

**THE CLASSICAL SCHOOL**

**JANUARY 2021**

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## **The Classical School Approach**

The Classical School of Transactional Analysis is often called the Bernian School of Transactional Analysis. In the literature the two descriptors are used interchangeably. First and foremost, they denote the first approach to Transactional Analysis - 1958 to 1969 and the originator of the School is Eric Berne.

Eric Berne was the originator of Transactional Analysis, hence the name Bernian School.

The Classical School describes Berne's own theory, practice and ideas which were devised as the central planks of Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy.

The Classical School of TA is so called because it has remained closer than any other school to Eric Berne's original theory and practice. In the pure Classical approach, the psychotherapist would emphasise the forging and strengthening of an adult alliance. Client and psychotherapist would work through Berne's operations of Structural Analysis, Transactional Analysis, Game Analysis, and Script analysis. The initial aim is to decontaminate the adult, this implies helping the client separate out their grow-up thoughts, feelings and beliefs from those borrowed from their parents or carried forward from their childhood. As early as practicable, the psychotherapist and client would agree contracts for behavioural change. For Eric Berne, the objective is to reach the goal of cure as quickly and effectively as possible.

In many ways, Eric Berne could be called the first CBT therapist as cognitive and behavioural change was the order of the day.

By putting "strengthening the Adult ego state" as the major objective of Transactional Analysis psychotherapy, he could be seen in this CBT vein. Berne's Classical approach was that through decontamination the client would know when they were in Adult Ego State, Parent Ego State and Child Ego State. From this awareness, they would then be able to put energy and thinking into staying in the "Here and Now" and not to be influenced by "destructive introjects" and/or child confusion.

The Classical School of Transactional Analysis is the original version of TA as developed by Eric Berne and the members of the San Francisco seminars. Almost all TA theories that followed formulate from his early thinkings and the group of people that surrounded him in the San Francisco seminars.

This pioneering group of Transactional Analysts were particularly keen on developing concepts that were simple to grasp and yet described complex human behaviours and internal processes.

## **Key Theoretical Concepts**

Parent, Adult, Child  
Structural Analysis  
Functional Analysis  
Transactional Analysis proper  
Games and Games Analysis  
Script and Script Analysis  
Eograms  
Episcript  
Self Reparenting - Muriel James  
Discount Matrix  
Stroke Economy  
Permissions - Potency - Protection -  
Theoretical Operations  
The Parent Interview  
Drama Triangle  
Life Script Questionnaire

## **Key Figures**

**Eric Berne** - Eric Berne was the originator of Transactional Analysis 1961-1970. His major books were Transactional Psychotherapy 1961, Principles of Group Treatment 1967, Games People Play 1964. What do you Say after you Say Hello 1969. Sex in Human Love 1970 (finished off posthumously).

**Claude Steiner** - his major book was Scripts People Live 1974. Claude Steiner was the prodigal son of Eric Berne and he was an ardent believer in social justice and radical reform. He developed TA theory and specifically in the area of Strokes, Script Matrix and of course Script and Counter Script. Other books he wrote which are perhaps less well known are Games Alcoholics Play and Beyond Games and Scripts.

**Pat Crossman** - she was well known for her article of Protection and Permission. Pat Crossman was in the "inner circle" of Eric Berne and very rarely missed one of the San Francisco seminars which took place 6.00-8.00 pm at Eric Berne's house in Carmel, San Francisco.

**Fanita English** - Fanita English was again one of Eric Berne's "so called members of his inner circle" and with Pat Crossman attended regularly the San Francisco seminars on Tuesdays in Carmel, San Francisco. She still lives today and I believe her age is 103 years of age. She became well known for her work on Racketeering, the Episcrypt, and has delivered many videos on transactional analysis throughout the years which can be found on YouTube. She has also written numerous articles on Rackets and the Treatment of Rackets within the Transactional Analysis model.

**Frank Ernst** - Frank Ernst is the inventor of the "Okay Corral". This is a four-way matrix that depicts the four alternatives in Berne's theory of Existential Positions. It relates each position to corresponding social strategies the person may use in grown-up life.

**Jack Dusay** - Jack Dusay created the idea of Egograms and the Constancy Hypothesis. The Egogram takes the form of a "bar-chart diagram". The relative heights of the bars show an intuitive assessment of the relative energy the person invests in the various "descriptive aspects" of his/her Ego States. Jack Dusay used the functional descriptors of Critical Parent, Nurturing Parent, Adapted Child, Free Child to describe the internal energetic shifts.

