

INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO
TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

A TA HANDBOOK
By Paul McCormick and Leonard Campos

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WHAT YOU ARE AS A PERSON

The diagram on the cover of this booklet is a diagram of a human being. Everyone has three parts, or persons, within himself: a Parent, an Adult, and a Child. These parts are known technically as *ego states*. The Parent in you feels and behaves in the same ways that your mother or father, or whoever raised you, did. Your Parent can be critical, or helping, or both. The Adult is the part of you that figures things out by looking at the facts. Your Adult is your "computer," the part that uses facts to make decisions. The Child in you is what you were when you were little. Your Child has the same feelings and ways of behaving you had when you were very young. He can be "natural"; that is, act on his own, not under the influence of your internal Parent; or he can act so as to please your *internal* Parent. Each of your three states has his own ways of feeling and behaving.

Often the three disagree with one another, and you feel part of you wants one thing, and another part of you wants another. Usually the best way to solve a problem like that is to have your Adult decide. One of the purposes of group treatment is to get all three parts working well together.

In a way, the three ego states are like voices in you. The Parent is the one who says things like, "You must," "You should," "You should not," or, "Don't." Slogans like, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," "A woman's place is in the home," "It's just one of those things," "You can't win," etc., are usually from the Parent. Your Child may say things like, "I want what I want when I want it," or, "Try and make me." The Adult in you *tries* to operate on facts, not feelings. He says things like, "Now I see the way this works." Listen to the voices within you and you will "hear" your Parent, Adult, and Child. You may not always hear words, but you will get messages from the feelings within you. All of us have a Little Kid inside us. Grownups can be kids again, and kids can be grown-up.

A young boy, after hitting an old man while trying to rob him, said to his probation officer, "I knew exactly what I was doing; I shouldn't have done it; but I felt like doing it anyhow." Take this sentence apart, and see if you can decide which part of it probably came from his Adult, which part from his Parent, and which part from his Child.

A father spanking his son said, "It's not that I *want* to do this. I

have to do it." Who do you think is doing the talking? The father's Parent, Adult, or Child?

You can readily learn to tell which part in you is usually in control. There are four ways of checking:

1. Look at your *behavior*. It includes your posture, the way you stand, sit, or walk; your voice; the words you use. For example, listen to the following words: *cute, marvelous, awful, childish, filthy*. These are usually Parent words. *Suitable, practical, and correct* are usually Adult words. Words like *gee, wow, won't, and can't* are common Child words.

2. Watch *how you get along with people*. If the Parent in you is bossy, or thinks he knows it all, he will often upset the Child in other people. If the Child in you is fun-loving and happy, the Child in others will enjoy being around you, and have fun with you. When you behave as Adult, there is a good chance that the people around you will be Adult towards you.

3. Check your *early years, your childhood*. You may remember how you spoke when you were little, and how your mother and father talked. Sometimes you will notice that you will be talking exactly the same way you used to when you were a child. Then you will know you are speaking as Child. Sometimes you will hear yourself say things exactly the way your mother or father did. You are then speaking as Parent.

4. Check your own *feelings*. This is the most important test. You can actually *feel* the state or part of you that is active in you at any given moment.

Remember, you are all three persons. All three are important, but the Child is probably the most important. You cannot do away with the Child in yourself. Besides, the Child is the most fun. It is your Adult's job to help meet the Child's needs without getting into trouble. It is your Parent's job to treat the Child in you with respect and love. This booklet may help you look inside yourself: (1) to see which part of you you allow to control your behavior; (2) to "hear" what you are telling yourself inside about yourself.

The following is an example of an internal exchange between a Child and a Parent:

Child: "Someday I'm going to be rich."

