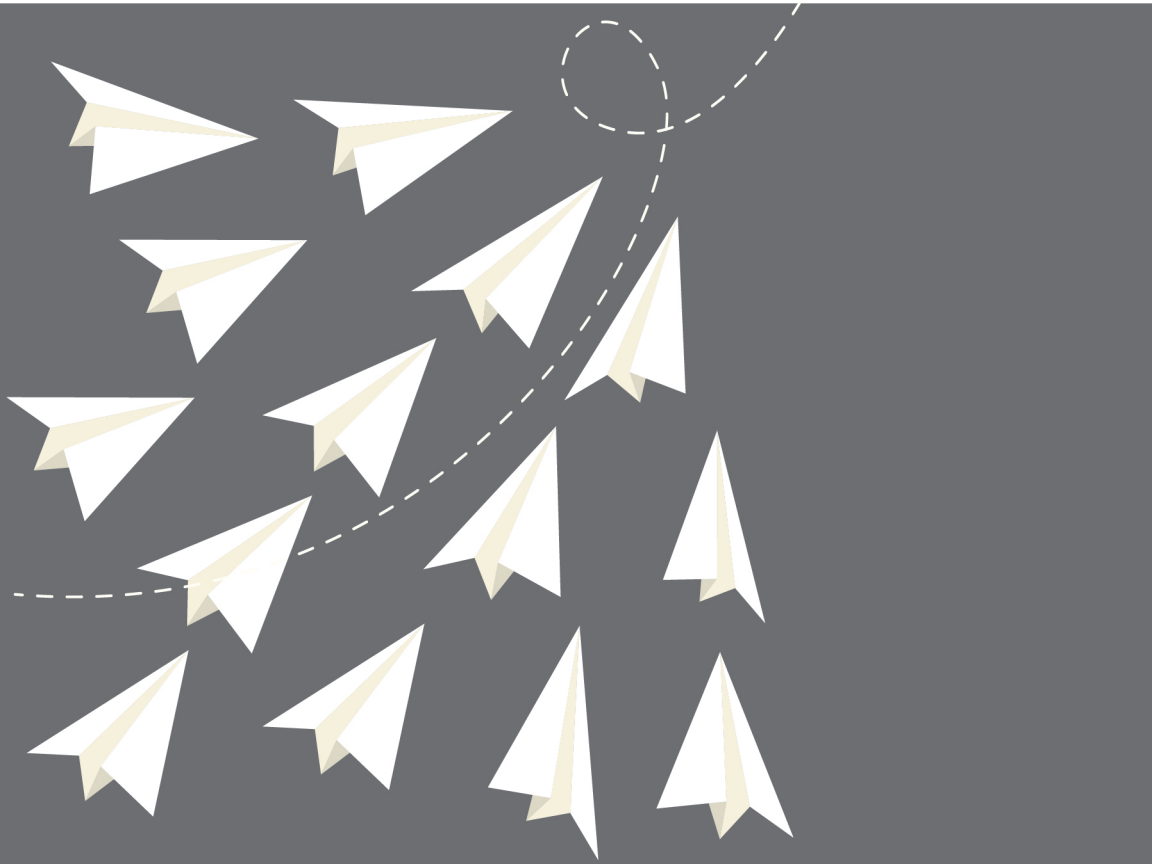


Being a Self-Aware

Leader


Dr Paras





Preface

Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion - Jack Welch




A leader plays an important role within any organisation. Every decision and every interaction made will influence others and determine the success of the organization. Difficult situations will always arise so to test their skills and they need to be confident and to respond appropriately. Behaviours and decisions will be based upon their own perspective largely due to personal and workplace experiences. However, to make the right decisions, they must calculate the best possible outcome.

The purpose of this book is to inform and to guide all those who are in or, who wish to be in a leadership role and for them to embark upon a journey of self-awareness. The idea is to help them become authority figures. This means they must understand who they are, and to comprehend their perceptions while developing the necessary skills so to observe and understand others.

This understanding of self along with learning how to guide colleagues will help to remove any barriers and facilitate a free flow of communication. Eric Berne, a renowned psychologist has developed the concept of Transactional Analysis which focuses on how we interact – not just with self but with others. The idea of this book is to take the concepts of Transactional Analysis and to use them as a basis so to improve leadership skills which include observation and communication. This is a powerful concept as it enables you to become more proficient in multiple areas of work, creates an improved connection with staff and colleagues.

This book takes a practical activity-based approach. This means that in each chapter, the concept is introduced and then, explained. A case study is also presented for each concept enabling you to consider your own personal experiences and to utilise experiences gained at work. What makes this book interesting are the various activities provided so to help consolidate the types of situation which are likely to be experienced and this reinforces the concept. There is a self-reflection i.e. “Learning space” provided at the end of each chapter so that you can reflect upon the concepts discussed and to consider them from a personal perspective.

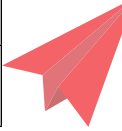


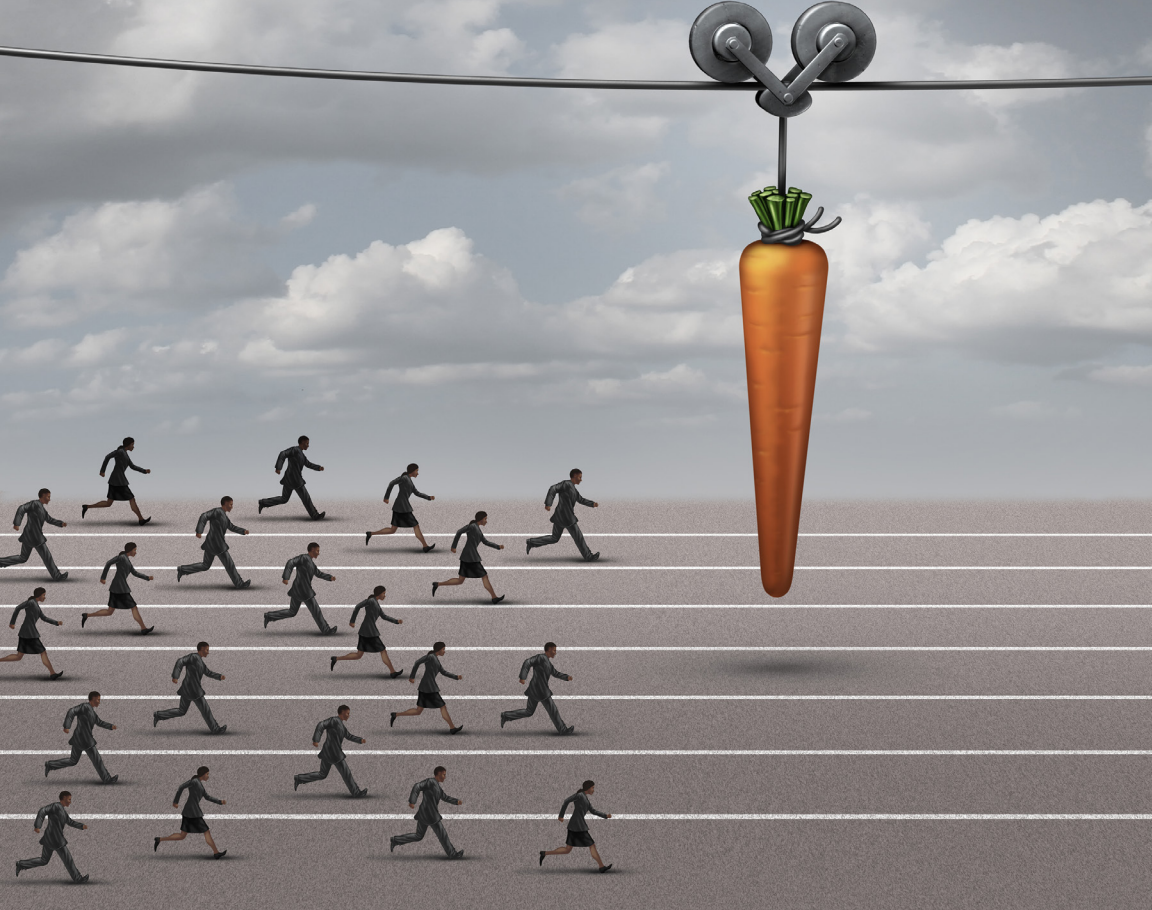
This book draws inspiration from Eric Berne who developed the concept of Transactional Analysis and from other writers who have helped to further this concept. We hope that leaders and entrepreneurs worldwide find this book useful and will apply the notions discussed here so that it improves self-awareness and provides the right influences both personally and professionally.



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Chapter One

Introduction – Leadership Challenges

“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.” William James (1842-1910)

Let's assume that there is a difficult project deadline looming. It is evident to you that the issues are as a result of two key team members and their inability to co-operate with each other. One is a senior professional who is even more experienced than you and he has the habit of undermining people. As you are a non-confrontational individual, you strive to ignore the situation and to simply work throughout outstanding tasks. The other person tends to be very enthusiastic but does not want to listen to other people's points of view. You are aware that these conflicting attitudes impact project delivery.

As a project leader, what would you do?

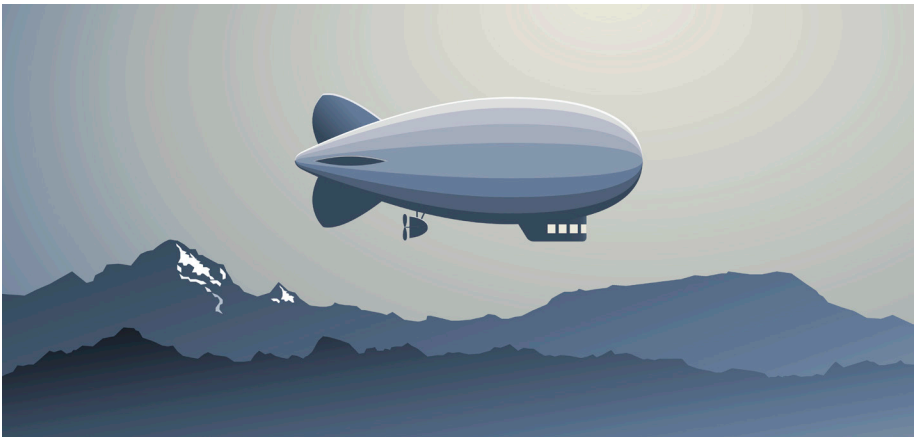
If you were assertive with the senior professional, would that help? How would you deal with the talented but individualistic younger professional who is simply not prepared to listen and absorb?

These are just some problems that can arise from a single scenario and these types of situations and many more are faced by corporate leaders across the world in their day-to-day operations. So, how should you address these individual behaviours? Also, should you work on aspects of self so to deal with these situations more efficiently?

These are important considerations for any leader.


We are influenced by many factors. The changing dynamics at work may make us change our natural behaviours. We may have to lead by example or, to make simple temporary adjustments. There are other changes which may be required too.

As a leader, it is important to understand what defines others and to work on polishing those traits so to manage the team more effectively.




Challenges in a dynamic environment

The current modern work environment is very dynamic in nature. There are constant pressures and deadlines and the pace can be frantic. This fast-paced aspect of work may lead to difficult decisions for leaders.