**Muriel James** - Muriel James - with her friend and colleague Dorothy Jongwood (Gestalt Psychotherapist) wrote their well-known book Born to Win, 1974. Born to Win explains the basic classical concept of Transactional Analysis, interlined with some Gestalt ideas and methodology from Dorothy Jongwood's input.

**John McNeel** - John McNeel created the idea of the Parent Interview and his article on how to do the Parent Interview 1979 became a staple diet for early transactional analysts. In this article John McNeel talks not only about how to do the Parent Interview but also some caveats on how not to do the Parent Interview.

**Bill Holloway** - he created the Life Script questionnaire which in its original form was 56 questions, though many TA therapists over the years have reduced the questions, for example Ian Stewart in TA Today has an example of Life Script questionnaire which has a much smaller number of questions within the questionnaire.

**Steve Karpman** - Steve Karpman is most well known for creating the Drama Triangle. The Drama Triangle is used within TA but also within various other therapeutic methodologies and the teaching of coaching etc. The Drama Triangle is also used to analyse Games.

**Taibi Kahler** - Taibi Kahler created the idea of Drivers and the Process Model.

## **Interventions and Strategies**

The early Transactional Analysts who were influenced by Eric Berne's thinkings used many of the diagrams and "slick techniques" to not only teach Transactional Analysis but to aid educative therapy.

As said above, the major plank of early TA theory was to strengthen the Adult Ego State, help the client sort out when they are in Parent, Adult and Child and then to work towards "Autonomy", which for Eric Berne was the ability to stay in the Adult Ego State and to develop coping strategies to maintain this position.

For Eric Berne, it was also important that clients become aware of their conflicts within their Child Ego State and their Critical Parental introjects that may be Sabotaging their ability to stay in their "Adult Ego State".

## **The use of Contracting as a major method within the Classical School of Transactional Analysis**

Eric Berne believed in bilateral contracts as a focus for change. In other words, the TA therapist would always have in mind to establish an "overall contract" for specific change which would be behaviourable, observable and finishable. For Eric Berne the contract must be explicit by nature and linked into "sessional contracts" and further treatment contracts. Once the overall contract had been achieved, the TA therapist would make another contract and so on.

It is important that the contract is made from the client's Adult Ego State rather than the client's Child or Parent part of themselves, otherwise the contract has not been made in the here and now, rather it has been made from either an adapted or critical part of themselves which will inevitably sabotage any real change for the client.

I have outlined in a previous section the key theoretical concepts of Classical TA and the TA therapist may use any of these concepts to enable clients to come from a truly autonomous position and strengthen their Adult Ego State in the service of change.

## **Decontamination**

Decontamination is an important part of treatment planning and Decontamination techniques so that the client knows when they are in Parent, Adult and Child, are a pivotal part of Transactional Analysis therapy.

Once the client is aware when they are coming from the Parent Ego State, Adult Ego State or Child Ego State, they then can concentrate on what part of the Ego State structure they wish to have therapy on. In other words, which part of the self is open to healing. Usually, this is the Child Ego State and Eric Berne called this "Deconfusing the Child Ego State".

### Deconfusing the Child Ego State

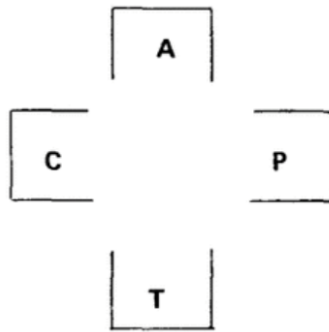
Deconfusing the Child Ego State follows Decontamination and in this part of the therapeutic process the therapist will concentrate on helping the client heal the confused child part of themselves.



## MULTIPLE CHAIRS TECHNIQUE

*by Edgar C Stuntz, M.D*

In this multiple-chair technique, the patient cathects P-A-C in the appropriate chair (Figure No. 1). The therapist sits across from the Adult chair and teaches the patient to carry on a triologue between his P-A-C and to use his Adult to observe his Child and Parent ("I see you feeling ... judging ...").



*Seating Diagram 3 Chair Technique, Figure 1*

This technique is useful for 1) structural analysis, 2) decontamination, 3) redecision, 4) parenting, and 5) relationship analysis.

