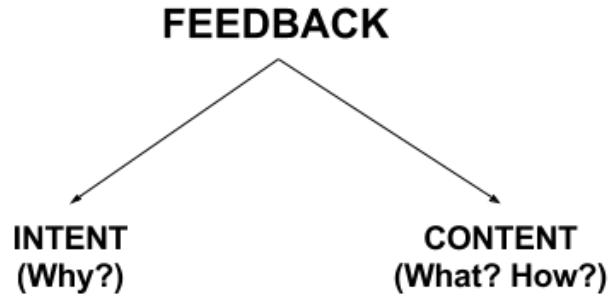


Figure 2: Feedback

Intent (Why?): The purpose of the feedback - What is the desired outcome after the feedback has been exchanged? For e.g., if I am the manager of a team and one of my team members comes late to team meetings regularly, my “intent” of giving her a feedback about this behaviour could be: “I want my team member to come on time to team meetings.”

I found the OK Corral (Ernst, 1971) to be a useful tool in understanding the “intent” of a feedback.

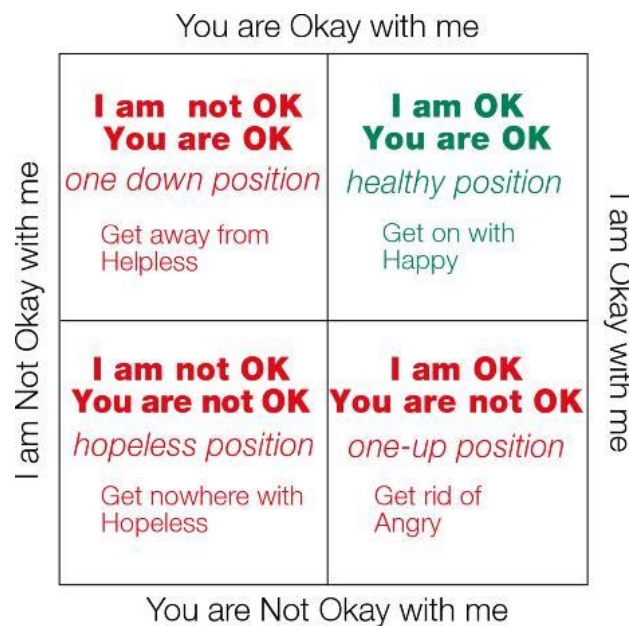


Figure 3: OK Corral (Ernst, 1971)

I illustrate this with an example from my work-life. At the start of my career, I was responsible for the maintenance and support of software applications for a bank and in one of my late-night shifts (at around 1 a.m.), I fixed an issue in the billing systems. The next day, I entered the office at the usual start-time of my shift, and as I was about to sit down in my cubicle, my manager came up to me and the following exchange happened:

Manager (furious, and shouting): How can you make a change in the billing system without asking me? (I'm **OK**, You're **Not OK**)

Me (embarrassed, indignant): I've just come in and the first thing you do is to shout at me in front of everyone? (I'm **OK**, You're **Not OK**)

Manager (angry, still shouting): You should've taken my permission before making the change. What if something goes wrong? (I'm **OK**, You're **Not OK**)

Me (indignant): It was 1 a.m., and I was sure of the fix. That's why I didn't call you. (I'm **OK**, You're **Not OK**)

Manager (still angry, not shouting): No, what you did was wrong! You should've called me. (I'm **OK**, You're **Not OK**)

At this point, my temper rises enough to make my ears red and I feel my heart pounding in my chest. I mumble "This is stupid!" and storm out of the scene, banging the door on my way out (I'm **Not OK**, You're **Not OK**), while my manager stands her ground.

When I analyze this exchange using the OK corral, the following observations come to light:

1. Throughout the interaction, my manager was operating from the **I'm OK, You're Not OK** quadrant. She started the exchange with a furious accusation and ended in the same state, albeit a little less furious.

2. I, on the other hand, started operating from the **I'm OK, You're Not OK** quadrant, as is evident from my indignant justifications to her accusation, and my amplified emotional state (embarrassed, angry, red ears, pounding heart). When I found she wasn't yielding, I closed the transaction by moving to the hopeless **I'm Not OK, You're Not OK** state, by storming off from the situation, concluding in my head that she's stupid and I'm incapable of making her understand my point of view.