This means they must take in any information quickly, assess and then, decide what to do. Each decision must be accurate otherwise it could be costly. After all, every decision made must have a positive bearing on the working day. It is important to note that anyone in a leadership role can be influenced by earlier built-up notions and perceptions.


Difficulties at work increase pressures and make for a challenging environment for anyone especially those leaders who are new, still learning or, who benefit from teams who are more interactive. The work environment and any unresolved stressors not only impacts the nature of relationships but impacts the overall culture of the organization.



Leaders hold important and influential positions within any organization. The competencies that they have and subsequently, develop will impact the basic functionality of the organisation. In addition, the fast-changing environment will make it more difficult for a leader to spend time developing their skills or to develop new ones. Development is of course vital when it comes to career satisfaction and an improved workplace environment. Many of the key skills such as - observation, questioning and communication may be lacking in some leaders. They may not find the opportunities to fine tune them or to strengthen these qualities. This can impact the workplace substantially.

For a strong management team, it is imperative that leaders spend quality time working on their own development so to understand personal limitations and to identify ways in which to improve. The decisions that leaders make have a great bearing on the outcomes of various work situations and so, decisions can be more accurate if the decision-making process is less biased. Decisions should be information-based rather than emotive.

Most people find it difficult to let go of inner prejudices, but this is something that must be worked upon. Leadership requires commitment to the role and so, this means ongoing growth within the role.



Continual development is all-important and in the modern work day environment, time can be a factor.

There are various ways to examine the need for self-awareness or self-development and understanding these factors enable the individual to build upon existing skillsets, to understand the work force and to

increase awareness.

It is important to:

- Develop awareness about self and identify ways to improve competencies
- Understand and communicate more effectively with team members and other stake holders who are involved in regular interactions at the workplace.

Self-awareness is of the utmost importance. It helps individuals, especially leaders to make more prudent decisions. If they can develop awareness regarding personal beliefs and experiences, this will help fuel their understanding of a situation or, can be directly connected to decision-making, and this can be a huge step forward.

Awareness equals neutral decision-making without giving into biases.


Transactional Analysis is extremely useful. It provides an understanding of awareness but also enables each person to understand other individuals with whom they must interact. This enlightenment about self and insights into how others think will help leaders to have meaningful interactions. This journey of self-awareness is very critical from a leadership perspective and we examine in further chapters how to develop self-awareness and to understand the importance of free will so to be make decisions without bias.

We will explore the use of Transactional Analysis conceptualized by Eric Berne and comprehend how it enhances awareness and create a better system of communication.

Transactions Analysis talks about the various interactions that we conduct with self and with the outside world and the influence that they have on the decisions that we make in life.


The philosophical assumptions of Transactional Analysis include:

- People are OK
- Everyone has the capacity to think
- People decide their own destiny and these decisions can be changed.



The principles of TA are based on the interactions that individuals have with each other i.e. Transactions and Strokes Berne provides an easy to understand definition of a transaction:

“The unit of social intercourse is called a transaction. If two or more people encounter each other, sooner or later one of them will speak or acknowledge the presence of others. This is called transactional stimulus. Another person will then say or do something which is in some way related to the stimulus, and that is called the transactional response.”




We are social beings and tend to naturally interact with those around us or those we meet. Either we or the others, start the interaction verbally or through some other non-verbal gesture which warrants a response from the other party. These different interactions which are carried out between the two interacting parties are known as transactions. As defined by Berne, these transactions form the unit of the social intercourse. Any transaction would contain a *stimulus* – the initiation of an interaction and *response* – acknowledgement to the initial interaction. In other words, body language becomes as equally important as the following verbal discourse.

Eric Berne defined a stroke - “*fundamental unit of social action*”.

A stroke is a unit of recognition, when one person recognizes another person. A stroke can be physical, verbal or non-verbal in nature. All the strokes can be divided into two categories - Positive Strokes & Negative Strokes.

One of the critical elements of any social interaction is acknowledging the presence of others. This acknowledgment happens through various means – a verbal communication, a non-verbal gesture, physical contact etc. All these interactions which convey the presence of another individual are called strokes. The nature of these strokes can either be positive or negative. Any stroke which makes you feel good – a compliment, cheerful smile, or a pat on the back etc. is known as a positive stroke. On the other hand, negative strokes do not convey a good feeling – a frown, angry response etc. Any stroke – whether positive or negative is considered better than a, “No Stroke”.



Strokes can also be categorised as:

- Conditional
- Unconditional,
- Internal
- External etc.

We will explore these concepts and their relevance to leadership in further chapters.



Chapter Two


Permission Wheel and Autonomy

*The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts -
Marcus Aurelius*

Transactional Analysis discusses “Life script” as a concept.

It is human nature to build perceptions about the world around us and these are normally influenced by life's experiences or are passed down behaviours. These perceptions set the life script that we use to make decisions daily. A life script has an unconscious effect on how we think and act in our lives. They build up our perceptions of what we can do and what we cannot do, so, in a way, building up an image of self. There are many factors such as: family, peers, culture etc. These influence and develop the life script. All the unconscious behaviours that we exhibit is part of the Life Script. We will, during this book explore how we unconsciously display different behaviours without even knowing it.

A person in an influential position is no different to anyone else because they too are influenced by the beliefs, thoughts and perceptions due to



their own life script. There are many instances in life as a leader, where intuitively, you feel a task is not possible or, that a process can only be done in a specific way. This is the life script working without any conscious thought. A certain portion of the life script is positively enabling, and this helps you to make choices in a constructive way. Whereas, there are other parts of the life script which restrict you so to gain full control of life. The wonderful thing about any life script is that it can be changed. Understanding this critical fact that the limiting factors in the life script can be altered and that the behaviour displayed is just a pattern which can be worked upon, helps a leader to realise the scope to improve and gain more control on life.

Let us now look at an example so to fully comprehend this concept.

Example:

A child that is brought up in a conservative, economically middle-class family is taught the importance of being prudent and choosing safe, less risky options.

No matter how well calculated a risk, the outcome can still be negative and will still influence future decisions.


A child grows to search for the safest option in life although this may not yield the most.

In a professional career, there will be times when an opportunity appears to be promising and on examination, it could boost business but, may mean progressing out of the usual comfort zone. Risks do not always lead to failure, but the concept may influence the decision whether to take that risk or not.

Have you experienced notions about self which have influenced decisions?

Permission Wheel

A Permission Wheel is just one concept of Transactional Analysis. It is a great way to understand the limitations that we personally exhibit in respect of the various aspects of life. We now understand that the actions we take are influenced by the life script. This varies from individual to individual depending on the experiences gained and the thoughts laid down by those experiences. It is this that sets triggers into the



subconscious mind which influences behaviour.

One key area in which the life script determines our decision making is how experiences shape our ability to be apprehensive or positive. It will also impact decisions. Note that the ability to make the right decision at the right time can make all the difference to the success or failure of a project.

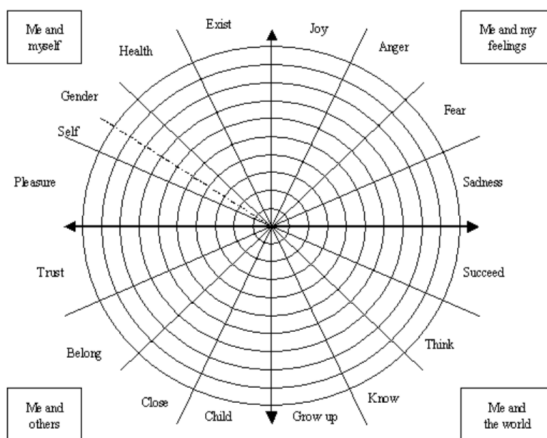
The decisions facing a lead are wide-ranging.

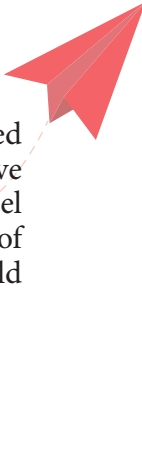
As an example: Should I take an opportunity and work on a project or not? Do I need to speak to a particular team member? Do I need to report an incident to management at a higher level?

Every decision made depends on that individual's experiences. It involves the narrative and previous experiences and learnt behavioural patterns.

Understanding your own life script enables you to gain better insight as to why specific decisions and actions should be made. It also helps you to understand why you may be more apprehensive about other things. This is where a Permission Wheel is useful so to determine the various aspects of our life script.

This concept was developed by Gysa Jaoui, in the 1980s.





A Permission Wheel as depicted above is dependent on a term called “permission”. Simply put, permission is the extent to which you have freedom or autonomy about a specific aspect of life. A permission wheel is a set of concentric circles with each circle determining the level of freedom you have. This circle is divided into four quadrants which could have further sub divisions. The four quadrants include:

- Me and myself
- Me and my feelings
- Me and others
- Me and the world


The permission that we grant ourselves in each of these different aspects determines the freedom that we have in being able to take decisions without any inhibitions or prejudices. For example, let’s look at the quadrant “Me and Others”. This quadrant can be sub-categorized into – trust or belong etc. The permission that we grant to ourselves for each of those aspects is going to influence the actions that we take. We can be more trusting with others or become someone who is always doubtful. We could be individuals who feel a strong sense of belonging and can easily bond with others or we can be someone who does not bond with others as well.


Let us take a scenario which can bring the Permission Wheel into perspective:

Case Study:

John is a brilliant individual whose abilities and skills has profited the team on many occasions and also, won him awards. He is energetic and driven and optimistic when it comes to his goals. He expects the team to deliver as well. He is a young achiever and does not show any sign of slowing down when it comes to his expectations and his enthusiasm is appreciated by his seniors and his achievements admired by both peers and colleagues. When the senior management entrusted him with a key project, it appeared that he would be the right candidate to deliver.

However, some months later, although the project seemed to be on track, albeit a little slower than expected, there was a remarkable change






in John who appeared exhausted and discontented. It was evident that both John and the project seemed to be headed for derailment.

When problems exist, it is always important to take a step back and to consider where things may have gone wrong. Before we delve fully into analysis with the aid of a Permission Wheel, you would list down your personal analysis of the situation.

Analysis as per Permission Wheel.

When John's case was analysed using a Permission Wheel, a few interesting and perhaps, obvious observations became clear:

- 
- He has higher level of permissions on the My & The World Quadrant especially with the Know and Succeed subdivisions. This indicates that he exudes great confidence in himself in respect of knowledge and the willingness to succeed. He also feels supremely confident about his achievements. This trait was obvious.
 - The permission wheel shows John providing less permission on the Me and Others quadrant especially the subdivisions of Trust and Belong. This opens the root of the problem which shows his limitations when having to trust others.

By observing these aspects about John's life script, it can be interpreted that while John has great confidence in himself, he does not have the same levels of confidence in others. So, while handling the project, there are many key tasks which he takes upon himself to complete rather than delegating the same to others. This explained his visible exhaustion and the slow derailment of the project with the team now reciprocating the lack of trust he has on them.

A deeper analysis would reveal instances from his earlier days where things were not completed as a result of trusting and relying on others and this consolidated his belief that only he is capable of completely things in a timely manner.