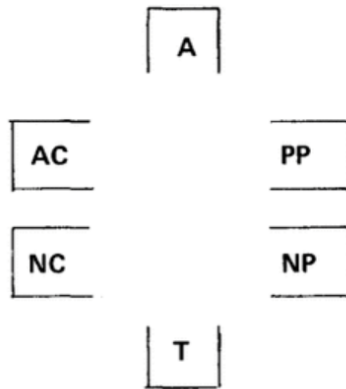
### **Structural Analysis:**

The patient sorts out his own ego states by moving from one chair to another so that he knows when he is coming on Child ("I feel ... I don't want ... I'm angry ..."), Adult ("I see ... I choose ..."), or Parent ("You should ... It's O.K. to ..."). The actual shifting from one chair to the next facilitates Adult awareness, since the patient's whole body is involved in listening to the therapist's observations.

### **Decontamination:**

Decontaminating is done by separating the contaminated Adapted Child feelings and Parent attitudes from the Adult with Adult awareness, by having the patient shift to the appropriate chair the minute he shows the corresponding ego state behaviour. The Parent and Child are cathected by carrying on a self-dialogue in Gestalt therapy fashion. Then, in the Adult chair, the patient observes the dialogue that took place and separates his opinions and his feelings from the facts ("I see you, Child, feeling ... I see you, Parent, telling the Child to ...").

The five-chair technique (Figure. No. 2) is useful when dual ego states involving Adapted and Natural Child, or Prejudiced and Nurturing Parent are observed.



*Seating Diagram 5 Chair Technique, Figure 2*

For example, there may be a rapid alternation between mad Natural kid and sagging Adapted kid; a Nurturing Parent message, “You’re OK” may be immediately followed with “but ...” from the Prejudiced Parent. The therapist sits next to the chairs of NC and NP whom he can stroke positively, while the Adult of the patient sits next to the chairs of PP and AC whom he can decide to “Kick out.”

Selinger’s concept of double personality with the Compliant Child (CC) and Vengeful Child (VC) can easily be used in the five chair technique. The patient quickly sorts out different aspects of his Adapted Child, shifting between “CC” chair and “VC” chair.

Decontamination often occurs within the first few minutes as Adult sorts out the different behaviours of the ego states. Occasional repetition of the five chair technique strengthens the ego state boundaries against contamination. sometimes a patient stays stuck in the AC chair (eg sulking). The therapist lets him stay there (“Oh, how long ...?”); often his Natural Child turns on with a twinkle and a chuckle.

This procedure is not an “act” because, as one patient said, “I shift chairs too fast to think up an act.” An act is usually Adapted Child behaviour which can be spotted and located in the appropriate chair. This in itself discourages acting.

### **Redecision**

After decontamination, the patient in the Natural Child chair is permitted to cathex early feelings toward the Parent and to express his needs and wants from the Parent (“I’m mad - sad - afraid ... I need ... I want ...”). He is asked to do this regarding early childhood memories, expressing his feelings in the present tense, while speaking directly to “mother” or Father” I the parent chair. This often elicits a big discharge of feelings that has been held in by “Don’t feel” or “Don’t feel about what you feel” injunctions. Often this leads to the origin of the early non-Ok decisions. The therapist may then ask, “What do you want now?” The Natural Child pours out what he wants in a new decision.

The patient is directed to the Adult chair and is given Adult information about making new decisions in meeting the needs of the Child. After seeing the Child’s painful feelings resulting from the old decision and old Parent tapes, the Adult may then make the new OK decisions.

## **Parenting**

After redecision, the therapist gives the patient in the Adult chair information about setting aside old Parent tapes (rendering them impotent) and recording new potent parent tapes upon Adult command. The potential validity of the new Parent tapes is checked out with the Child ("That's what I want!") and is firmly grasped by the decontaminated Adult ("That makes sense"). The parenting contract is made between the therapist and the patient in the Adult Chair. The therapist says to Adult, "You can choose to come on Nurturing Parent and give new messages to your Child." The patient cathects a new Nurturing Parent while in the Parent chair and gives new messages to his Child in a potent protective manner. The result is checked out with the patient in the natural Child chair ("Are you convinced?"), often resulting in joy, belief, relief and seeing the Prejudiced Parent as having shrunk.

Because of multiple parent-Adapted Child ego states and ulterior or double Parent messages ("You're OK if ..."), the patient's early attempts at cathecting a new Nurturing Parent are frequently hesitant and impotent ("How am I doin'") This calls for any of three procedures: 1) The ego states are further clarified and decontaminated. Therapist asks parent, "How would you get your Child to believe you?" Therapist also asks the Child, "What do you need to believe your parent? Tell him." 2) Patient may be asked to cathect a Nurturing Parent, other than mother or father, whom he remembered as being nurturing to him (e.g. his scoutmaster). 3) Patient can be shown how to cathect his Nurturing Parent by going around the group and being stroked by the NP of group members with the messages he wants and needs.