The intent of my manager in this example (I learnt this later on when both of us had calmed down), was to bring to my notice the potential financial impact of things going wrong while directly fixing an issue in the billing system. However, this intent got clouded by her anger at not being informed beforehand about the fix, and her fear that if anything goes wrong, she'll be answerable. Now, if she were to operate from the **I'm OK, You're OK** quadrant, she could have done a few things differently to effectively convey her intent:

1. Wait till I settle down, and not accost me the moment I arrived in office.
2. Call me in for a 1-on-1 discussion in a meeting room to avoid a showdown in front of everyone.
3. Begin by thanking me for having stretched beyond my shift late at night to identify the fix for the issue.
4. Explain the impact of things going wrong while fixing the issue directly in the system, and outline the process for protecting the system and team from such mishaps.

On the other hand, if I was operating from the **I'm OK, You're OK** quadrant, I could have done a few things differently, to understand her intent:

1. Acknowledge her anger and take care of my embarrassment by proposing a 1-on-1 discussion. E.g.: “I see you’re quite upset, can we go into a meeting room to discuss further?”
2. Ask clarifying questions to understand the reasons for her anger and possibly her fear as well. E.g.: “What are you upset about?”, “Are you OK to receive calls late at night?”, “What happens to you if things going wrong?”
3. Brainstorm with her on strategies to minimize the potential negative impact for customers in case things go wrong with the fix I introduced. Co-create a process to address such situations in the future.

In the session on “Giving and Receiving Feedback Effectively”, I used this example to help the group I was coaching understand how they can identify which quadrant in the OK corral they are operating from, and how they can effectively give and receive the intent of a feedback by operating from the **I’m OK, You’re OK** quadrant. I also helped the participants draw their own Corralograms (Ernst, 1982) to reflect on which quadrant they mostly find themselves in and correlate that to the kind of interactions they experience. We concluded this part by becoming aware of the importance of thinking through the “intent” of a feedback and by looking at options to operate from the winning (I’m OK, You’re OK) quadrant.

In Part 2, I will analyze the **Content (What? & How?)** of a feedback using strokes and explore how awareness of the stroke economy and our need for strokes can help us structure the content of a feedback in order to communicate the intent effectively.

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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.

Prelude to allowers!

Deepak Dhananjaya

Abstract

One is always in relationship with others (even when one doesn't like the other). Drivers (Kahler & Capers, 1974) influence the way we engage in the relationship. This way of engaging becomes the "perceived" identity of the person. This paper is to be read from the perspective of a therapist working with the drivers of the client. This paper suggests 3 steps that a therapist can focus on, as a proactive step before beginning to work actively with driver messages of the client. These suggestions are outcomes of my personal experience as a client and professional experience as a therapist. The work is based on strengthening the Adult ego state (Berne, 1961), providing permissions to the Child ego state (Berne, 1961) and building an internal credit bank (English, 1971). The intention of this paper is not to discuss the detailed treatment plan but to introduce the 3 steps and their impact on the work

Introduction

Drivers are behaviors that last from a split second to no more than seven seconds (Kahler, 1975). Kahler (1975) quotes Berne who said that script "is driven by the repetition compulsion", explaining how it may be repeated many times over the course of a lifetime. This also implies that it can be repeated in smaller versions where the whole script can be played out in an hour or even in seconds. He names this phenomenon as the Miniscript (Kahlers & Capers, 1974). Kahler & Capers (1974) use drivers as an analogy to counterscript slogans which come from the Not OK nurturing Parent or rescuing Parent. They also suggest that all the counterscript

slogans/drivers can be categorized into 5 types: Please Others, Try Hard, Be Strong, Hurry Up and Be Perfect. They are conditional NOT OK messages that trigger script behaviors. The messages usually start with “You are OK Only if...”.

These definitions and explanations of the drivers clearly indicate the impact they have on our behaviors. These behaviors are not always in isolation and often they are manifested in relationships. We are seen by people through these behaviors and somehow they become our identity. “Try Hards” are seen as multi taskers who never give up, “Be Strongs” are seen as crisis managers and stoic, “Hurry up” are seen as always on wheels, “Please Others” are seen as always available, always approachable and as helpers and “Be Perfects” are seen as detail oriented and task masters. Others relate to us by what we do. This defines a template for us to exist in relationships and in the world.

Working with Drivers

Drivers can be limiting and unhelpful. Kahler & Capers (1974) suggests that drivers can be substituted with life-giving, nurturing allowers that begin with “Its OK to...“. The table below lists all the 5 types of allower messages:

Driver	Allower message
Be Perfect	It's OK to be yourself
Hurry up	It's OK to take your time
Try hard	It's OK to do it.
Please me	It's OK to consider yourself and respect yourself
Be Strong	It's OK to be open (and to take care of your own needs).