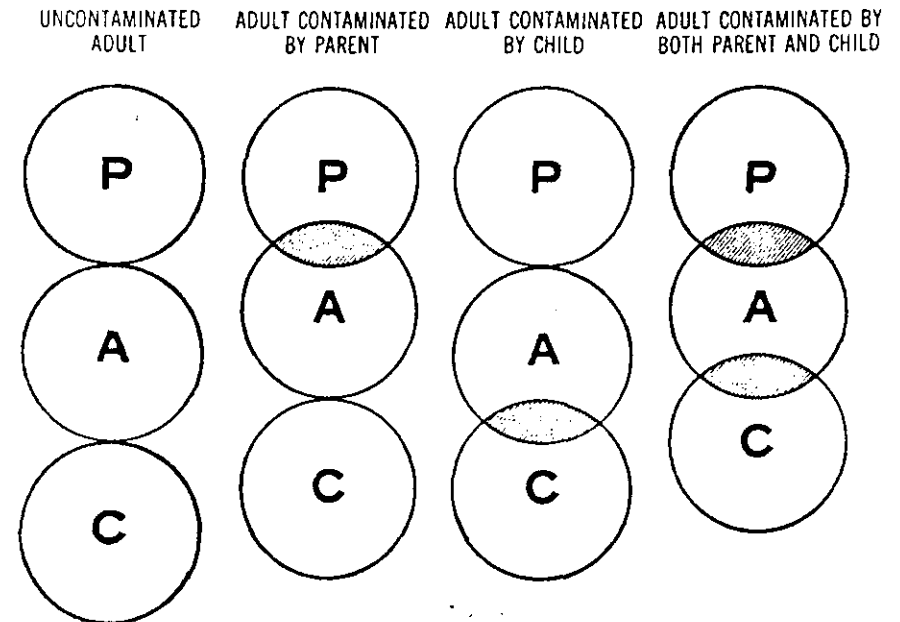
Parent: "I hope you will be—but money isn't everything. The way it burns a hole in your pocket, you may end up on welfare."

With these mixed up messages, the boy may never firmly decide to make money until his Adult unscrambles the facts from the "jazz."

Ask yourself these questions: How do I treat myself? What kind of a Parent am I to myself? Do I have a scolding Parent inside me, or a helpful Parent? If your mother or father, or both, criticized more than helped you, then the Parent inside you will probably be more fault-finding than helpful. Does my Adult run my life so that I can have plenty of Child fun without getting into trouble with myself or with others? Does my Parent really treat my Child with love? If your father and mother did not like to show their love for you, then the Parent in you probably does not treat the Child in you with love.

There is another common problem that can lead to trouble. It is called "contamination," which means "messing." The Parent or Child part of you can interfere with your Adult and mess up whatever you are doing or feeling. For example, in some situations you may think that you are using your Adult, but if you are prejudiced, the Parent in you may be doing the talking. For example, if your mother believed that people of another race are no good, the Parent in you may talk the same way she did. Your Adult may then be contaminated by your Parent. That is, your Adult may take what your mother said as fact, without really checking it

DIAGRAM I



out. Your Adult can also be contaminated by your Child. For example, if you think that people are against you when they are really not, it may be the scared Little Kid in you that is messing up your Adult thinking.

Important words: ego state, Parent, Adult, Child, contamination.

2

YOUR TRANSACTIONS WITH OTHERS

There is a special word that helps to describe how people talk or act with one another. The word is transaction. It means an exchange between two people. It can be an exchange of friendly words, or of angry blows, of presents, or of bullets. Here is an example. When you say "hello" to someone, and he says "hello" back, the exchange of *hellos* is called a *transaction*, a bit of social business. The Parent, Adult, or Child in the other person will be answering the Parent, Adult, or Child in you, whoever in you said "hello." All conversations are series of transactions, one exchange after another. These exchanges can be Adult to Adult, Adult to Child, Adult to Parent, Parent to Parent, Parent to Adult, Parent to Child, Child to Parent, etc.