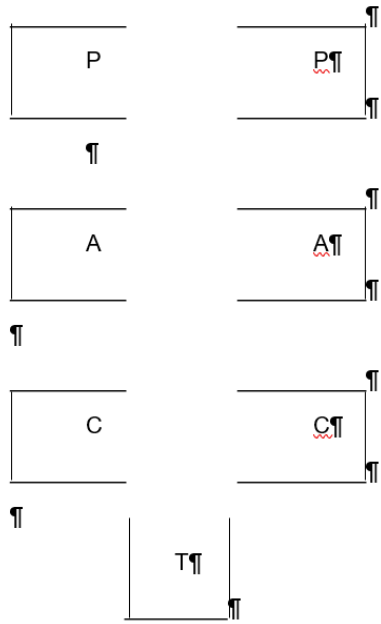
The parenting contract in the multiple chair technique implies that the patient is responsible for deciding and acting on replacing PP and NP. all three P's - Permission, Potency, Protection - are used by the therapist and the patient together. Permission is given to change. Potency is shown with concise vigor by the Adult and Parent of both therapist and patient. Protection is given by the immediate replacement of old Parent tapes by new Parent tapes. "You can be a better Nurturing Parent to your Child than your own parents were toward you".

The group may be involved in the multiple-chair technique. For example, a modified form of script rehearsal can be used, with "NP" and "PP" standing behind the Parent chair, and "AC" and "NC" standing behind the Child chair - feeding messages and feelings to the patient. The patient in the Adult chair can choose to turn off the rackets and injunctions (by excusing "AC" and "PP" from the "state") and then make a decision for new parenting. Other group members are asked to monitor the ego states of the patient and to point out when he is in the "wrong" chair. Group members sit very close around the "Stage" for better observation and stroking of the patient.

A therapist can use all the above procedures with the "musical chairs" to work through a patient's specific problem in less than an hour. When the therapeutic music stops, the AC and PP no longer have chairs to sit on, and the patient is in charge of his NP, A and NC. "Confidence comes from possessing my own Nurturing Parent."

## **Relationship Analysis**

In marital counselling and relationship analysis six chairs are used with the P-A-C of each partner facing each other, and with the therapist's chair at the end of the Child chairs "see figure 3). This arrangement permits immediate examination of the nature of these dyadic transactions.



*Seating Diagram Relationship Analysis Figure No. 3*

## **Methods of Analysis**

In terms of analysis, the TA therapist will use:

1. Ego State Analysis
2. Game Analysis
3. Script Analysis
4. Transactional Analysis proper

**Ego State Analysis** - the TA therapist will analyse which Ego State the person is coming from using Eric Berne's four methods of Ego State analysis. These are:

- (a) Behavioural observation
- (b) Historical
- (c) Social
- (d) Phenomological

Behavioural observation is the most important way that a Classical TA therapist can analyse which Ego State a person is coming from and how much energy they will be spending in that Ego State.

### **Game Analysis:**

Berne used Formula G in his early days to analyse repetitive behavioural sequences, ie Games. However, later TA therapists used the Drama Triangle 1974, to analyse games.

### **Script Analysis:**

In Script analysis Berne looked for injunctions, and counter-injunctions to determine early Script decisions that maintain the continuance of a person's Script. In further writings, Steiner created the Script Matrix to chart Script analysis and Woollams and Brown 1978 also created their own Script Matrix to analyse the continuance of Script.

### **Transactional Analysis Proper**

The early TA therapists used Transactional Analysis Proper to analyse different transactions of communications - complementary transactions, ulterior transactions and cross transactions.