Table 1: Driver - Allower messages

These allower messages are liberating and enable us to account for ourselves and others. It relieves us from the pressure to be compliant to the driver messages.

Process of building allower messages

The therapist can use any of the techniques like decontamination (Berne, 1961), therapeutic operations (Berne, 1966), redecision therapy techniques (Goulding & Goulding, 1979) or any other and these are out of the scope of this article. The result of such work is that the Parent ego state (Berne, 1961) is updated with allower messages.

Impact of allower messages

The client having replaced the driver messages with allower messages starts feeling liberated. The client starts to account for oneself and others as a result of allower message. People around him will start experiencing difference in behaviors. “Be Perfect” begins to feel OK about making mistakes, “Be Strong” shows vulnerability and asks for help, “Please Others” begins to say “No” and claim his space, “Hurry Up” is relaxing and taking time. This is the healthy shift for the client.

Impact of it on the identity and relationships

The client’s behaviour also changes with the new allower messages. This means the perceived identity of the client is changing. People will be unable to connect with the client as they did before. There are chances (from my own experience) that people around the client may start disconnecting/drifted away. This can be scary for the client because his perceived identity

is changing and he is losing the strokes he was used to getting (even though they could be unhealthy strokes).

To avoid this scenario for the client, I suggest the following steps to be followed as a check/intervention in the beginning:

1. Educating the Adult (A2) of the client:

It is important for the Adult of the client to know that the choice can be made moment by moment and that the safety of the Child is very important. Otherwise change doesn't sustain.

The Adult of the client needs to know the following information:

- a. This process is to account for self and act in the here and now. In this process the perceived identity of self will be impacted and others may see him differently. This may result in stress in the relationship (others may drift away/disconnect).
- b. The change comprises of small steps at a time and is made moment by moment. The work here is to have more options, be aware and make appropriate choices to be in the relationship rather than obeying driver messages (in auto pilot mode). It is not about having allowers as the other extreme of being, which can be stressful.
- c. This process is intended for the self to learn healthy ways of being in the relationship knowing that the other may or may not change. This is the consequence of the change.

Below is an example.

T: Now that you want to be interdependent and vulnerable in your relationship with your spouse so that you could seek help and relax, I would like to give you some information about the consequences.

C: What type of consequences?

T: He may not like to take responsibility, he may still want to be dependent and not very comfortable with your vulnerability. How would you feel then?

C: Unhappy. I will be forced to go back to being strong.

T: Well that's an option and a scary one! instead we could also explore ways you could continue to relax, be vulnerable and seek inter-dependence in small steps despite his resistance. This new change you are seeking is not forever. It's about having another option and the ability to exercise that option. It's about knowing that you don't get into auto-pilot mode of "being strong".

C: How will I be able to do it?

T: When you start changing, you may want to test the waters and start small steps and know that others may not like it. If you find it scary you still want to adapt the situation and be strong by choice and not auto pilot.

C: Ok, this information is like disclaimer.

2. Permission (Crossman, 1966) to the Child of the client.

As an outcome of working with driver messages, the client will start building allowor messages in his Parent ego state. Clients usually jump from one extreme of obeying the driver to another extreme of disobeying the driver completely. Instead it's about having a choice. In the beginning of this process there seems to be two parts to the client. One which believes allowor messages are healthy and liberating and the other part that feels scared of losing people (driver messages). This results in an impasse (Mellor, 1980). The belief of the client is that new changes are to be sustained always. This adds

another level of pressure to the impasse. Considering a scenario where the client is experiencing a lack of strokes, he may choose to disbelieve the allower message and start going back to familiar driver behaviors. This will reinforce the importance of obeying the driver messages for the client. To avoid this extreme scenario of disbelieving them and falling back to obeying driver messages, it's important for the therapist to give a permission to the client. The permission is to have allower messages as another option along with driver messages – “If the situation is too scary and you not ready to face the consequences, it's OK to obey the driver messages until you are ready to face the consequences.”

It's extremely important to have the Adult of the client available at this stage, otherwise the Child may get scared and can be discouraged by the prospect of change.

