

Parent-Adult-Child explained

Transactional Analysis (TA) is a form of humanistic psychotherapy that was intentionally developed to enable people to improve themselves without the need for a psychotherapist.

The ego states form the core model of Transactional Analysis (TA).

According to TA, we have three sides or 'ego-states' to our personality. The **Parent** ego state (P), the **Adult** ego state (A) and the **Child** ego state (C) known as Parent-Adult-Child.



An ego state is a way of us experiencing the world. It is an entire system of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours from which we interact with one another (and even with ourselves in our internal conversations). Our thinking, feeling and behaviour when we are in each ego state is consistent.

An ego state consists of:

- Thinking,
- Feeling,
- Behaving.

Each of the ego states can have positive qualities that enrich your life - but also negative effects that reduce your quality of life.

- In the **Parent** ego state is where critical, managing, evaluating come from, as well as nurturing and caring. Our parent-ego is formed out of adopted patterns of behaviour, feelings and thoughts of our parents or former caregivers. Our Parent ego state is split into **Critical Parent** and **Nurturing Parent** depending on the way we are behaving.
- In the **Adult** ego state you think, feel and behave appropriately and in the here and now, i.e. logically and rationally. You can make clear decisions and have access to your intellectual potential.
- In the **Child** ego state you think, feel and behave as you did as a child. There is the **Free child**, the **Adapted child**, but also the **Rebellious child**.

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Patterns of communication

Familiar patterns

When are patterns of communication 'hook' neatly into the other person's we recognise familiar interactions.

At any one time, an individual will be interacting from one of his or her ego states and so is the other person.

This is often 'automatic', for example when someone speaks to us from their Parent we are likely to respond from Child. Or Adult to Adult/ Parent to Parent/ Child to Child.

Communication flows when the activated ego states are complementary or sympathetic to each other. For example, to the question: "Have you seen my keys?" (Adult) the answer would be "Yes, they are on the table." (Adult).

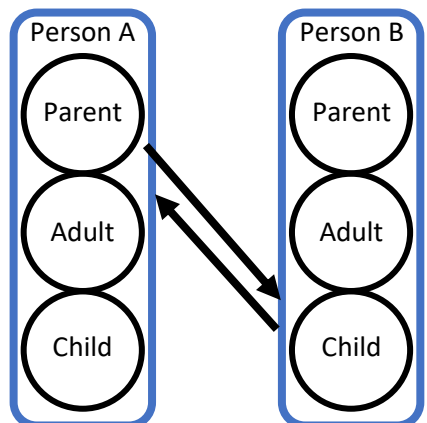
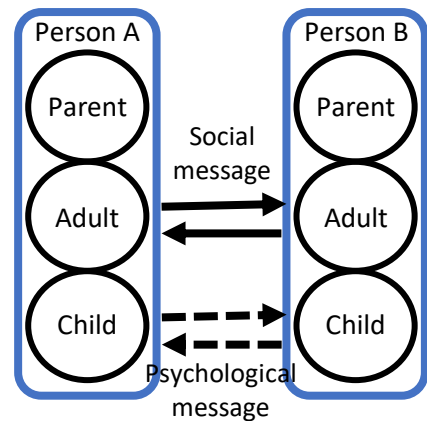
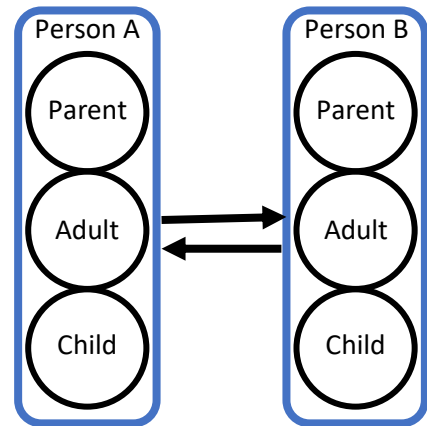
Eric Berne (founder of Transactional Analysis) says that we can communicate on two levels. There is the **social** message – what we say, and the **psychological** message – what we mean. These communication patterns can be productive or can be unhelpful, 'stuck' patterns that feel difficult to change.

Sometimes the **social** and **psychological** message do not match. Sarcasm is a great example of this. When someone is sarcastic, what they say is the opposite of what they mean. The person who they are being sarcastic to picks up the **psychological** message rather than the **social** message.

Body language usually gives away someone's **psychological** message if it is not aligned with the **social** message. We often get a feeling that the interaction is not what it appears on the surface even if we cannot pinpoint it specifically.

Changing unhelpful patterns

Many of our problems come from interactions which are unsuccessful or 'stuck', and we tend to repeat them over and over again.



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In a work context an Adult ego state is usually the most conducive to good interactions with other people. Therefore we often need to try to get the conversation back to Adult-Adult to be most productive. When we are focused on the present situation, we are noticing, thinking and responding for ourselves, rather than repeating patterns of interactions unconsciously.

When we consciously use our Adult we can often change unhelpful patterns of communication and start more productive ones.

By practising doing this we can start to notice when we get caught in an unhelpful pattern and actively moving ourselves (and often the other person too) out of it.

This is an incredibly effective tactic because it only takes one person to decide to change to transform unhealthy communication patterns over time.