DIAGRAM II

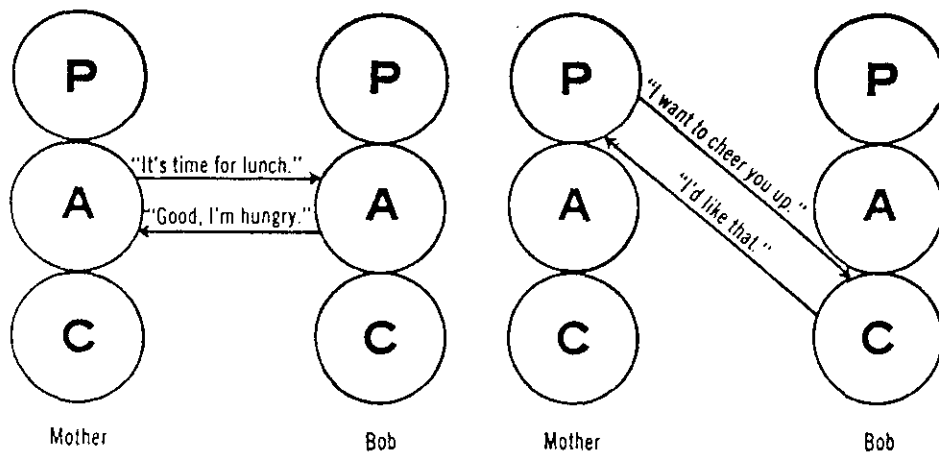
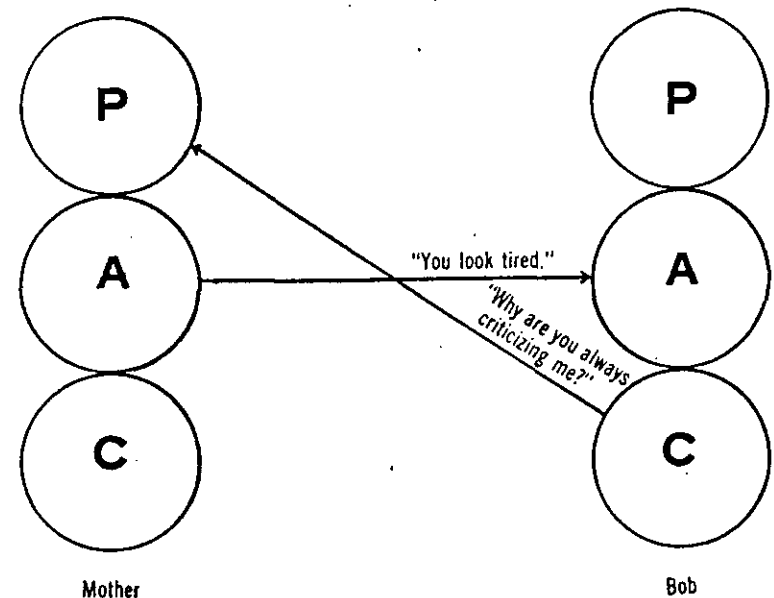


Diagram II shows examples of simple transactions. The lines with arrows tell in what direction the communication is going. Notice that the lines are parallel. That means they do not cross. Suppose a mother says to her boy, "Bob, it's time for lunch" (Adult of the mother). Bob says, "Good, I'm hungry" (Adult of Bob). This is a simple, uncrossed transaction, Adult to Adult. If the Parent in the mother says, "I want to cheer you up," and the Child in Bob says, "I'd like that," the lines in the diagram are still parallel, so the transaction is straightforward and unbroken. There is no rule saying Adult-to-Adult transactions are the best kind. Two or more people talking to one another can switch from one ego state to another easily, with no break in the conversation, and with all the transactions remaining uncrossed.

Sometimes the lines, though, become crossed, as the next diagram shows. Crossed transactions result in a breakdown of communication.