3. Building Internal credit bank balance

English (1971) describes the concept of internal credit bank work of David Kruper. I borrow this idea as is. It's important for the client to feel safe internally. This step is not a one-time event. It is like curing the house at different stages of construction. This step is not about seeking strokes. Instead, it is about bringing the awareness of the client to the discounted strokes that has come his way unexpectedly. In this step, it's important for the therapist's Adult to connect with the client's Child through the client's Adult. This process can be difficult if the client is self-critical or denies any positive event in his life. It implies that the Child is scared and unable to believe in these positive experiences. Hence the Adult of the client will help in convincing the Child as it can provide data.

An example of how it can be done:

T: Do you remember of any appreciations that you received for what you did since your childhood? / When did you hear good about yourself when you least expected?

C: <shares many instances of her studies, painting, creativeness, at school or home, encouraged by mother>

If the Adult of the client is not available to account for all the strokes, then it's an indication that deconfusion (Berne, 1961) is pending.

An example when the Adult of the client is not available:

T: Do you remember any appreciations that you received anytime during childhood or anyone appreciating you?

C: No one has been nice to me. Everyone would find faults in me.

T: Ok, it seems like you have had a difficult time!

C: Yes!

T: OK, I believe you!

This step helps the client feel safe within and also account for the strokes that has come their way*. This step and the education of the Adult helps the client stay with allower messages. Change can be scary but when there is enough internal credit balance available for the client, then he can sustain the new change.

Conclusion

The above three steps are proactive ways to prepare the client to drop the drivers and embrace the allower messages. This will also help clients introspect into their way of being in relationships and also make changes that are healthy. These steps are followed in various ways and forms by therapists today and in my experience reactive than proactive. I am suggesting this as proactive steps.

Assumptions I have made:

1. Clients who have deficit of strokes.
2. Clients who have volatile environment that can be difficult for them to make too many changes.

*This does not in any way imply that strokes from others are not required/not important.

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Moving from Self Centered Relationship to Relationship Centered Self

Geethan

Humans are relational beings. We survive, thrive and grow in relationships. We always exist in relationship – as a parent, a child, a sibling, a friend, a neighbor, a manager, a subordinate. To get a sense of what I am saying, I will lead you through a fantasy trip now. Follow my instructions given below:

Imagine that you have lost your way in a forest. It is a dark forest area where you cannot see anyone else. You hear wild animals growl and can sense insects creeping nearby. Many days and nights pass and you have lost count. Somehow you are managing to be safe. You eat some wild fruits and survive. There is no way to contact anyone and you are all alone. How is it for you? Not to be in contact with fellow humans for a long time? To miss your loved ones?

Now as you keep walking through the dense forest in a far-away place, you see a fire and it seems to be a village. Finally, a sign of human habitation. How do you feel now? After a few hours of walk you meet the friendly villagers. You are now able to get in touch with your family. How do you feel about that? The universal reality is that **we need each other and we co-exist in this world**. I believe that **we are all born with the space for the other within us**.

Our perceptions about ourselves and others form at a very early age, even before we are 2 years old. In the psyche of the new born there is already a perception of others which later develops into life positions such as, “I am OK/ Not OK”, “Others are OK/ Not OK” (Berne,1972). The script protocol (Berne,1961) is also an early development of script (Berne 1961) of how an individual will relate with the world and others. Stern, in his research, mentions about the inter-subjective self (Stern,1985) as a key part of child development. This proves that the self cannot develop an identity in this world without the other. Erskine, R.G. & Trautmann, R.L. (1996) also showed through the key hole model, how through contact with the other a “value for self” gets developed. These ideas confirm that we are relational beings and that the relational need is an important human need.

Having understood the importance of others in our life, it is also true that relationships do cause a lot of heart aches for all of us. This happens because often we are engaging and building “self centered relationships” rather than creating “relationship centered self”. That is the central theme that I am addressing in this article:

- *Do I use a relationship as only a means to get what I want? Or do I engage in a relationship in a meaningful way?*
- *Are my relationships self centered or is my self centered in relationships?*

I will go on to explain the difference between *self centered relationship and relationship centered self* using some transactional analysis frameworks.

Let me start with the word “relationship”. For me a relationship is the sharing of boundaries and exchange of energy between two or more people. For eg., a role of a father cannot be defined

without reference to a son or a daughter. Therefore, in a relationship, there is an exchange of energy and sharing of boundaries based on the influence the role has in that relationship.

However, when the relationship is defined by one person and is not a shared identity, then it is a self centered relationship. If one person unilaterally decides how the relationship should function, not only in the overt level but at the covert level, problems arise because the scales are now tilted in one direction.