Leaders can use the rationale of the Permission Wheel to analyse themselves and work on those areas where they need to start giving more permission.

In conclusion, John is a very capable person with some excellent skills,

but he does not trust others in the same way that he trusts himself. Therefore, he fails to delegate adequately and by doing too much, this leads to fatigue and erodes away his abilities.



Activity

Using the Permission Wheel, do a self-assessment of the permission so to grant yourself some categories.


Analyse the limitations that may restrict you from completing self-autonomy. List down these limitations for each of the categories. Work through them one at a time and create a plan of action as to how you can remove these limitations and try having full autonomy.

Let's do a small activity:

List three challenges that you face:

- Workplace,
- Home
- Personal life


Create a table with each of these headings and list the three challenges under each heading. Now pick up one challenge and question yourself:



“What permission do I need to grant myself so to be able to handle this differently?”

This triggers the starting point leading from difficulty...perhaps complaining about the challenges in life to finding potential answers through self-exploration. Repeat it with all the challenges you have listed down. After a while, you begin to have more confidence when it comes to tackling the challenges and as a result, become more self-aware.


Takeaway



The idea of a Permission wheel and an improved understanding of the Life Script provides a valuable insight for any individual, especially a person in a place of authority. Decisions that one may take are dependent heavily on thoughts, beliefs and biases that we have built-up. Each of these acts as limitations restricting the full permission to be able to make rational decisions and different scenarios. Autonomy or granting full permission to do things can only be achieved when these self-limitations are addressed.

A leader should always attempt to break down their own self-limitations as these affect his or her relationship with others. It impacts self-confidence, or, feeling happy or sad. In fact, it affects the full spectrum of emotions. The more an individual can free up these different aspects of his/her life and to achieve autonomy, the more informed that person will be. As a result, more prudent decisions are made.

While we explore further aspects of Transactional Analysis, it is important that anyone in a leadership role learns all relevant skills and understands the concept of TA so to become a more self-conscious and informed leader. Having knowledge of the Life Script and autonomy/freewill will help to increase leadership skills.



Learning space

Have a deep look within yourself, can you identify your own life script? Consider the various limitations that halt your decision and actions and the need to gain permission and to develop free will and to be devoid of these influences.

Write a story or a narrative reflecting these concepts in your own life.



Chapter Three

Self-Journey of a Leader

The art of communication is the language of leadership - James Humes

In the previous chapter, we discovered what the term life script meant. We also discovered exactly how learned behavioural patterns from the past can influence our decisions today. Using the life script, we are better able to analyse thought patterns and to make positive decisions within the work place.

The life script is really the beginning of a journey into self-awareness and it is powered by Transactional Analysis which was created by Eric Berne. The Ego state is born from this concept and is a very powerful method in which a person creates the ability to look deep into themselves.

Knowing about Ego States not only help that person to better understand self but also, to develop an understanding of those who they interact with. This creates scope for more awareness and improved meaningful interactions. As a team leader, developing this understanding is critical so to develop meaningful interactions.

What is Ego State?

The concept of “Ego States” provides a new dimension in the way psychoanalysis is done and it draws its inspiration from the proposition that human personalities are multifaceted. The interaction between these facets of humanity - shape thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviours etc. While there were many who have proposed theories and who explored the concepts of different egos, we will focus on Ego States, as part of the Transactional Analysis methodology.

The understanding of Ego States is now not only being used in the field of therapy but is gaining acceptance in the corporate world. Organizations are using these techniques to handle situations where there is a breakdown of communication, for leadership development, for mindfulness practice and to enhance emotional intelligence.

Insights into the concept of Ego States and the various stages are explained as part of Transactional Analysis methodology and help to understand the nature of interaction and other forms of communication. Observing these interactions help to understand the nature of the interactions and potentially, identify the reasons which influence these decisions.

Berne's three ego states


After observing many of his patients, Berne has proposed that every individual has three Ego States as follows: Parent, Child & Adult. It needs to be understood that these terms are not used from an English language perspective but are technical terms used to refer to three different ego states in an individual as per the methodology of Transactional Analysis.

In the words of Eric Berne:

“An Ego state is a consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behaviour”

Understanding these ego states provide interesting options for anyone who is in a management position to not only understand the ego state that's influencing their own interaction but also, to observe and understand the behaviour patterns carried out by those in the work force.

- Parent: The parent ego state refers to the summation of recordings



in the brain relating to the external experiences and the interactions that an individual perceives or endures in the first five years of life. Many of the initial interactions of the child during these formative years involve the parents or other figures of an authoritarian position such as teachers or doctors, and hence, this ego state is referred to as the Parent state. As a young child has few experiences of their own, it means they take lessons from adults about life.

These recordings are laid down in the subconscious part of the brain and form the early foundation blocks which help to map out a life plan. Examples of such parent recordings include:

“Do not touch that “, “Do not go there “, “Don’t talk to a stranger”, “Mind the step while walking “.

We will discuss the importance of these early learned behavioural patterns and the impact they have on the interactions that we have daily.

- Child: The recordings in the brain for a Child Ego state are also primarily from the formative years like in the case of Parent Ego state. However, the critical difference being that, the Parent recordings are the external experiences of a child, the Child recordings are the internal responses and reactions to these experiences.


An example of recordings considered to be part of Child Ego state include:


“The shadows at night-time are frightening”, “the faces my dad makes are amusing”, “the songs my mother sings are soothing”.

In simpler terms, Child recordings are the emotions or feelings that the child reacts to in external experiences.

- Adult: The Adult Ego state introduces the concept of analysing and thinking rationally. Although Berne is of the opinion that Adult Ego state is not always activated by the rational position, but it also considers feelings, thoughts and attitudes etc. This state begins at around 6 months to 1 year in a child when he/she starts analysing facts, appraising them, thinking, reasoning and evaluating.


As an example:





“It is right that hot milk needs to be blown over before drinking”. The child sees a sibling burning their tongue by drinking the hot milk directly without blowing over it. This is an analysis of Parent recording “always blow over hot milk” and the Child recording “tongue burns by drinking hot milk”.

Berne states that Adult Ego State are “principally concerned with transforming stimuli into pieces of information, and processing and filing that information on the basis of previous experience”.



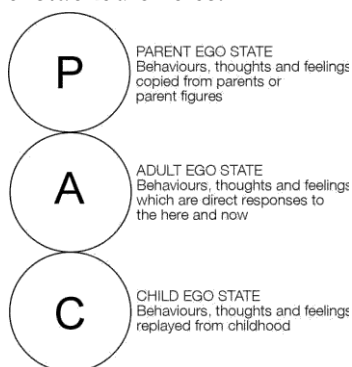
In an adult ego state, the individual is aware of the current situation and can make informed decisions. These decisions are not limiting or influenced by prejudices but are taken with free will.


From the age of one, an individual begins to record the analysis of the experiences encountered and continues to add to them as he/she grows up. This is a continual process of building experiences and learning various outcomes from these experiences and the decisions made involving them.

Having insights into these three states would help someone in a leadership role to develop self-awareness and help them to make more prudent decisions. Understanding Transactional Analysis would not only aid self-development but will help to grow as a team leader as this would help sharpen the ability to observe, interpret and communicate more effectively.

PAC Model

A simple version of PAC model (Parent - Adult- Child) is illustrated as 3-stacked circles.





The three Ego state concepts of Parent, Adult and Child can be summed up as:

- Parent is our ‘Taught’ concept of life
- Adult is our ‘Thought’ concept of life
- Child is our ‘Felt’ concept of life

Parent Ego State:


As we learned earlier, Parent Ego State is the set of thoughts or feelings that we have developed by mimicking our parents or parent-like figures of authority. We continue to build on these ideas and emotions while growing up. The circle of people that influence us expands rapidly as we mature, our fellow classmates and new friends, even external influences from the world of fiction could also play a role in the developing mindset.


We often mimic certain behavioural patterns from our parents long into adulthood and for the most part, they do remain an influence through life. This can be both positive and negative depending on the parenting skills and external circumstances at the time. As a team leader, when practicing Transactional Analysis, it becomes necessary to understand when someone is taking up the Parent ego.

Finger pointing, impatient or angry body gestures – these are just a few of the physical attributes that one can notice in Parent Ego. Verbal stimuli or responses such as critical tone, judgemental words, posturing body language etc indicate that the individual is displaying Parent Ego state.

Adult Ego State:


The Adult Ego state is a more rational or grown-up ego state which makes sense. In this state, the person tries to speak more rationally and assertively without being too aggressive or submissive. As a person of authority, an adult Ego state is the ideal mindset to have to be able to effectively react and communicate in certain situations. One other important aspect of Adult Ego is that the person is comfortable within self. It requires a certain level of confidence which of course, is true with all positions of authority.





The Adult Ego state is the only state which does not have the connection to the past and processes information which is currently available. In an Adult Ego state, the past does not influence the current interaction, which means that dialogue is very much part of the now.

The Placement of the Circle representing Adult Ego State is in the middle of Parent and Child. This signifies the equilibrium and the coordination and adult needs to bring between a Parent Ego State and a Child Ego State.



For Example: The Parent Ego state might shout “This was your mistake, you should not have done this “, while the Child Ego State might respond “This was not my fault and I was right to do this”. Adult Ego State brings equanimity to this internal interaction and responds in a more positive way depending on the current factors.


Child Ego State:

The Child Ego State is very much entrenched in the past and plays back feelings and emotions that were experienced as a child.

For example, the anxiety and apprehensive reaction we may feel when someone in authority questions us could equate to the feelings we had as a child when asked questions by a teacher or headmaster.

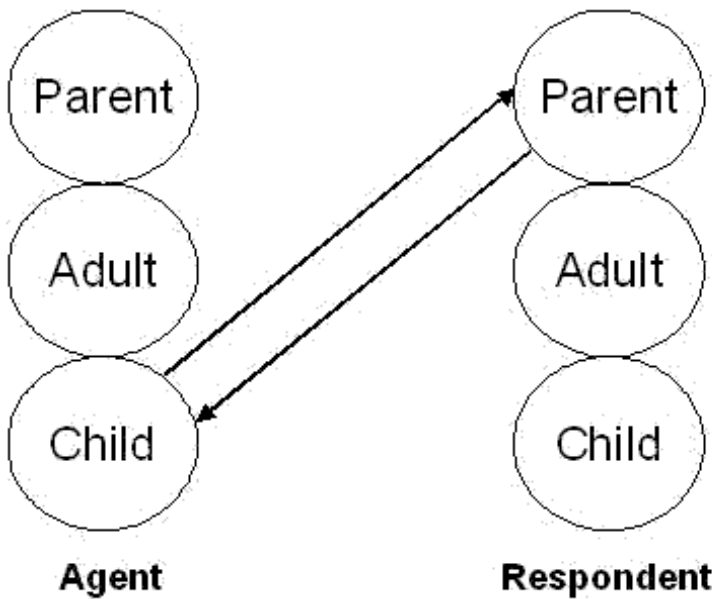
Transactions in a PAC Model

Every time we transact or interact with the outside world, we take one of these three alter egos. It is the same for other individuals when they interact with us. Berne observed that a transaction needs to be complementary to be successful.