DIAGRAM III

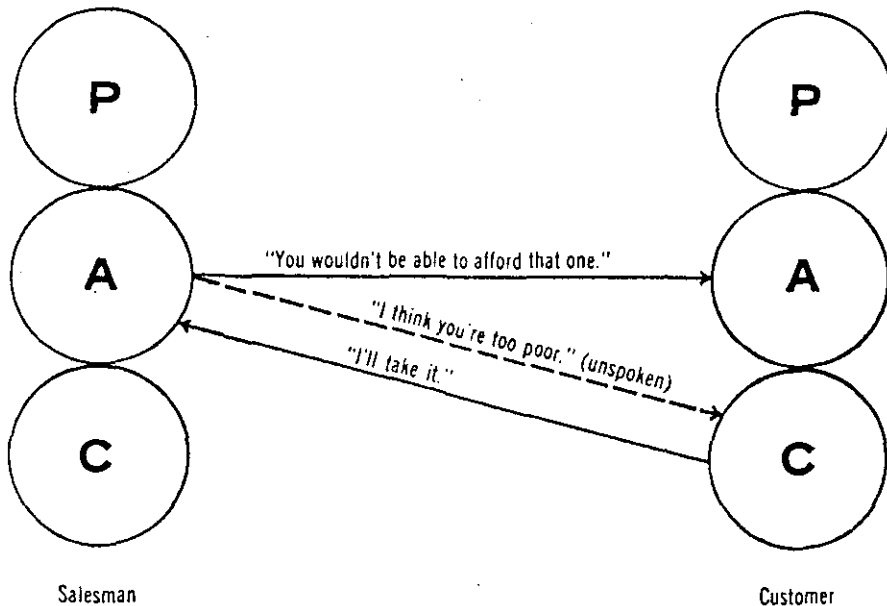


The diagram shows a mother talking Adult to Adult. She says, in an uncritical way, "You look tired," but Bob, instead of answering with

his Adult something like, "No, I'm really not," says angrily, from his Child, "Why are you always criticizing me?" The communication about Bob's looks immediately breaks down and switches to a discussion about whether or not the mother is criticizing Bob. The transaction is crossed.

Another kind of transaction is called an ulterior transaction, one that has a hidden message in it. For example, in Diagram IV, a washing machine salesman is talking to a woman customer who obviously is not rich. The salesman says straightforwardly to the customer, "You wouldn't be able to afford that one." He may be right, and it may be his Adult talking not only to the Adult of the customer, but also sending a secret message to her Child. The customer's Child answers to herself, "I'll show this guy what I can afford," and aloud says, "I'll take it." The Adult of the salesman politely directed himself to the Adult of the customer, but he "hooked her Child" by sending a secret message so that he could trick her into buying the product.

DIAGRAM IV



When there are secret messages in your communication with others, you are dealing in ulterior transactions. Not all ulterior transactions are dishonest, but many of them are. Try to analyze the following transaction:

Brother: "Give me a hand with this, will you?"

Sister: "You're not my boss."

What do you think might have happened here? What do the lines in this transaction probably look like? Are your communications usually uncrossed, or are they crossed? If they are crossed, your communications will break down.

Important words: transaction, uncrossed communication, crossed communication, ulterior transaction.

3

YOU NEED STROKES

Everyone needs strokes. A stroke is a pat on the back, or a word of recognition. A kick on the shins is also a stroke. Everyone needs some kind of stroking, pleasant or unpleasant. A child would rather be spanked than completely ignored. A stroke that helps you to feel that you are OK is called a positive stroke. One that tells you that you are not-OK is a negative stroke. Loving is positive stroking. Hating is negative stroking.

If a stroke is given to you for what you *do* rather than for what you *are*, it is a conditional stroke. For example, when a parent says to you, "I like you because you do as you're told," he is giving you a stroke on the condition that you give him something in return. He is not stroking you for what you are. When a stroke is given to you for what you *are* rather than for what you *do*, as when your mother says to you, "I love you because you are you," it is an unconditional stroke. It has no strings attached.

When you are given strokes only for doing "good things" and not for being who you are, you may soon resent doing "good things," and react in a negative way, perhaps with anger. Everyone seems to need much unconditional stroking. You probably prefer to be told that you are OK for what you are, rather than only for what you do.

Strokes are necessary for physical and mental health. Without strokes, infants may die, because their urge to live decreases. As you grow up, you become more willing to take word stroking instead of the physical stroking you had when you were a little baby. You still need and want physical stroking, but you often have to settle for word (symbolic) stroking. Stroking for *being* is more important than stroking for *doing*. This is an important lesson. You need not feel ashamed to ask for positive stroking. A good question to ask yourself is, "What kind of strokes do I make sure I get, and how do I make sure I get them?" You can decide to become better at giving positive strokes, too.

It is also important to know that the Child in you has his own way of looking at other people and at himself. How you feel about yourself, and about other people, is called a basic position. There are four "positions."