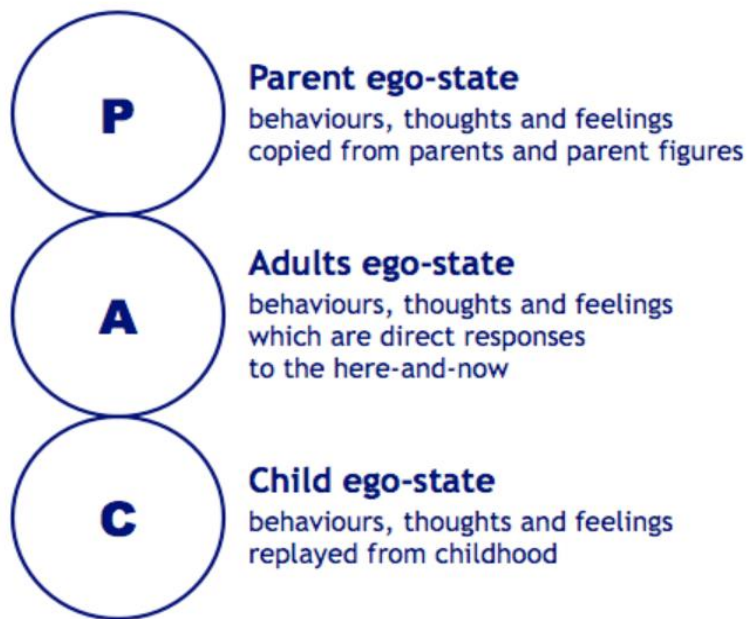
## **Structural and Functional Analysis**

Berne's structural model - Parent, Adult, Child - is the personality model that became the primary model in Transactional Analysis for TA treatment, diagnosis and change. Berne used the PAC model to help clients understand their internal psychological dynamics and what was needed on a psychological level for change. One of the strengths of the structural model is that it is easy to understand and to explain to clients in an accessible manner.

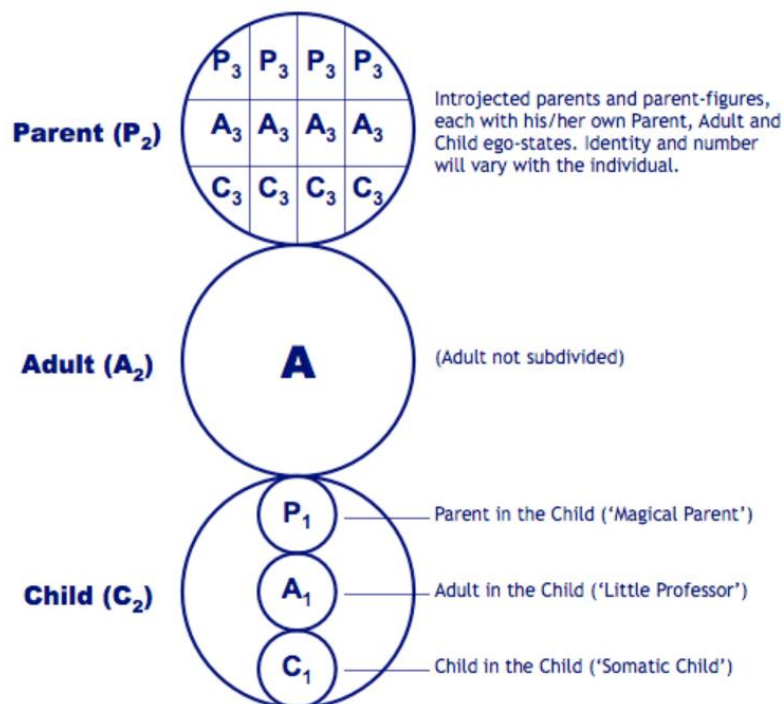
### **Functional Model**

The functional model is a taxonomy of behaviours and is the external manifestation of intra-psychic processes. Many TA therapists taught the functional model as it is accessible and easily understood by the client. It was also used in the service of Egograms to explain behavioural shifts at the Ego State level.