For example: If ‘A’ stimulates the interaction as Parent-Child, the response should be that of a Child to Parent. In case the response is not complimentary, it becomes a crossed transaction and leads to unsuccessful interactions. It can lead to confusion and one person not fully understanding what is expected of them.

A self-aware leader would be able to understand the Ego state of the other person interacting with them and be able to alter the ego which would create successful interaction and not confusion.



Case Study:

Alan is a manager with a great many years of experience in the industry. He has earned his reputation as a nurturing leader with many of the staff respecting and looking up to him for advice and direction. Alan has always been interested in interacting with his fellow work colleagues and often offers advice on various situations drawn from his vast experience.

However, there is one member of staff, a man called Jason, where the interactions have not been always productive due to alternate differences of opinion. His behaviour has often been puzzling to Alan because his other interactions have been positive, and his advice has always been valued by the rest of the team.

In most of the interactions, Alan – due to his position and experiences creates a Parent-Child stimulus, with his work force. Most people respond naturally to a Child-Parent stimulus making the interactions smoother. However, in the case of Jason, he did not exhibit a child ego but that of an adult. Alan would find it easier to interact with Jason with an Adult-Adult form of interaction which offers more freedom for Jason to express his views. This flexibility allows both people to understand and

respond to each other in a far more positive way. The key is recognising the traits of other people around you.

Activity:


For this activity, sit down and recollect all interactions over the last 24-hours. Categorize them into one of the three Ego states depending on your reaction to them.

Your reactions - inspired by the actions of a parent or a care-giver would be labelled as Parent Ego. Those where you have thought and behaved as a child would fall under the Child Ego stage and finally, those situations which you responded to due to your understanding of the current situation, would fall under Adult Ego State.

These three Ego States are neither good or bad. It is essential however, to understand how we react/respond and communicate with others. We can then work on improving these interactions.

Now review your notes. Consider whether the reactions for each of the different situations are different and which Ego state was used. All three Ego states are a part of your personality and influence you when reacting to different situations. Together, they are called a PAC Model.





Every individual exhibits these three different Ego States in various situations. Child and Parent Ego States are reflections of our past experiences whereas an Adult Ego State would take into consideration the current scenario and act accordingly.

Understanding the PAC model, helps the leader to be self-aware and to consider the various ego states and how he/she behaves in any given situation. This self-journey towards understanding the various interactions that one has with self and with others help leaders to better communicate with work staff and colleagues. This knowledge helps leaders to interpret the ego state which influences the communication of others and thereby, communicate accordingly.

Learning Space

Being in a position of authority helps create many opportunities so to interact with all kinds of people daily. Are there any situations where you could have used the PAC model to have more meaningful interactions?



Leader's Questioning

The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers
- Ralph Nader

We now understand the concept of life script and the bearing it has on situations in the work place. Understanding the concepts of the life script and the various permutations possible enable you to improve how you deal with employee problems daily.

Being able make decisions on the spot and without overthinking a situation is an important aspect of being a good team leader. We have also seen how the three different Ego States are displayed by individuals. Not only is it important to understand one's self but also, it is equally important to understand the position that the other person is coming from.

One thing is very clear when you understand the concept of Transactional Analysis and that is that a capable leader is self-aware, and decisions

made are based upon the situation at hand and the leader is free from the influences of the past.

Justifying the script beliefs

Throughout our lives we map out a life script. Decisions made are often associated with past results or learned behaviours even if the outcome could be more positive with a different decision or action. We are in a constant drive to justify the life script through our actions and thoughts.

So, let us understand how we justify the life script and the possible ways in which we can find solutions that could break the life script.

We tend to justify our script beliefs through:

1. Racket Feelings
2. Games.

We will dwell deeper into the concept of Racket Feelings in this chapter and discuss more about games in the next one.

Activity


You are reaching a project deadline and have a very tight timeline and delivery commitments. Being a hands-on leader, you are involved in all the stages and have personally overseen and reviewed the development of the whole project.

You send across completed work to the Quality Assurance Team who conduct an audit of the project. They identify an issue and report back to you. The error is something that you should have picked up on during your own review and correcting it, would not have an impact on the final delivery time line.

Consider the following:

What would be your first reaction when the issue is highlighted by the quality team?


List all the emotions experienced at that point - disbelief, upset, anger etc. How are you likely to reciprocate as a result?



Let us now look at various possible scenarios and understand the reasons behind them. Through this activity, we will explore the concepts of “Racketing” or “Racket Feelings”.

Case Study 1

Imagine a scenario where after being informed about the issue in the project, the first reaction you have is disbelief. Being an experienced and effective person, one who has handled multiple projects successfully, you are surprised that such an issue has gone unnoticed. You feel you should have been more vigilant.



You report your sense of disbelief and shock to the team and make it clear that this error may impact the final delivery time. They are not happy with this and insist that the mistake must be corrected before launch.


You feel your experience is being undermined and that your solution would be the better one. You find their stance annoying, but you are limited in your choices as they are resolute in what they want in the matter.

Question:

Can you think of a similar situation using your own experiences?


Case Study 2

In a different scenario, you are informed about an issue in the project. You understand that trying to work on fixing the issue would severely impact the project deadlines. You realize the mistake was made and you have failed to discharge your responsibilities. However, you must now try to get the quality team to provide an approval for the project despite the mistake. You try to guide them through various options, so they understand the situation and provide approval.



Since the quality team has refused to back down from their stance, you now feel helpless and must get on with the task to fix the issue and to oversee the team so to meet the deadlines.

Racketing and Racket Feelings



Aggressive posturing and passive acceptance are the result of influences from childhood. The reactions that we have developed were responses to situations that occurred when young. We try to replicate these as over time, we have built up a narrative in our life story that this behaviour leads to a better outcome.

In the first example:

As a child you are being bullied. Seeking support from your mother falls on deaf ears and her advice is to stand up for yourself. This quickly teaches you that anger is your support mechanism. This learned behaviour pattern stays with you into adult life.

In case 2:

The childhood memory is very different. When you turn to your mother, her advice is to try to talk things over with the bully and to reach a place where you both feel happier.


This leads to a more submissive stance and one that you might fall back on under extreme pressure. This method does carry merit in certain circumstances and can make for good negotiating skills.


These feelings or emotions that we develop as responses to these situations are referred to as *Racket feelings*. Remember that these feelings are not the authentic responses that we give to a situation but are the ones we choose to exhibit based on the experiences we have had in the past. There is a difference between a leader who understands Racket Feelings and one who does not. This is about learned behaviour patterns and understanding how powerful they can be.

The reactions to the situations differ and depend upon the comprehension of Racket Feelings. An aware leader realizes that the reactions being shown are not authentic ones and are Racket Feelings used in times of stress.

It pays to understand the trigger of these emotions. Once you can do this, you become aware of your base feelings and responses.

So instead of *Racketeering* (the act of showing and using Racket Feelings to manipulate the situation), it is better to think about where these emotions come from, how they are triggered and to rethink the situation.






This enables you to move towards a more positive solution.

Both negative and positive thoughts have their place in life. In fact, there should be a perfect balance but, when imbalance occurs, then, issues arise. It is perfectly normal to feel angry at times, but, equally useful to understand where the feelings come from.

Stamps:

When someone experiences Racket Feelings, there are two alternatives:

- 
1. Express it then and there
 2. Store away the feelings.

When an individual chooses the second option, it is referred to as Saving a Stamp.

During the 1960's in the United States, people were given stamps of various colours in accordance with the goods they bought. These trading stamps were collected and cashed in at a future date.

Similarly, people often store away Racket Feelings as they may hope to cash in on them later. They can be cashed in for smaller values or stored up so to cash a large book of collected stamps.

Example:

Cynthia is angry with the way her boss treated her. She stores up the racket feeling of anger.

Emotions are a human response to a situation. But anger must be released. Talking through the problems rather than releasing it all at once is normally the sensible option.

Of course, it is perfectly normal for us to build up emotions, especially if this has come from a learned behaviour pattern.

Activity:

Is there any recent incident where instead of reacting in a measured way, you stored Racket Feelings for Stamp?

Can you recollect a recent incident where you cashed in your stamp?
What was the result of that situation?

Questioning self

How do we avoid racket feelings?

Now that we understand how these emotions can build up and where they come from, it is a small step to be consciously aware of them. This allows us to act in a more positive way and to adjust thinking.

When confronted with a situation, it would help if instead of reacting, we stop, breathe and then, ask ourselves questions such as:

- Are my feelings justified?
- Am I able to react in a different way?
- What situation am I in?
- What could improve my situation?
- How do I find a better outcome?

This helps to gain a balanced approach rather than Racket Feelings.

Thinking about our actions and how we can react in a positive way should be set at conscious level, but this does take work as we are instinctively going to revert to the life script which may provide a negative impact – especially if we are not fully aware.


Let us look at another aspect, “Discounting”, which is also influenced by the life script and which prevents us from being in touch with reality.

Discounting

“Unwarily ignoring information relevant to the solution of a problem.”

It is very easy to ignore the obvious at times and to fall back on learned behaviour.

In the earlier chapters, we have learnt the concept of ‘Life Script.’ Simply, this is a narrative that we build ourselves and most actions are driven by this narrative. Due to the narrative, sometimes the most obvious




solutions are ignored. This tendency to ignore simple solutions is because we are under the influence of pre-set notions referred to as discounting.

A simple workplace scenario would help to understand this aspect better.

Example:

John has been trying to get the attention of the person at the office to bring him the printed copy he needs from the printer. He has tried calling him to gain his attention several times but to no avail.



Instinctively, John starts reverting to his Life Script. He becomes frustrated that he cannot get his colleague's attention. In some ways, this was akin to a childhood experience where despite his best efforts, he was unable to get his mother's attention. While playing to the life script, John overlooks few things which he can do as an adult.

1. Walk up to the attender and ask him to get the printed copy.
2. Fetch the copy himself from the printer.

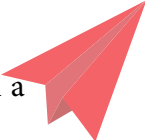
These two are obvious solutions that he can do, but due to the script narrative – his Child Ego State makes him feel helpless.

There are two things which are happening here without the conscious knowledge of John:

1. He is discounting himself and considers himself to be helpless.
2. He is giving too much power to the attendant

These actions are not valid.

There are many instances like these that you may encounter when in a leadership position.



Activity:

Can you recollect a situation where you have discounted yourself and have overlooked some obvious solutions?

In addition to testing this on yourself, you can also do this activity with your team as well. Ask them to identify situations where they allowed

the life script to take the lead and ignored the obvious solutions.

Through this activity, you can realize the types of challenges that you may come across in the workplace, many of which can be resolved easily without reverting to the life script.

Discounting – passive behaviour

With the impact that discounting has in the way we look at problems, it is necessary that it is identified and dealt with. Ideally, you should look out for any signs of discounting within yourself or within the team. The major challenge in identifying this is that most of the discounting happens in thoughts. These are difficult to identify and interpret. However, there are certain behaviours which can be identified.

