

### What is Transactional Analysis?

“Transactional Analysis (TA) is a theory of personality and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and change.” *International Transactional Analysis Association*

TA offers a unique way of understanding our personality, behaviours, and relationships. It’s an integrative approach, which combines humanistic, cognitive-behavioural, and psychoanalytic concepts.

### TA provides a theory of:

- How people function psychologically
- How people communicate and why communication breakdowns occur
- How decisions made in childhood may continue to influence behaviour later in life despite painful consequences (*Julie Smith, 2001*).

### TA Philosophy

- People are OK: everyone has equal value and worth
- Everyone has the capacity to think about and assess their experiences
- Decisions can be changed; this is on the premise that everyone has the capacity to think and can, within the confines of their culture and resources, decide their own destiny.

The underlying philosophy of TA is respect for the intrinsic worth and dignity of human beings and their capacity to change. TA encourages equality, mutuality and choice and is based on a contract between client and practitioner in which they take equal responsibility towards common goals. The methods and concepts used are made open in the understanding that power is shared. Four key concepts of TA are:

- **Analysis of Transactions**

Analysis of Transactions examines both social and psychological forms of human communication using the Ego State model (*see Functional Ego State Model overleaf*) to diagram the types of transactions. Transactions may be open and clear, or combined with ulterior messages.

- **Structural Analysis**

Structural Analysis is a key concept that helps us to clarify our life experiences, thoughts, and feelings and examine how we learnt our beliefs and values from our parents and other significant figures. It also helps us to understand how being in different Ego States can influence our behaviour and relationships. Ego States comprise of Parent, Adult and Child, and categorise the ways we think, feel, and behave (*see Structural Ego State Model overleaf*).

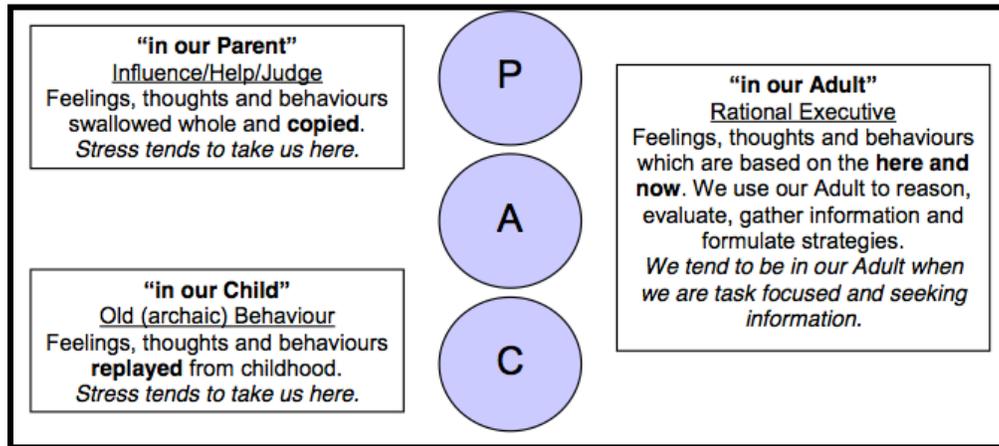
The Structural Model (*overleaf*) shows us what (*content*) is contained within our personality, whereas the Functional Ego State Model (Richard Maun 2009) below suggests how it operates (*process*).

- **Script Analysis**

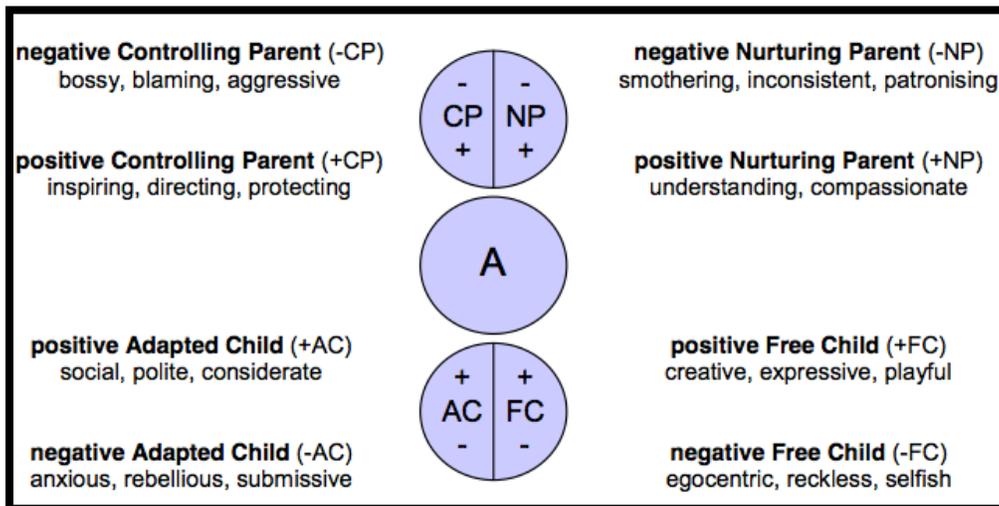
Script Analysis offers an approach to the question: “How do we get to be the people we are?”

The origins are embedded in the history of our childhoods, families, culture, and life experiences. A 'life script' develops, without our being aware of it, for purposes of survival, approval, and security, rather than for self-realisation. By analysing our scripts, we can reconsider the decisions we made when we were too little to realise what options existed.

**Structural Ego State Model** (Richard Maun, 2009)



**Functional Ego State Model** (Richard Maun, 2009)



- **Analysis of Games**

People learn to play games in childhood, as often the best possible response to family and life circumstances. The motivation in continuing to do so, as adults, is the need for stimulus, structure and as a substitute for security. Games are predictable patterns of indirect communications and played outside of our awareness. They are our best attempt to get our needs met - in reality, we'll not meet them by playing games.

Decisions about self, others and the world are made in childhood and have a significant influence on how we live our lives in the present. By understanding how our personality is constructed and analysing the transactions, games, and unique life script; both therapist and client gain an understanding of the client's unconscious life plan, which, once in awareness, can be changed and resolved.