A strong reminder of how relationships can be self centered and built on unrealistic expectations in parent-child relationships, has been identified by Virginia Satir, (Loeschen,1998). In her book, she says that in a dysfunctional family, the parent expects the following of the child:

1. Make the parent feel worthy by achieving or performing
2. Want and like the same things the parent does
3. Be grateful for getting what the parents didn't
4. Want to do what the parent wants
5. Parent the parent
6. Be a diversion so that their marital conflict can be denied

With the above expectations, the parent is shifting responsibility to the child, to take care of his/her covert needs (self centred). These predefined ideas about relationships may lead to adaptation, control or power struggles rather than developing a meaningful relationship based on mutual respect.

Let me explain through an example. Take a minute and complete the following sentence by substituting any role that you identify with the most: As a wife/ son/ daughter I am supposed to...

After completing this, take a few minutes to reflect on how some of the beliefs influence the roles we play, the sharing of boundaries and exchange of energy between ourselves and the other in a relationship.

I did this exercise for myself and these were the insights I got:

- As a brother I am supposed to take care of my sisters and I need to protect them at any cost. I am a man and hence these are my responsibilities.
- As sisters, the women are supposed to take care of me and feel obligated to me since I am taking care of them.

Here I sense that I am seeking to establish control on them by making them feel obligated to me. Additionally, I am discounting my sisters' ability to take care of themselves. Is my relationship self centered? The answer is an overwhelming "yes". I also see my need to control as an ulterior motive in this relationship.

How do we understand the difference between the two motives? How can we move from self centeredness in relationships to a relationship centered self and more importantly, why should we move?

When I look deeper, I understand my need to control as really, a need to feel secure in my relationship with my sisters. To move from self centered to relationship centered self, I can learn to be more direct and ask for care from my sisters. I also need to learn to account for their abilities and offer care and help when needed (rather than pushing it on them). I need to accept that they don't need to be obligated to me in this relationship.

Surely living can be fun, exciting and every moment can be a meaningful experience. When we make a relationship meaningful for mutual growth and happiness then we develop a

“relationship centered self”. We do not say, “*If you love me, you will do this or not do this*”. A meaningful relationship is, always a shared identity with equal contribution. Eric Berne identified this movement as social control (Berne, 1964) and such cure may be demonstrated as:

- Taking ownership for our feelings and discomforts
- Getting needs met in an authentic way
- Taking responsibility to construct a meaningful identity in the roles we play
- OK-ness to be dependent on each other and to be independent.
- Being explicit about one’s wants and willing to negotiate with the other in a respectful way to get needs met
- Respecting self and other
- Maintaining eye to eye contact

There could be other values that you may want to add, to understand what “relationship centered self” means to you. The principle behind “relationship centered self” is that we create and exist in an identity by sharing our identities. This means that the parties in a relationship share equal or complementing responsibilities in maintaining the health of the relationship.

We can also understand the journey from “self centered relationship” to “relationship centered self” through games (Berne, 1964). Berne described games as a form of social psychiatry. Relationships are about social experiences weaved in with individual experiences. In relationship centeredness, the people involved take equal responsibility for their experience and hence the game does not turn pathological. Games are also a way of indirect communication (Widdowson, 2010). Instead of confronting games, we could attempt to understand the needs that are being communicated through games. It is possible that games are the messengers of our

unspoken longings to be fulfilled in a relationship. Once the needs are identified and understood then the person ceases to play the same game - when the message is received then the messenger is no more required.

We can apply the game formula (Berne,1972) to architect the movement of the “self centered relationship maturing to a relationship centered self”.

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \mathbf{G = C + G \rightarrow R \rightarrow S - X \rightarrow \text{PAYOFF}} \\
 \\
 \mathbf{G = W + N \leftrightarrow R \leftrightarrow S \leftrightarrow X \leftrightarrow \text{INTEGRATION / OPENNESS}} \\
 \quad \quad \quad \downarrow \\
 \quad \quad \quad \mathbf{EMERGENT}
 \end{array}$$

Figure 1: Formula

The game formula shows how people in relationships reinforce their script beliefs and indulge in racket feelings. The main components of the game formula are the con and the gimmick. There is a response “R” followed by a switch “S”, where ulterior messages start surfacing and there is a shift in the egostate. These are turbulent experiences for the partners as each may feel they are being subjected to unwarrented surprises. The “X” part of the game formula represents confusions, racket feelings and script beliefs being reinforced.