Most of the actions of discounting equate to Passive Behaviours. Discounting renders a sense of helplessness at not being able to do anything and, effectively ignores the action required to solve a problem.

There are 4 different passive behaviours that one can observe:

1. Doing nothing
2. Over-adaption
3. Agitation
4. Incapacitation or violence.

Let's now try to understand these four passive behaviours in detail.

Doing nothing:

This is a behaviour wherein the individual, in a literal sense, does nothing at all. It could be a group activity or a simple task which is assigned to the person who shows some reluctance in taking part or, contributes very little. This behaviour can easily be identified within groups as well as if observing individuals.

This is taken from the life script and largely feeds on the fear of past results.

‘I cannot do anything, or I tend to screw up.’

This is part of many people's thought processes. While the most obvious course of action is to become involved in the activity and to look for better outcomes, this is not the case usually.



Over-adaption

In this type of behaviour;

The person tends to overreact or overworks in a situation, attempting to do everything as if only they can do so.

Example: Joe walks into the office and sees that his co-workers Susan and Chris are discussing a pile of account ledgers and files and Susan makes a comment:

“Good day Joe – it is a perfect day for going over these accounts “.

Joe, without responding or, giving it much thought, decides to simply get on with the task himself.

In this case, you may have noticed that Susan did not ask Joe to (1) Clear the pile of files (2) Start reconciling the accounts.

Nor did Joe stop and think (1) Do I need to set the pile in order? (2). Do the accounts need to be reconciled now?

This behaviour is driven by the script that other people's necessity is important and needs to be accommodated irrespective of the self. While this behaviour is helpful for those around, it leads to discounting the needs of the self.

Agitation:

How many times have you felt frustrated about something but kept your feelings to yourself instead of reacting to the situation?

Here's an example:

You are in a conference and due to your seated position, you are unable to hear the speaker correctly. You become frustrated. You tap your feet or tap your fingers on the arm of the chair. These are indications of "Agitation" behaviour.

It would be far better to simply change seats and to move to an empty space nearer to the speaker.

Incapacitation or violence

Sometimes, frustration or an inability to act appropriately can lead to a violent response such as slamming doors or throwing something. While this does not sound like passive behaviour, technically it is, since you are unable to find a solution through this outburst.


A non-passive response to a situation would be to identify the problem and try to find a solution rather than to have a violent reaction.

Can you relate to any of these situations or feelings? How did it turn out for you?

Discounting vs. accounting:

Accounting refers to taking account of the situation to find a solution. This is not the same as discounting which is influenced by the life script.

Discounting displays a Child Ego state whereas, Accounting equates to an Adult Ego state.




A leader when faced with a situation, needs to take a stock of the current situation, to consider the challenges on hand, the capabilities to resolve a problem and to come up with a feasible solution.

Activity

List down any instance where you have applied “Accounting”, rather than “Discounting” as a reaction to the problem.

Assertive leadership and preventing self-sabotage




Racket feelings have a huge impact on the leadership function. Based on the narrative they have built and the life lessons and behaviour patterns, a person in authority can be both aggressive and passive.

In the first case study, the trait shown is an example of an aggressive leader who wants to tackle a situation head on or, equally, it could be a leader who has high esteem/ confidence. When a mistake has been made or a pressured situation arises, the instinct is to resort to the racket feeling of anger which showcases an aggressive leader.

In the second case, the passive leader tends to be someone who tries to diffuse the situation and hopes to avoid confrontation. While this sounds better it does not help to resolve the situation.

The challenge in being an aggressive leader or a passive one is that in both cases, a solution may not be found. Relying on the racket feelings will only sabotage the solution which can be found when not under the influence of those feelings. Self-sabotaging a situation is a behavioural pattern that many people must confront. Instead of understanding and finding a real solution to the issue, they find a temporary way out which sabotages the situation.

The traits that individuals develop have many influencing factors. Gender, culture, economic and social status. These all play a vital role.



As an example:

There is a strong social influence on a man needing to be strong or to not cry. Or, women need to be more sensitive to a situation than men. When these beliefs are reinforced constantly since childhood, the traits develop and this in turn, influences how they react to certain situations.

Clearly these learned behaviours could have a negative impact on decision-making.

On other hand, there could be situations where a woman intends to speak out or rebel against something which is enforced on her. However, it may be that her response is connected to Racket Feeling rather than in relation to the situation.

“Women should not be speaking up and need to bear things”.

The same thing is also true of anyone. When early learned behavioural patterns exist, this can often influence the outcome in a negative way.

Those Racket Feelings which are influenced by gender, culture or society may lead to self-sabotage where the individual would be demonstrating pre-set notions instead of having free will.

As a leader, it is important to identify such beliefs and to question them.

How to prevent self-sabotage?


Racketeering does not find the right solutions to a situation. If a leader works under the influence of racket feelings, he/she continues to self-sabotage the possible solution as well as their own situation. The best way to prevent this situation is to give use their authentic feelings. These feelings are intuitive responses to the situation and to the individuals transacting with them. In other words, it is about reacting to the now and not being influenced by past results.

Let us consider the example earlier but explore a different situation.

Case study - 3

As a leader, when you are informed about a difficult situation. One of the first reactions is to feel dejected at any new obstacle as this of course, adds pressure to tight timelines. The fear of not meeting the proposed deadline or, the additional time needed to find a solution will be prevalent in your emotional response. An assertive leader understands the gravity of the situation and knows that yielding to Racket Feelings would only sabotage the solution and not help in easing the situation at all.

Having deadlines to various tasks can put tremendous pressure on an individual. This is especially true if they are responsible for other people



and need to see the task through while helping others work as a team. The important thing would be to act in the now and not base decisions on past results. Sometimes stepping back from the scene also provides some clarity and helps avoid errors in judgment.

Based on your experience, you understand the issue highlighted does not impact the current final delivery of the project and so, this relieves some pressure. Since the quality team is not agreeing to your proposal, you decide to approach your superiors and explain the situation along with a clear plan of action as to how to rectify issues later and to pass on the assurance that the delivery date will not be impacted. By doing so, this opens communications along with common sense and should prevail.

This is an example of Assertive leadership which is all about finding solutions based on the current situation. Assertive leadership prevents self-sabotage or racketeering.

Takeaway:

Being able to ask questions is important if in a management role, it is also important to ask the right questions. In a busy workplace, it can be very difficult to give full attention to every detail and so, some questions are never asked. This can result in that person resorting to learned patterns of behaviour.

Any manager or team manager who is aware of this should take a step back at times and to calculate a potential outcome. This helps to avoid those gut-instinct decisions that might lead to a negative outcome.

It always makes sense to approach any problem with at least two options.

Awareness is key.

Instead of starting a question with “Why?” replace with “What?”

This can often yield better results to most situations.

Why you did not do this? “can be replaced with “what stopped you from doing this? “

“Why am I struggling? “can be replaced by “what can I do to help me stop struggling? Or “what did I do to cause this situation? “

As you can see from these examples, by using the word why, it encourages you to utilise Racket Feelings whereas, what helps you to connect with the reality of the situation and to find solutions which are more genuine.

It is important to examine every possible solution in a bid to avoid resorting to gut feelings which are almost always learned experiences and they may not have any value in the present.



Chapter Five

Strokes Within the Workplace

Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing. Rollo May

Transactional Analysis is a powerful method of therapy. It is often used within leadership activities so to strengthen the connection between management and employees, but it is inciteful and when used correctly and with purpose, it can increase self-awareness and confidence. It is, therefore, the perfect resource for creating the foundations of leadership.

We have already discussed how Transactional Analysis determines the Ego State and whether Parent-like, Child-like or, Adult-like and this forms the underlying principles of how we are in life but, we can use TA in other ways too.

Eric Berne created TA back in the 1950's and its focus was on how to alter the Ego State. The intent was to learn effective and positive ways of how to cope with emotional behaviours that would be likely to occur within the work place. The term stroke is used to describe a unit of social interaction. Although we all interact with each other quite naturally, or, so it would appear on the surface, there are varying levels of social interaction. Not all people are able to interact as well or, without issue. Our behaviours in life and our perceptions affect our connection with others.

We all interact with each other through verbal and physical connections and when we use the term stroke, we consider the process of where two people recognise and acknowledge each other's presence.

Friendly strokes

- A verbal greeting
- A wave of the hand
- Shaking hands
- Smiling


Non-Friendly strokes

- A verbal warning such as shouting
- Rude hand gestures
- Threatening body language

Both friendly and non-friendly strokes are still acknowledgments of the other person's presence, but they may not be as professional or as positive as we would like. As adults, we constantly require these acknowledgments as they affirm our place within the workplace. We like to feel that we belong. Friendly strokes provide us with a sense of reassurance or justification of our presence. They may relay that we are liked or respected, or, the opposite.

Although Eric Berne introduced the concept of Strokes in Transactional Analysis, we must also consider the origins of this which are through the work of Rene Spitz. He was an early pioneer when it came to understanding child behaviour. He observed that children who were deprived of physical strokes over a significant period began to display abnormal behavioural patterns later in life. This demonstrated the need for human contact and acknowledgment.

Berne took inspiration from this work and used it to link adult needs into Transactional Analysis. It became clear that adults also needed communication and in multiple ways. It was not necessary for physical reassurance per se but, verbal or minor physical acknowledgement which we now refer to as strokes had evolved sufficiently to be able to meet the needs of those within an organisation. Berne concluded that this was recognition-hunger or, perhaps, stroke-hunger. Part of the core



element of Transactional Analysis is the need to understand how to change stroke patterns.

He went further with his analysis by stating that we actively seek out these strokes and need them in exactly the same way that a young child often needs physical reassurance. This was an interesting concept as it indicated a natural evolutionary process and highlighted how basic needs remained intact throughout human life. Understanding these interactions and how we can change them in both negative and positive ways is a big part of what Transactional Analysis is about.




Varying strokes

If our needs are partly met through using strokes, then, it stands to reason that they would have varying effects on those with different backgrounds or, viewpoints or, situations.

- Culture
- Wealth
- Belief systems
- Religious views
- Politics

All the above could equate to an individual perceiving a situation differently than someone else and, it would be easy for conflict or, misunderstandings to occur. Equally, within the workplace which can be stressful at times, people would have different triggers or needs. Stress in the workplace can make people act 'out of character' and respond to situations or people in an emotive way, so, strokes must consider behavioural changes too.



Also, our needs may change depending on a stroke being negative or positive. If someone said hello or good morning to you, this naturally translates as being positive. Imagine if that person ignored you and yet, had definitely seen you, eye contact was made and yet, nothing was said. Or, imagine how they would feel if you did not reply to them. This

equates to the stroke being negative. They would want to understand why. What would have satisfied them at first has now deepened and their needs have changed.

Our need for strokes goes deep – even on a sub-conscious level. Just a simple smile from a colleague, or, someone noticing we need help can make a difference. Strokes go two-ways, so that a simple smile from one person leads to a smile by another. It is all about the acknowledge that we are there. No one likes to be overlooked of course.

So, if strokes are about being recognised, any form of negativity given back when a positive message has been sent out changes the basic structure of the person's needs. This is true in both personal and work-related life. A team leader or manager would have to be aware of the negative and positive usage of strokes.