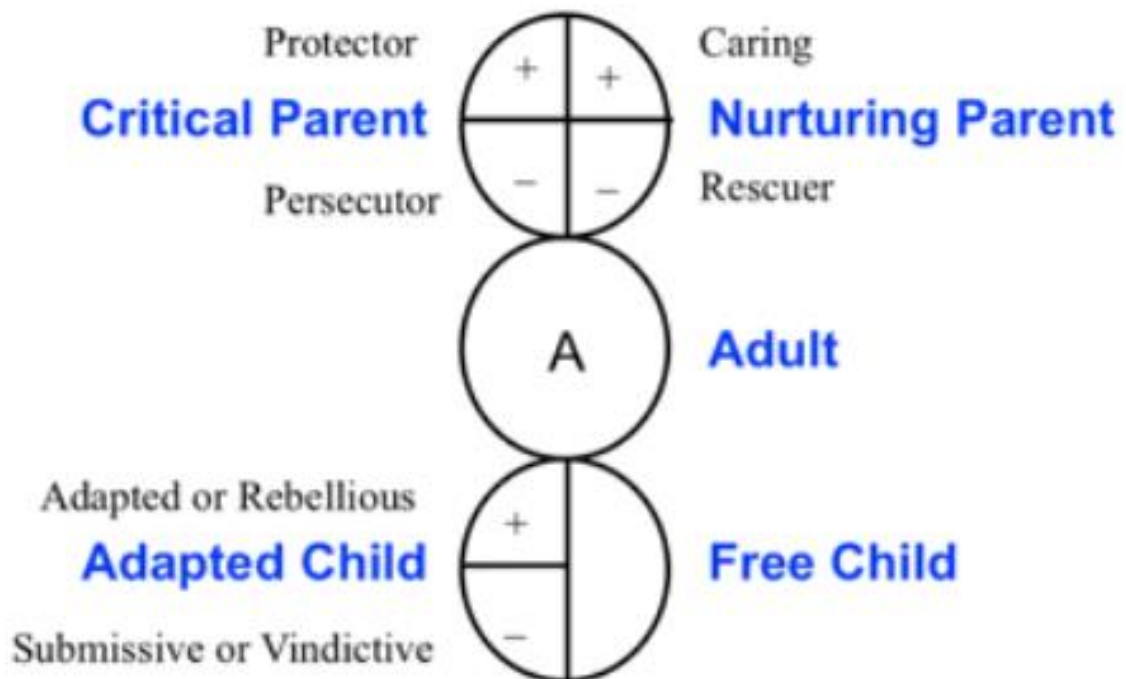
## First Order Structural Model



## Second Order Structural Model

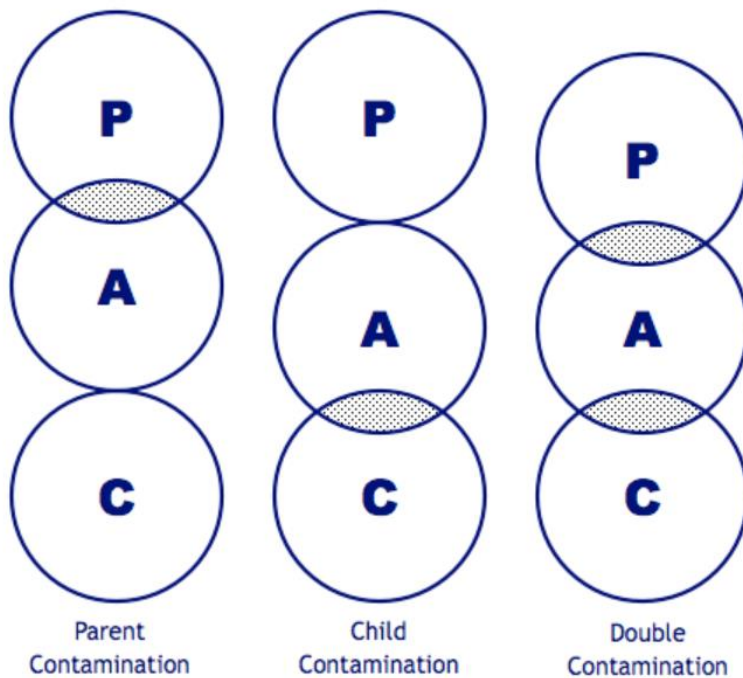


## The Functional Model

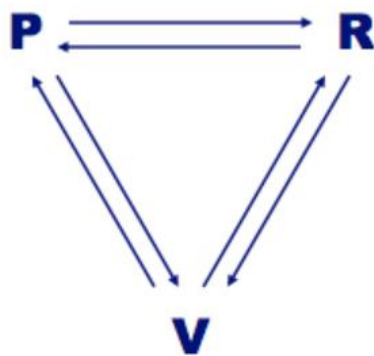




## Contaminations

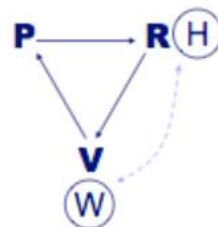


## Drama Triangle



### **Drama Triangle**

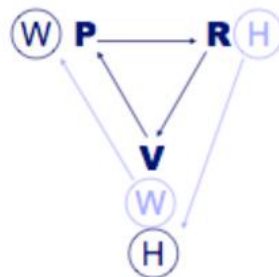
(also called the Racket or Game Triangle to emphasise the discounting aspects of the three positions)



### **Racket**

Each person as one or two favourite positions in the drama triangle and will seek out others who will exchange strokes from complementary positions.