1. I'M OK; YOU'RE OK. This is the only healthy position.
2. I'M OK; YOU'RE NOT-OK. This is a distrustful position. It is a position taken by a Child who is suspicious of people.
3. I'M NOT-OK; YOU'RE OK. This is the position of the Child who usually feels low or depressed.
4. I'M NOT-OK; YOU'RE NOT-OK. This is the position of a Child who feels that life just isn't any good, and he may even go crazy to escape it.

People in whom the Child feels not-OK become more used to negative strokes than to positive strokes. They refuse to accept positive strokes because they feel they don't deserve them. They go out of their way to collect negative strokes. They may really want compliments, but they feel uncomfortable when they get them. They are not used to them; and when they get one, they think the person who gave it must not be very bright, or must want something.

Important words: stroke, positive stroke, negative stroke, unconditional stroke, conditional stroke, basic position.

YOUR STAMP COLLECTIONS AND RACKETS

This lesson is about "trading stamps" and "rackets." A trading stamp in TA language is something that happens to you, or something that someone does to you, or you do to yourself, that you can use as an excuse to feel bad or good. Brown stamps are for bad feelings; gold stamps for good feelings. You know about the stamps you can collect when you buy something in a store. You can save them up to cash in for a prize or a gift. In about the same way, you can use almost anything that happens to you as a trading stamp. For example, you can collect a lot of insults or hurts from a person until you feel that you have enough to trade in for one big punch on his jaw. You can choose to feel that after all you've had to take from him, you have earned the "right" to hit him. That is, you have saved up enough brown stamps for one guilt-free act of revenge.

You may want to cash in a "full page" or "full book" of brown stamps for one free temper tantrum, a runaway, or a day off "sick." The *free* means "free of guilt," at least for the moment. It means that you feel you have the "right" to do what you want to do.

Not only can you collect bad feelings; you can also save up your good feelings, such as those you have when you have done something well. You can use these stamps as a good reason to relax for awhile, or to have yourself a good time. If you do this, you are a "gold-stamp" collector. People in whom the Child feels that he is OK, and other people are OK, too, do not have to collect either brown or gold stamps. They do not need excuses for what they do or feel.

Here is an example of a little girl who is shopping for a brown stamp, and a mother who could have avoided the uproar simply by taking the daughter, after the opening remark, into her arms.

"Mommy, I don't think you really love me."

"Why of course I love you. Don't be silly."

"How can you love me when you get so mad at me?"

"I get mad at you *because* I love you. I want you to learn to do things right."

"You mean you *only* love me when I *do* stuff for you?"

"You know that's not so."

"It is too, and I hate you."

"Now listen here, young lady, I've heard about enough."
"I knew it. You *don't* love me. *Nobody* loves me."
"I've *had* it. The way you're behaving, who could love you?"

This little girl's Child went out of her way to collect "unloved" feelings.

Stamp collectors, especially brown-stamp collectors, have a hard time throwing their stamps away. The Child wants to cash them in, not forget them. Questions like the following may help you see if you are a stamp collector:

Do you sometimes sulk when you don't get your own way?
Do you put things off, and then feel guilty for not doing them?
Do you do things you consider wrong, and then feel bad?
Do you sometimes play "stupid" when you really know what's going on?
Do you sometimes stop yourself from relaxing because you feel you don't deserve a rest?

The Child in you can collect "depressive" (low feeling) stamps for a free "drop out," "quit," or suicide try. "Anger" stamps can be used for a free assault. You can collect "crazy" stamps for a free trip to a mental hospital. Jails are full of people in whom the Child collects brown stamps.

Even if all your life you have been collecting brown stamps, or bad feelings, you can change. You can replace your bad feelings with good feelings. You do not have to accept brown stamps no matter how often they are handed to you.

Brown-stamp collecting can become a "racket," which is the using of bad feelings as excuses for doing things you might not otherwise do. Here are some bad feelings that you might use to cash in for a free tantrum or sulk: fear, confusion, anger, frustration, anxiety, depression, and stupidity. Your bad feelings usually come from the Child in you.