It is not uncommon to see people demanding attention even if it is in a negative way. This is simple because their needs may have not been met over a period of time and any attention is seen as being better than none. This is often developed as a result of learned behavioural patterns from deep childhood.


We also can give ourselves internal praise that counts as a self-styled stroke. This can satisfy or justify any action we have taken.

Additional classification of strokes


- Verbal and non-verbal
- Physical or psychological
- Strokes gained through self – when self-praising
- Strokes gained through others

How do stroke filters work?

These are built-in filters that work at subconscious level. It allows some strokes through while sometimes, completely blocks others. The subconscious part of your brain is there to protect you and so, when it



filters out things, it does so because of those learned behaviour patterns. We can't rely on this as being fully accurate though. Often thought processes can be wrong. For instance, a person who was told when they were young that they would never amount to anything, are more likely to have self-doubts about their abilities later. They may accept a stroke that indicated that they were clever but filter out one that told them they were in the best candidate for a role. This can lead to negative behaviour and phobias, anxiety, and depression.




A lot of this interaction can also be at an internal level as we can change positives to negatives within ourselves. A compliment given which would represent a positive stroke changes when we do not believe that person and think they have other motives for saying it. Of course, this may be due to how the compliment is said and the individual's perception. The reversal which can work both ways, has its base also in learned behavioural patterns and will have an effect on interactions at any level.


The stroking charts.

Each of us has a stroking chart built into us that is often referred to as a stroking profile. This is important as all interactions play a huge role in our lives each day. In therapeutic terms it is an advantage to know the four categories as this then offers the ability to make changes. Without acknowledging these categories, it would be impossible to facilitate positive changes.

Categories

- Giving out
 - Saying no
 - Receiving
 - Asking
- 

There are any number of reasons why a person may be attracting certain behavioural patterns into their lives but by understanding where they mostly spend their time within each category then, they open up the ability to change.



An example would be a person who recognises that they do not give many strokes out in their daily life but who continuously seeks them from others. They could once they were aware start to consciously make small changes and this would be beneficial to them, to their colleagues and indeed, to team leaders and managers.

It is important to remember that strokes are representing social interactions. There are possibly hundreds of these going on each day in a working-type environment. Your brain is constantly categorising each interaction and looking for the appropriate response. Once you are aware of this, it becomes easier to understand the game you are in and to be able to act accordingly.


Creating these different strokes is about gaining attention and this can easily be interpreted as needing to be noticed. While it is true, we all to varying degrees, need to belong, but some will need this more. Without a doubt, all will need to be noticed and to belong. Our primitive ancestors tended to be within small groups and so, would have depended on each other for survival, this basic instinct remain a part of us and creates a connection to interaction of a distant past.


Berne also came up with the idea that behavioural patterns that have an ulterior motive and work against the concept of gaining strokes would be called games. He went on to write a book in the 60's called Games People Play and this proved to be very popular. The principal behind these games was when someone would say one thing and yet, mean or do another. This could be intentional or unintentional.

Case study

Let's assume that one person suggests a solution to a problem and yet, someone else rejects it without thought or through principle solely. The person whose idea was rejected feels unhappy and this may impact self-esteem or self-worth. The person who rejected the idea feels that they are alone with the issue and no one else has the potential to truly help.


This leads to a cycle of self-destruct behavioural pattern if not careful and is very common. Both people have failed to get satisfaction, and this is reinforced by the fact that they reached out. These games are constantly





played and can continue in an endless loop which often does not reveal how the person really feels at a base level.

Most of these types of games are well-rehearsed scripts that are played over and again. In the workplace, it is very important to understand when you are caught in one of these loops because the outcome is rarely what is desired. As a team leader or manager, observing these loops is again, important. Equally, understanding them and being able to bring these behaviours to the fore is vital.




Strokes are interactions that we act out daily. We can swap from being a victim to being in control depending on the situation. We do not give them much thought as they are often based on learned behaviours and these may well have stemmed all the way from childhood experiences. In both work or a personal environment, it is essential to understand what the person is actually doing if joining in or, participating in what Berne entitled The Game.

By understanding the relevance of strokes that form a part of this game-playing, we are more informed and aware as to how to act in a more productive way so to connect with and resolve any issues that may occur for all concerned.

Takeaway

Understanding how strokes can be used effectively within the workplace is important. As there is a continuous need for acknowledgment there will naturally be a greater sense of connectedness through using strokes. Rapport and good communications are vital for within the workplace and creates positive relationships throughout. This can be through verbal communications and offers:



- Recognition
- Praise
- Feedback

Physical strokes also support this process i.e. handshakes or even a pat on the back can go a long way.

Negative strokes should be avoided which includes repetitive criticism.


Learning space

Consider a time when you have felt slighted within the workplace. You have smiled or spoken to someone and this greeting (stroke) was not reciprocated. Consider why it may have been concerning or examine your feelings at the time.



Life scripts


In any organization, it is important for individuals to be able to develop their identity and sense of worth. They need to value themselves alongside others. Any person's sense of identity begins when young. When there are solid foundations around us, where parental care is consistent and caring and authority figures provide strong reasoning and positive lessons of life, then, perception and subsequent experiences are likely to be positive as well. A good life script also equates to strong resilience.



Life positions will vary but relate to the behaviour of one person to another or, to a group of people and is based upon early assumptions.

- I am O. K....you are O.K and this is where someone has positive experiences with others. There were no issues and relationships with those around them were normal. These people are usually good at problem-solving and recognizing the significance of others. It is based upon the Adult Ego.
- I am O. K....you are not O.K. This is where an individual did not receive all necessary care when young. They believe now that they are right, but others are wrong. They work from the Child Ego. So, all blame is attached to others.
- I am not O.K, you are O.K. This life script occurs when someone believes others are far more adequate than themselves. There is a sense of inferiority and a low sense of inner belief. They may complain a lot and are usually dissatisfied with life.
- I am not O.K and you are not O.K. The people who have this life script generally lack interest. They may have been neglected when young and perhaps, were brought up by others. Those with this life script may self-harm.

To be a stronger leader, you must be able to relate with others and to comprehend fully their back story. We all have unique ways of thinking, feeling and functioning, and in the workplace, it is no difference. By being able to relate to employees, you are better able to understand behaviours and situations that unfold around you. It is important to resolve issues as quickly and effectively as possible and Transactional Analysis is an efficient way of doing so.



Think of Transactional Analysis as a jigsaw where the separate pieces must come to the fore so to make the picture clear i.e. life scripts, stroking, Ego and so on.




Chapter Six

Leader's Communication

"A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be." - Rosalynn Carter

It is not uncommon to have some miscommunications with employees. Often, both parties will look back and wish a situation had been handled more professionally. If these types of situations occur repeatedly, then, you may find yourself caught up in a cycle of behaviour that can be explained through Transactional Analysis. This sort of interaction is called a "Game". Eric Berne identified interactions of this nature and they follow certain set of rules.

As a leader, understanding the different games that people play will help when it comes to improving communications. There are a few games which can be beneficial on multiple aspects and some others which can lead to negative outcomes. These all need to be understood.



Before we go into the concept of ‘Games’ and how full comprehension can help those in a leadership role, let’s look at an example which helps with perspective:

Example:

Roy is a team leader who is known to be approachable. He is happy to help when he can and to listen. Steve works in his team and approaches him. The conversation goes on like this:

Roy – How can I help you?

Steve – I am not happy working here and I want to quit the organization.

Roy – Is there any reason for not being happy at work?

Steve – I feel what I do does not match my experience.

Roy – I understand that you have a lot of experience and we could look at assigning you additional responsibilities which could create some interesting options?

Steve – With my current activities, I would not be able to take on additional responsibilities.

Roy – We can look at reducing your current activities if you take up new ones.

Steve – No, stopping my current activities would undermine the stable foundation I have built.

Roy – Yes, but the new activities will provide you with revised options and might rekindle your interest.

Steve – New activities would place me in an unfamiliar zone, and I do not want this at this point in my career.

Roy – What would you want me to help you with specifically?

Steve – Leave it. I do not think there is any way I can be interested.

Steve walks away, leaving Roy wondering why the conversation ended this way.

This is not the first time that Roy and Steve have engaged in this type of dialogue. Steve has engaged in other conversations expecting solutions, but this has failed and so, he has falsely learned to not trust these types of conversations.

Roy has also been in similar situations where he has tried helping others and yet, has failed to build a stronger connection or to offer a solution.

This is an example of a game that people indulge in and is called, “Yes-but”.

Game – definition

In the words of Berne,

“A game is a series of ulterior transactions with a gimmick, leading to usually a well-concealed but well-defined payoff” (From the book, *Principles of Group Treatment*).

However, Berne provides a different definition in a later book “*What do you say after you say hello*”?

In this book, Berne introduces a formula which he terms as G-Formula explaining the process of the Game.

Con + Gimmick = Response → Switch → Crossup → Payoff


$C+G=R \rightarrow S \rightarrow C \rightarrow P$

After introducing and explaining this formula, Berne states that:


“*Whatever fits this formula is a game, and whatever does not fit it is not a game*”.

Most people tend to use the later version of the definition which includes the formula, and this is a preferred definition of the game.

Let us now look in detail about the formula introduced by Berne:



The game starts off by an individual throwing in what Berne calls as “Con”, In the earlier example, Steve, dissatisfied with work becomes the Con that is thrown in. The other person falls for the Con due to an inherent weakness which is called as the “Gimmick”. Roy’s weakness is to want to help others, so when he sees Steve needing assistance and advice, he joins the game with his gimmick.




The interaction which ensues between the two parties is “Response”. In our example, it is the interaction between Roy and Steve. Roy offers advice and Steve responds to it. The “response” can be couple of seconds or can go on for hours until both the parties are interested in the game. Steve pulls the switch which surprises Roy and leaves him confused. This stage of the game is called “Cross up”. Immediately after this, both the parties collect their ‘Payoffs’.

The concept of pulling the “Switch” in a game is considered as a differentiating factor from Racketeering, (defined by Fanita English). We have in the earlier chapter learned about Racket Feelings and Racketing. This process, which involves Racket Feelings and people resort to it while interacting with others, does not have the aspect of “Switch “.

Hence the later definition is generally used to provide a more realistic definition of game.

Let us now look at few features which define a Game so to have a better understanding about this concept.

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1. Games are repetitive in nature. We tend to play the same game repeatedly but with different individuals.
 2. The games are played without having an adult awareness about it. It is only in the end that it becomes clear.
 3. Players are always left with Racket Feelings by the end of the game.
 4. There are ulterior motives behind each player who is playing the game. The process occurring at the social level is different from the one happening at the psychological level.

5. Games have a moment of surprise or unexpected realization.

Activity

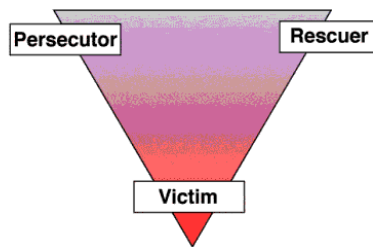
Recollect a recent sad incident. Note down the details of how the interaction happened.