Here a Husband (H) & Wife (W) adopt helper (R) and helpless (V) positions, exchanging complementary transactions that stroke each other's not-OK position.

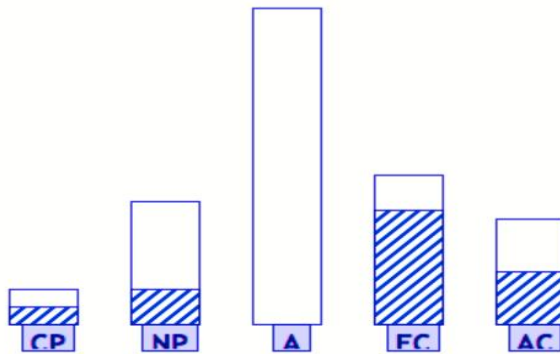


### **Game**

The Racket becomes a Game when one or both participants shift positions on the Drama Triangle and gain a Racket Feeling payoff.

Here Wife (W) moves to Persecutor (P) and Husband to Victim (V) when the husband's earlier rescuing proves ineffectual (the strokes dry up).

## Egogram



### Legend: Ego States

Positive   
 Negative 

CP: Controlling Parent  
 NP: Nurturing Parent  
 A: Adult  
 FC: Free Child  
 AC: Adapted Child

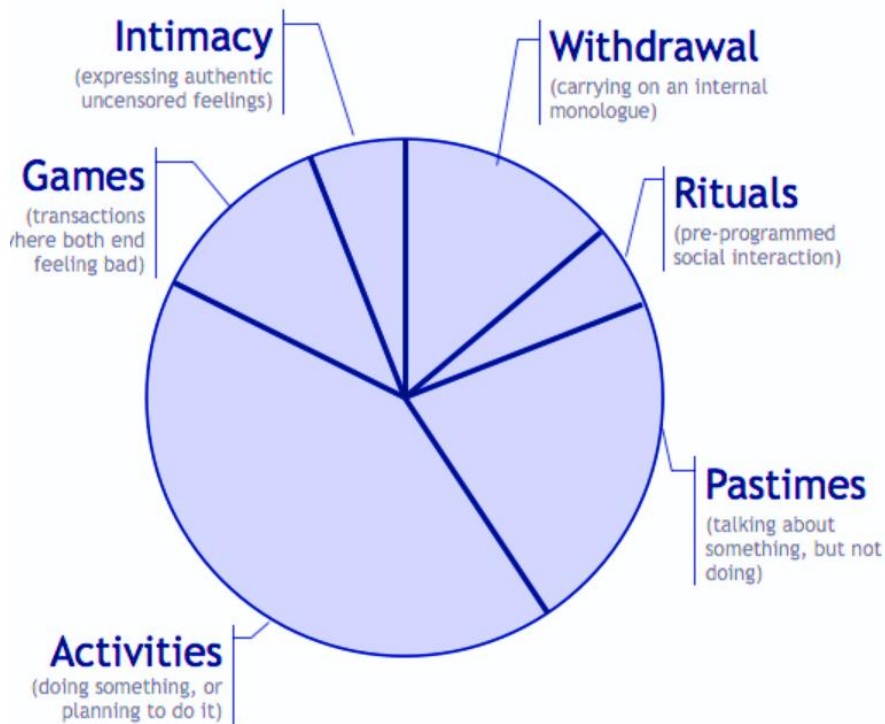
**Note:**  
 Dusay's Constancy Hypothesis suggests that if you change something about yourself, eg, spend more time in NP, then you will have less of another ego state.