Here is an example: take smoking. If you smoke and feel guilty, and the guilt leads you as Adult to take action (quitting), your guilt is not a racket. But if you continue to smoke and you continue to feel guilty about it, then your guilt is probably a bad-feeling "racket," in which you can collect brown stamps to cash in later for a free "low feeling" or coughing spell. That may be the way the Child in you attracts attention for strokes. If so, the Adult in you will probably not realize what is happening. Your Child can be very clever at doing things your Adult is not aware of. One of the purposes of group treatment is to get the Adult in you to see exactly what the Child in you is trying to do.

Rackets are taught by parents, or by whoever raised you. Most of your bad feelings are probably not "for real." If the Child has not taken basic position No. 1 (that is, "I'm OK, and others are OK, too"), a person will be in some kind of bad-feeling racket. A good way to check on what your feeling racket might be is to think back to what happened in your home when things got uptight. Did your parents respond with anger, confusion, depression, guilt, fear, nervousness, anxiety, or Adult action? If they did not usually respond with Adult action, they probably taught you a feeling racket.

Important words: trading stamps, brown stamps, gold stamps, rackets.

5

THE WAYS YOU FILL YOUR TIME

You need to be with people, of course, in order to get stroking. When you are with people, you have only six ways of filling time. The way you fill time with others will depend on which of the four basic positions the Little Kid in you has taken, and on what kind of stroking your Child wants from others. Your greatest need is to be close to someone in a loving relationship. That is one way of filling time with others. It is called *intimacy*. But there are five other ways, and you use them because you cannot be intimate with everyone. It may be that the Child in you, because he is not sure that he is OK (lovable), is afraid to get warmly close to anyone. If so, you will use the five other ways to fill time with people, even though your Child still wants very much to be loved. Since he may not be sure he is lovable, he may settle for ways of getting along that seem to him to be safer, less frightening, than love.

The first way you can fill time with people is called "withdrawal." You withdraw when you are present physically, but absent mentally from the people around you. It is as though you are hiding out, refusing to get

mixed up with others, even to the point of making believe you are somewhere else. Daydreaming, for example, is one way to withdraw.

The second way to fill time with people is by "rituals." A ritual is a fixed way of behaving towards other people, a transaction or set of transactions that almost everyone uses. For example, look at the way you greet your friends. You may say something like, "Hi, how ya doing?" Your friend may say, "Hi, I'm fine. How are you?" You may say, "Fine, thanks." This is a fixed way of behaving, an example of one of our many greeting rituals. Each remark is a "word stroke." If people do not return these strokes, we consider them unfriendly, or even rude. If you have good manners, you are probably a good stroker. You can be depended on to go through the rituals.

A third way to fill time with others is by "activities." This is usually called "work" and is not usually for the sake of social visiting, but rather to get something done. Since work is often done with others, it is also a way of getting strokes.

A fourth way you can fill time with people is "pastiming." "Bull sessions" and gossip are examples of pastimes. Some have names, such as General Motors. It is a pastime in which people talk about and compare cars. Who Won is talk about sports. You can name many other pastimes. They are usually pleasant ways of exchanging strokes, filling time, and getting to know people. Making Out is a pastime of teenagers. It may lead to a loving closeness (*intimacy*), but it may be done without any real love at all.

Important words: withdrawal, ritual, activity, pastime.

6

THE GAMES YOU PLAY

A fifth way in which you can fill time with people is by playing "games". A game is something like a put-on, except in a game, the Adult part of you does not know exactly what the Child or Parent is up to; that is, the Child or Parent has a secret reason for playing a game. When you are not coming on straight—that is, when your message to another person is "ulterior" and secret, for some hidden purpose, such as to have

a feeling of defeating another person, you are playing a "game." For example, you may be helping a person with a problem, thinking with your Adult that you are *really* helping him. At the same time your Child may be making fun of him. The job in group treatment is to get your Adult to see exactly what your Child and Parent are up to.

Here is an example of a game called Now I've Got You. You and a group of friends are watching a Charlie Brown cartoon on T.V. You notice that the only person not enjoying the show is Fred, whom you never did like very much. When the show is over, and everyone except Fred is saying how good it was, you ask him, "Did you like it?" You already know that he did not.