Check whether any of the interaction mirrored aspects of the Game. Then, consider how you felt at the end of the interaction. What was the underlying motivation revealed and what was the reason you were in the conversation?

The Drama Triangle

The Drama triangle is a simple yet effective way of understanding the Game. It was developed by Stephen Karpman. According to Karpman, people assume one of the three roles – Persecutor, Rescuer or Victim.


The Drama Triangle is illustrated in the diagram:



Persecutor: A Persecutor is someone who believes that others are below them in respect of responsibility or, just generally. They will belittle others, demonstrating bullying behaviour. They do not want to listen to others.

Rescuer: A Rescuer also has similar traits to the persecutor in that they often see others as lacking ability or knowledge but, they also see themselves in the role of guiding or helping them.

Victim: A Victim would typically lack confidence and may feel inadequate. They are more likely to accept their situation and have a feeling that they



deserve life to be difficult. This is typical of low self-esteem issues and they would almost certainly seek guidance.

There are important aspects about these three roles:

- All three roles display unauthentic feelings.
- Each of the roles involves “*Discounting*”. The Persecutor discounts the integrity and value of others. There could be cases of extreme persecutors who could go to more serious behaviours such as bullying. A Rescuer discounts other people’s ability to think. In respect of the Victim, he/she discounts self. The victims believe they are unworthy and do not deserve to be treated properly. Or, they feel they cannot cope with a situation because they lack confidence due to low self-esteem.
- Anyone playing the game, usually starts off with playing one of the roles and may switch to another during the game.


Activity

- Consider a situation where you experienced conflict. What role did you play and consider the roles of others? How did this scenario end for you?
- Think of an example where you recognize these perspectives and where someone has utilized the Switch role.
- Think about and analyse the feelings shown by a Rescuer in real life. Is this person authentic? Consider someone who genuinely wants to help and those who want to play the role. Determine the differences.

Why do people play games?

From the experiences in your own life and the examples discussed, one thing becomes clear – it is not fun to play the Game. However, in life, we are constantly playing games. Why is this the case? For what reason do you think that people choose to play the Game?

As a team leader, there would be many instances where you find people using these types of behaviours or, you may find yourself resorting



to similar patterns. Understanding the purpose of playing the Game and whether it yields any benefits or, if it has a harmful effect on the individual involved, will enable you to communicate more effectively. It pays to understand why so many people turn to these types of behaviours and of course, we can with awareness, recognize it within ourselves too.

Psychologists have suggested many reasons for this behaviour. Most of them agree that this behaviour was useful during the early learning years of childhood or, even during youth, where individuals resort to playing games to get their needs fulfilled. However, as an individual grows into an adult, there are many alternatives which are available to achieve the desired results. An understanding of the games that people play and the roles they assume when doing so, will help team leaders to alter their communications more effectively and this should lead to a better outcome. With more self-awareness, the task of understanding the different roles becomes easier.


Let us now understand the various reasons why people play games:


1. To further the life script: Eric Berne says that at the end of each game, one has a Racket Feeling. We have discussed the concept of Racket Feelings and stamps in an earlier chapter. Once any game player has stored enough of stamps, he can utilize the same for any negative pay-off. Everyone plays a game, so to collect these stamps which advances the life script. The degree of the game played would depend on the extent of the stamps that the individual intends to cash-in at the end.

In your personal assessment of games that you have played, what is the feeling that you want to collect as a stamp?


As a leader, can you identify any individual who seems to be playing a game to experience specific feelings?

Developing these observational skills and identifying the games people play to further the life script is useful so to discuss and identify better ways of getting their needs fulfilled. Once again this is better understood through generating awareness. The theme of awareness runs through the whole of this book.





2. Reinforcing Script beliefs: When individuals play games, it is not only to advance the life script narrative that they have built for themselves but also, to reinforce their own beliefs. Every time a game is played, and the expected outcome is gained, the individual reinforces the script beliefs that he had built since childhood. The payoffs at the end of each game build up the narrative that one has in place for self and about those around them. There would be sort of a “tick box” against each of the beliefs that they hold, and others would be ticked at the end of each game. These beliefs are reinforced as “True” at the end.



As in the given example, Steve reinforces his belief that nothing good can happen to self and that no one can provide a credible solution for his problems.


He plays on the game multiple times reinforcing the belief that he has built up about himself as well as others.

3- To confirm the Life position: In earlier chapters, we discussed the concept of life and how each individual repeat and confirms actions which justify the life position. Whether it is the role played as a Persecutor, a Victim or a Rescuer, an individual justifies each of the roles by confirming with learnt behaviour

What is your life position? Are the roles you play in any interactions, influenced by the life position?

Can you think of others in your team who seem to be playing games to affirm a life position that they have?

4- Need for strokes: Every child considers strokes to be a necessity for survival. A lack of strokes makes them feel insecure and they look for ways in which they can collect more strokes and be more secure in their lives. Games are one of the most reliable ways in which a child can get more strokes. This tendency continues even as they grow out of childhood and seek to gain more strokes.



At the start of any game, the nature of the strokes can either be positive or negative. However, while making the switch, the strokes can become extremely negative. Irrespective of the nature of strokes, everyone who

participates in the Game and exchanges the strokes is discounting self, others and the situations. There are many options that adults have rather than resorting to playing games.

We will discuss the alternatives that an adult should seek so to get the things done instead of resorting to games-playing.




Benefits of playing games

Are there any advantages of playing games? Can leaders use games to gain positive results?

Berne identifies six benefits from playing Games. Let us consider each of the advantages highlighted by Berne.


1. Internal Psychological Advantage: By playing games, an individual can lend stability to the internal set beliefs of life script. Every time a game is played, the beliefs are reinforced, and individuals feel more secure within themselves.

Example: Leaders may feel that they are doing what is best for themselves if they reach out to others.



2. External Psychological Advantage: Games help to avoid challenges that could potentially arise from interactions. In a social interaction, there could be a situation where your narrative of the life script is challenged. This could result in anger or other unpleasant reactions. By playing games, an individual looks at avoiding these challenges.

Example: There could be a conflicting opinion. However, to avoid getting into a conflict, the team member can resort to playing a game of accepting leader's view point allowing the person of authority to assume that there was agreement.




3. Internal Social Advantage: Games offer a gateway to socialize with people. The interactions might not be genuine and there could be ulterior motives behind the interaction. However, they do satisfy the need for having social interaction.

Example: One might not agree with the viewpoint of the team but would want to socialize and hence, joins in the discussion.


4. External Social Advantage: Gossiping forms an important part of social interactions. Playing games help to satiate this urge when involved in social groups through gossiping and other forms of communication. These interactions facilitate a sense of belonging. They can converse and racketeer on a topic such as: "The manager we have is not of much use. "This again creates a link to a group of people and highlights a common thread.

Example: Team members share their viewpoints about a specific individual or a thing

5. Biological Advantage: As discussed earlier, as a child we need strokes to survive. Irrespective of the nature of strokes, one tends to look out for easier options to gain as many strokes as possible. Although the strokes gained from playing games are mostly negative in nature, they are an easy way of getting more strokes thereby satiating the hunger for more.



Example: An individual might desire sympathy from other team members by discussing a problem. These discussions might not provide a solution, but he/she gains strokes.



6. Existential Advantage: We have discussed the need to affirm life status. Games help to confirm the life status such as: “I am not OK, you are Ok” or “I am OK, you are not OK.”

Example: A leader reaching out to help a team member would confirm his life status, “I am ok, you are not Ok. “

Activity

Think of a situation of conflict that you were involved in?

What role did you play?

What were the benefits gained, if any, by your playing that role?

What are you remembering right now?

There are certain positive payoffs which can be reaped from the games.

Positive payoffs in Games

As John James stated, games can have real advantages apart from those scripted advantages which are generally associated with them. He states that Games have both positive as well as negative payoffs. As we have already discussed earlier, games are a child’s way of getting things done. We continue to use the same strategies even during adulthood, even though these are now outdated and manipulative.

John James states that after the negative payoff, there is scope for positive payoff. As an example, after a game, one might feel that “I have some time for myself “, or, “At least I was able to speak to someone”.


Activity


What positive payoffs did you gain when you have played the game?

Dealing with Games

By now you will have an understanding about Games. You can consider the following:



- 
1. Why people play games?
 2. The roles individuals play as part of games.
 3. The advantages they perceive to derive out of any games including discounts and strokes.
 4. Possible benefits of the games.




Now that you understand, you can identify when others are playing as well as to identify if you have become involved in the Game too. Knowledge is only good if you know how to use that knowledge for positive development. Let us now look at how to deal with Games - once you identify them.

1. **Naming the game:**

Berne has named the different games that people play. Naming the Game would help to categorize and work out a more effective solution. While TA experts over the years have come up with various games, let us stick to a few of the popular ones that people play.

a. Persecutor to Victim Switch: In this type of game, you would notice that the person initiating it starts as a persecutor and then, switches to victim mode.

As an example. “If you were not there. “- In this game, an individual might always complain about how the inefficiencies of the team members around him is affecting his own personal growth. You might be led into thinking that team changes could be of benefit as a result. However, when you change the structure of the team, he changes tack by using the victim switch stating how changing the process has made him vulnerable.



Another type of game switch is the “Blemish “game. This is a common game that you notice in the workplace. A player of the game constantly criticizes others with the way they look, how they work or various other elements. Most of this happens behind the back of the individual and they tend to gain discount feelings by criticizing others. However, there could be an instance where the backbiting is heard and the person

playing game switches to becoming the victim.

b. Victim to Persecutor Switch: In the first example considered at the start of the chapter, we saw Steve play the game of “Yes, but ‘. Where he seeks advice from Roy, but when Roy runs out of suggestions, he pulls the switch stating that Roy would not be able to provide a solution. Here the player has switched from being a victim to a persecutor.


“Stupid and Poor me “, is another game that you can see many individuals playing in the workplace. The individual playing the game would express that he/she would not be able to do a task or, is not capable of completing the task. They would seek assistance from others so to get the task done. They continue with this game for as long as they gain strokes. However, when confronted and if assistance is offered, they would pull the switch and become angry, perhaps making statements such as: “I knew you would not be able to help me “.

Spotting these scenarios being played out would help to smooth out the situation before the switching happens.

c. Rescuer to Victim Switch Let us go back to the first example in the chapter. Roy tries giving advice to Steve on the various alternatives that are available. Roy plays the role of a Rescuer in the game. However, at the end when Steve switches and states he is not getting what is needed, Roy is surprised and now, he switches to Victim mode. He now thinks, that despite all the good advice and positive intentions, his advice in not being heeded and that he is not helping.

As a leader, there would be multiple scenarios where you need to play the role of a Rescuer. However, by understanding the game correctly, you would be able to escape from being a Victim and if possible, provide a more feasible alternative for the person seeking help/advice which is far more constructive.


d. Rescuer to Persecutor Switch: This is another game which those in leadership roles can easily fall for. Sometimes, after the switch the person playing the role of a Rescuer turns into Persecutor rather than a Victim. The reaction could be, “after all the advice I gave you, this what you did? I will leave you to it and see what happens.”