In the “relationship centered self”, both the parties while engaging in the relationship do not know their unconscious motives, but they are willing to take responsibility as it emerges. Hence I have recreated the formula. Instead of con and gimmick, I introduce the terms “want” and “need” (both could be want or need, I have used want and need just to differentiate the components to represent two people involved in the context). “R” represents responsibility rather than response. As in the original game formula, there are multiple responses between

people. The “S” in the “relationship centerdness” formula stands for sharing - to engage in a dialouge, to understand variety of needs emerging in a relationship.

When reactions and repsonses are handled responsibly, the same reactions can pave the way to understanding the real needs of the individuals engaging in a relationship. This is represented as the arrows moving in both direction so that people can take support from each other to get such deep needs met through the relationship. From a relationship centered self perspective, instead of the games ending with bad feelings, it can be an integrating experince and be an eye opener for new dimensions in the relationship.

When you want to develop a relationship centered self and move away from manipulating the other to get your needs met, it is easy to start at the communication level. A relationship cannot exist without communication and when an individual communicates, there are different levels of messages getting communicated.

Dialogic

Dialogue (Bushe & Marshak, 2015) is derived from the greek word “Dialogos”, consisting of “dia” meaning through and “logos” meaning speech. Bernd & Geethan (2015) define it as an engaging conversation cutting through and going beyond logic. It helps update and form a new perspective, see a relationship with fresh eyes and construct experiences moment by moment rather than pre-concluding from a secondary awareness (Berne, 1964). The health of any relationship depends on whether the communication is predominantly through dialogue or a monologue.

When we are in a monologue we are possibly self centered and when we are dialoging we are relationship centered.

Example of Monologue

Wife: I am tired

Husband: What am I supposed to do?

Wife: In this house can't I even express how I feel?

Husband: No one cares about me, I had such a tough time at office

Though the above conversation is a combination of crossed and complimentary in the social level the common message at the psychological level is, "You are not caring enough". They both are expressing their needs from two different worlds and not engaging to share their world.

Example of Dialogue

Wife: I am tired

Husband: What happened?

Wife: I had a tough day

Husband: What was tough about the day?

Wife: Our servant maid did not come and I had to do all the work

Husband: Can I do something which will help you feel better?

In this example both the partners are sharing their world and hence it can be an example of dialogue. Represented diagrammatically, it is:

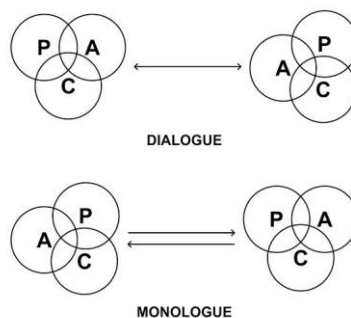


Figure 2: Dialogue and Monologue

In a dialogical diagram, the communication pertains to here and now. When we are in the present then the Adult ego state is active and it does not matter whether the transactions are complimentary, crossed or ulterior. The parties involved are expressive, engaging and in contact. In a monologue, the ego states are flipped, indicating that the people in a relationship are self-involved and not in contact with the other. In monologues, the Adult functioning is veiled by the other two ego states - this means that the past is influencing the present. Though the partners are transacting, they are not in contact or engaging with each other.

One more scenario could be when one person is in a monologue and the other is in a dialoguing mode. Such mismatch also can be aligned through a dialoguing mode. E.g., “Whenever I bring this topic of money, I experience you are not in contact with me. Can we understand what we both are going through?”

I don't see the movement from the monologue to dialogue or from self-centered to relationship centered self as linear. People will go through many ups and downs as well as experience flux, uncertainty, vulnerability, discomfort and pain. Such a journey is scary and many people could avoid subjecting themselves to it. The quote from “Pain” (Gibran, 2003) may give us confidence to see discomfort and pain experienced in a relationship as a way to knowing oneself.

“Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. Even as the stone of the fruit must break that its heart may stand in sun so must pain. And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy.”

To some of you, it may seem as though I am promoting “relationship centered self” as an ideal way of life. The truth is that we are all self centered and it is ok to begin our journey acknowledging this. Peter Hawkins, the co- author of the book, “Supervision in the helping profession”, in a conversation told me that he translates the principle of “I am OK and you are OK” to “I am not OK, you are not OK and that is ok.” Becoming aware of our self centeredness does not mean we are “not OK”. Becoming aware can be the first step in moving towards building a meaningful relationship. When we have self awareness and acceptance for self and others, we generate multiple choice and this makes relationships interesting.

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