## Stroking Profile

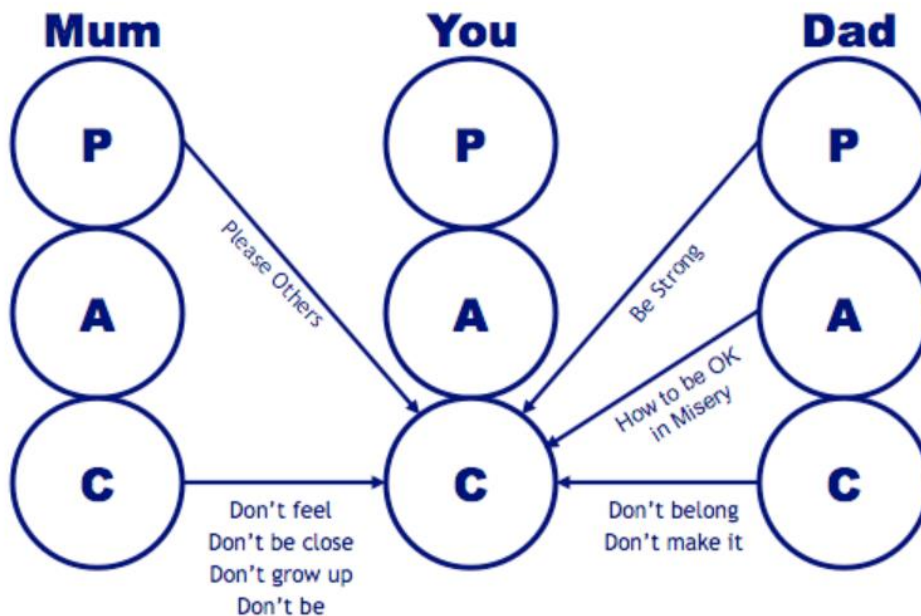
	How often do you give +strokes to others?	How often do you accept +strokes?	How often do you ask others for the +strokes you want	How often do you refuse to give the +strokes they expect from you?
Almost Always				
Usually				
Frequently				
Often				
Seldom				
Almost Never				
	<b>Giving</b>	<b>Taking</b>	<b>Asking For</b>	<b>Refusing to Give</b>
Almost Never				
Seldom				
Often				
Frequently				
Usually				
Almost Always				
	How often do you give -strokes to others?	How often do you take -strokes?	How often do you ask others indirectly or directly for the -strokes that you want?	How often do you refuse to give -strokes

Note: McKenna's inverse relationship suggests that if someone has a high positive (e.g. gives a lot of positive strokes) they're likely to have a low negative (eg give few negative strokes) and vice versa

## Time Structuring

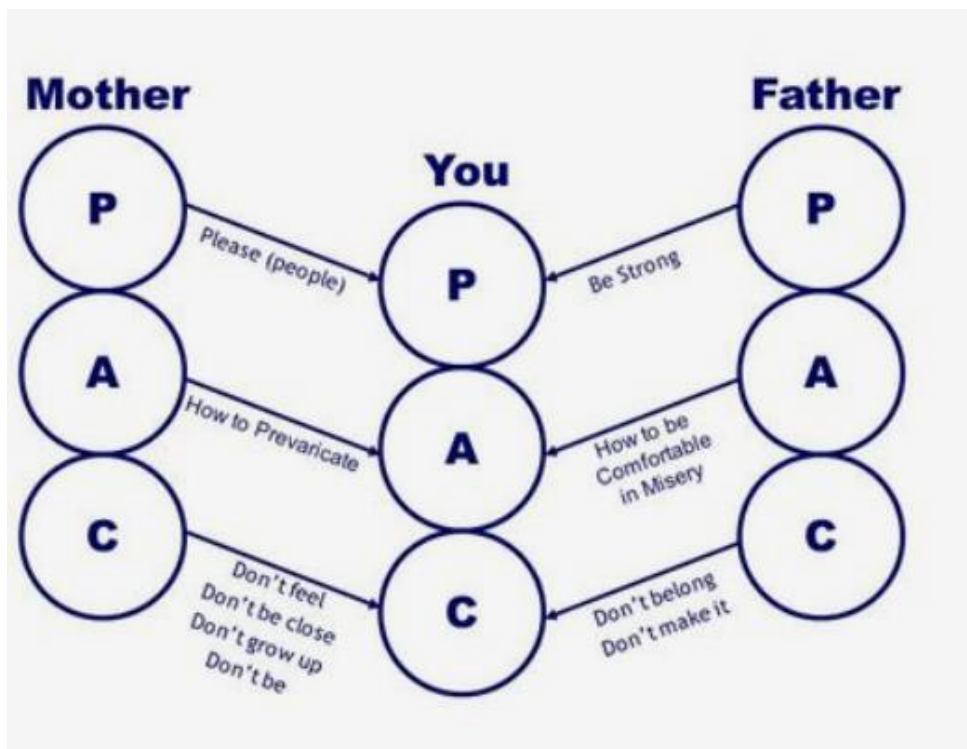


## Script Matrix - Woollams and Brown 1978



Note: Originally the program was shown as coming from the same sex Parent as the child (as shown here). Now it is recognised that both Parents can transmit program messages.

## Script Matrix - Claude Steiner



## Okay Corral