Many people are reluctant to take advice, and this can be frustrating for anyone in a management role. There is the potential for the person in charge to resort to activities which have a negative impact on the other person. This occurs through frustration often or at having failed to be a Rescuer. Both these trends are negative, and it is important to avoid becoming a Persecutor.

Identifying these areas and being aware of how people can switch into alternate roles will help you to deal with potential problems.

2. Catching it Early



The moment you identify a game, the easier it is to set out a strategy to counter it. First, work on identifying the game. This is beneficial because you are not encouraging behaviour.

When Steve approaches Roy expressing his feelings about the job, Roy could use different tactics. He could ask Steve directly what he wants to happen. This would put the onus on Steve to think about the problem and solution and rather than playing the game of a Victim, this gives both men a chance to have a discussion. It may be that instinctively Steve will resort to old habits where he rejects options and walks away after the payoff. However, since Roy identified the game, he would escape payoff.

3. Lookout for Discounts

Any individual playing the game is looking out for discounts and collecting stamps which he/she can cash in on in the future. As a leader, it helps to develop the skills that allow the ability to identify this approach. Identifying the nature of these discounts and working on an alternative would be a sensible approach to the problem.

Pick up the discount and confront the individual.

4. Not taking Negative Payoffs

There can be instances where you may fail to identify the game at the start. It is only at the switch point you realize the behaviour. Is it too late?

No. At the end, is the payoff. In most instances, playing results in having

negative payoffs. It is perfectly feasible that you could change the pattern and eventual outcome at any given time.

In the example that we studied, Roy realizes at the switch that he has been part of Steve's game. So, instead of feeling like a victim or taking up any negative payoffs, Roy can smile and accept that he tried his best.

5- Providing Intimacy

At the time of the Switch, the person involved will change roles but instead of responding, they engage in conversation that addresses the initial problem. In many ways, this negates the person switching roles.

As leaders, communication is all-important. There is the potential to overcome the Switch and to provide a diversion. This affords the opportunity to be able to communicate your feelings to others and they can then, openly communicate with you in adult mode rather than through game playing.

6- Managing strokes

We have learned that one of main reasons why individuals play games is to get the reward. When we stop playing games, there would be time when the individual feels they are not gaining enough rewards. They may resort back to Child Ego stage and take action, just to create a more beneficial outcome but these actions can often lead to self-sabotaging behavioural patterns.

Hence as a leader, while it is a good practice to engage and encourage others to have adult conversations and adult perspective, it is also important to be able to find and show alternatives for gaining the strokes.

Activity

List the games you have played.

Can you name the different games played?

List games that you have become part of with others.




How could you avoid getting into these games?

Take away:

Communication is an effective tool for any leader. To avoid issues, it is important that ideas and feelings are communicated to the other person effectively. Games only serve to hamper this free flow of communication as they propagate un-authentic feelings and have an ulterior motive.

Identifying these games played by various individuals enables avenues for more direct and genuine communications.



There are many problems in the workplace with miscommunication often at the root. Such problems can be mitigated by creating an environment of awareness and not resorting to games but encouraging free and open communications.

Learning Space

Consider a time where you identified a game but managed to counter it.



Recap




At the start of the book, we discussed the challenges that leaders face every day in the work environment. The situations demand leaders to be alert and to make quick, effective decisions leaving less scope to observe, analyse or even, question a situation.

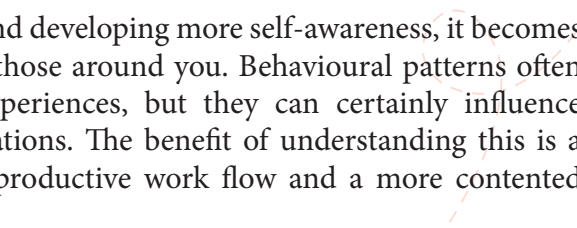
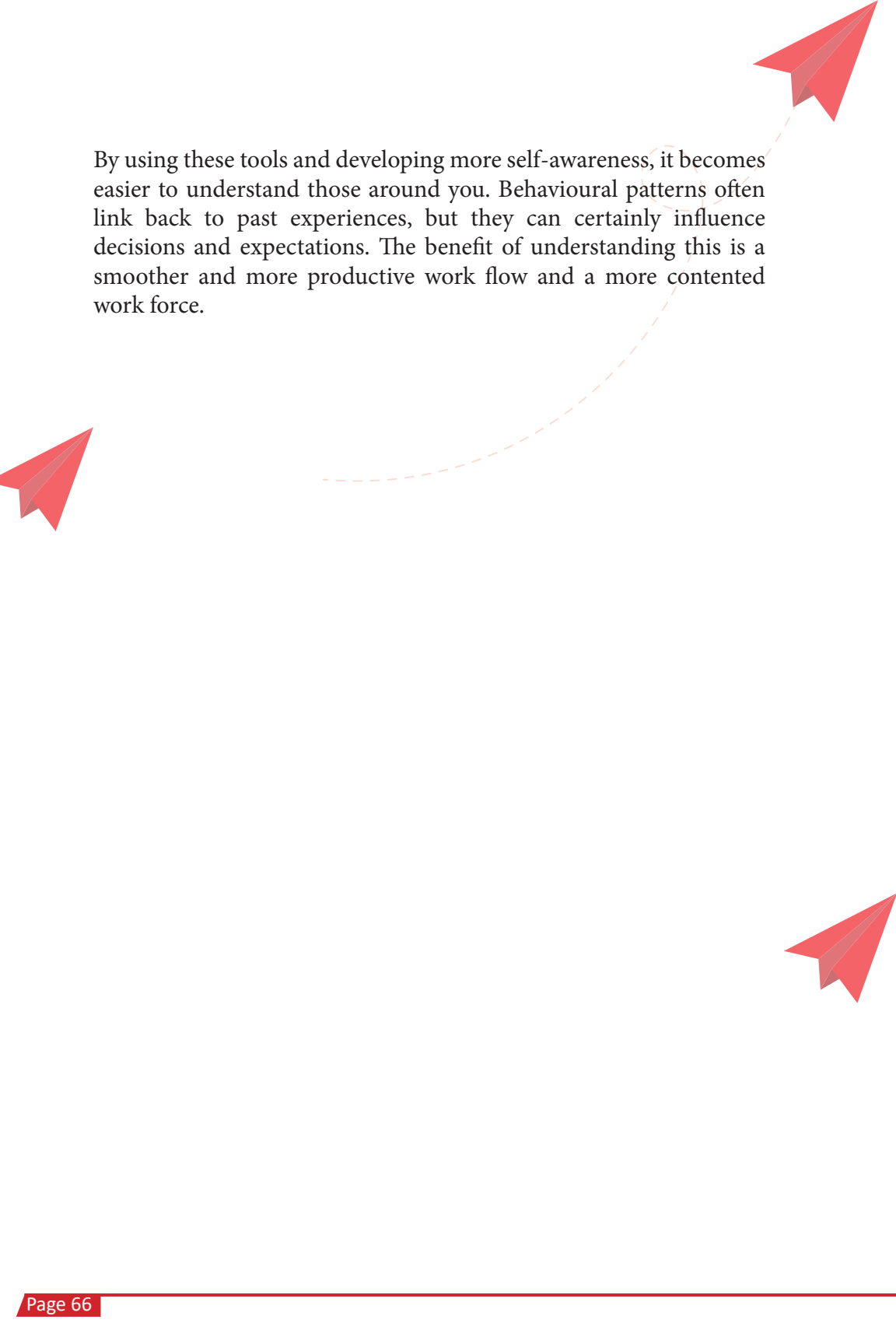
As we have discussed throughout the book, when dealing with difficult situations, it is the narrative of the life script that takes up the control and influences decisions. The life narrative is influenced from a Child Ego state and most of the actions under such influence are things we would have done when very young. Basically, these are learned behavioural patterns.

However, as we become adults, we gain new experiences and skills which afford us options which were not available to us as a child. As an Adult, it becomes easier to understand that there are other options. We can observe and then ask the right questions which would enable us to find the right solutions. Another important aspect to consider are the restrictions of the life script. These restrictions are influenced by the variety of experiences from the past and limit the freedom to think and to then, experience life fully. Analysing these self-restrictions and working out ways to remove them give the individual more autonomy and control over their life.

The purpose of this book is to help leaders of all levels of experience to be able to fully comprehend the influence of a life script through using Transactional Analysis and to understand the various aspects which influence us consciously and unconsciously. This impacts the decisions we make. There is no doubt that these elements can hold power over us.... Ego States, Life Script, Racketing and Games. These are just a few of the concepts that we touched upon and you should now understand how each of them have an influence.

An understanding of these concepts will help leaders to self-assess and understand the limiting options which impact self as well as how these aspects influence the behaviour of the people who the leader interacts with.





By using these tools and developing more self-awareness, it becomes easier to understand those around you. Behavioural patterns often link back to past experiences, but they can certainly influence decisions and expectations. The benefit of understanding this is a smoother and more productive work flow and a more contented work force.

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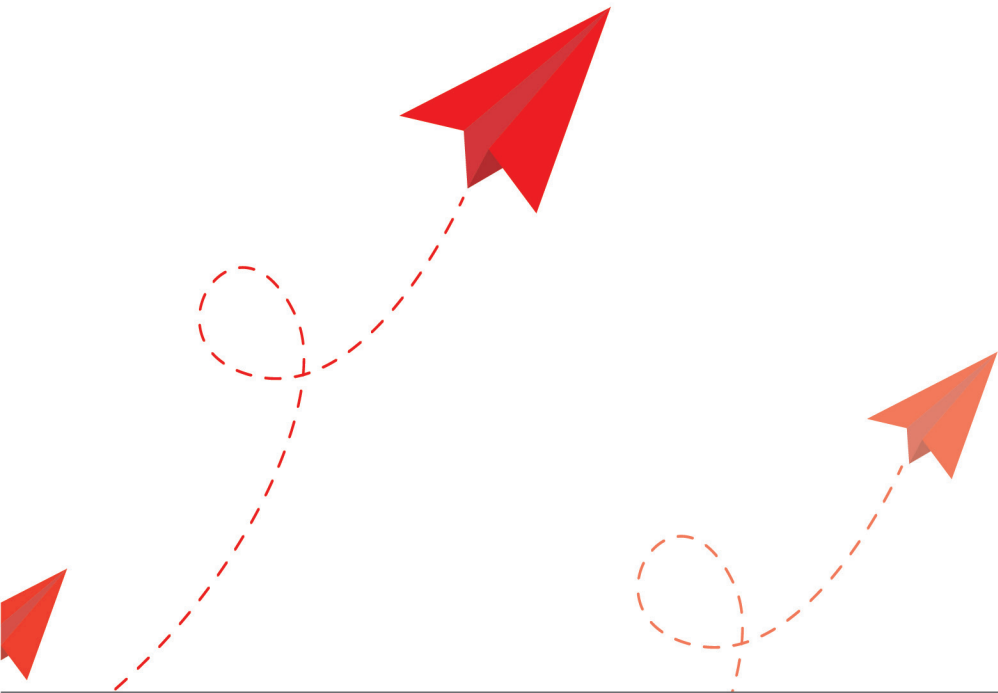
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