When he says, "No, and I don't know why you guys go for that make-believe stuff," you say something like, "It's funny that you're the only one who didn't like it. What's your problem?"

Fred will probably resent your remark, and you will probably not like his resentment. You may then say, "What are you getting uptight about? You're the oddball, not me." Crueler forms of this game are called Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch (NIGYSOB).

Fred, who may be a Kick Me player, probably sensed that you were not really interested in a straight answer. He could have refused to play by ignoring your question, or by saying something like, "No, but I don't mind your liking it," and letting it go at that.

A game has a "pay-off," which is the feeling the player gets at the game's end. The game of NIGYSOB ends with a feeling of winning over, or of beating down, the other player. The game Kick Me ends with the feeling of being wronged. A Child may want to feel wronged in order to have a reason for revenge, for "getting even." Another Child may want to feel wronged in order to have a good reason for running away, or for getting a divorce. People who want to feel wronged collect brown stamps.

The Adult in you has many choices. An important choice for you is to refuse to play the games of your Child or Parent. After recognizing a game, the best way to stop it is to refuse the pay-off; that is, refuse to cash in on the feeling that usually results from the game. You will, little by little, stop trying to play the game, once your Adult decides not to take the pay-off.

Why does anyone play games? There are at least six reasons for playing games.

1. Games help your Child to "keep his cool," but in a dishonest way. For example, games may help you feel that your problems are caused by others' faults rather than your own.

2. Games help you to keep from facing up to what you're afraid of, such as responsibility, competition, others' opinions of you, etc.
3. Games help you pass your time with your family and close friends.
4. Games help you pass your time with people with whom you are not very close.
5. Games help you get strokes, although they may be negative.
6. Games help to "prove" that your Child's basic position (such as, "I am not as OK as others") is "right."

Why would any Child want to feel not-OK? No Child would, unless he was convinced, from his early years, that he was not as OK as others. If he was convinced of that, he will then decide to "prove" it in order to believe there is no use in trying to change for the better. Remember—your Child can feel not-OK without your Adult's realizing it.

Here is a list of some common games:

Ain't It Awful	Kick Me
Schlemiel	Stupid
See What You Made Me Do	Do Me Something
Cops and Robbers	Wooden Leg
Now He Tells Me	Alcoholic
If It Weren't For You	Uproar
Rapo	Harried
Creditor-Debtor	Let's You and Him Fight
Little Old Me	Psychiatry
Courtroom	Corner
Take Me As I Am	Blemish
Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch	Addict

Some games are harmless, but some are dangerous, and a few are deadly. Ain't It Awful is often harmless. Cops and Robbers (with drugs or guns) is dangerous, and War is deadly.

Instead of playing games, there is a sixth way that you can spend your time with people. It is called "intimacy," which is a warm, loving relationship with another person, without any games. It is the best way to get the strokes you need. Married love may be its best expression. Intimacy, however, does not always include sex. Father-son, brother-brother, friend-friend relationships can be very intimate.

Important words: **games, pay-offs of games, intimacy.**

YOUR LIFE SCRIPT AND DECISIONS

Your life depends on what is known as your "script." Everyone has a life script. It is your life plan, which your Child decided upon in your early years, and which you are now probably not aware of. You can find out what your script is by examining your Child feelings. Your script is either a healthy one, or an unhealthy one, depending on your basic position. If your Child early in life was convinced that he is not quite OK, that he is unlovable, you may want to change your script. For example, your Child may have decided, "It never pays to get close to people," because you tried that as a little boy and got burned. Your script then would be a plan not to allow yourself to get close to people in a warm, open way. You will settle instead for relationships based mainly on game playing. You will get strokes, but they will often be negative, or only conditional ones. You will still want to be loved, but your Child will be afraid to risk it.

You really have more choices about your life than your Child thinks. These choices are called options. In general, you have five main options:

1. You can stay the same (continue your old games).
2. You can do away with yourself (commit suicide, gradually or abruptly).
3. You can do away with others (ignore, divorce, kill).
4. You can get put away (go to jail or hospital).
5. You can get better, or well; that is, you can change your script.

You cannot change your script until you decide to start seeing the Child in you as great, and as lovable, knowing that you deserve all the positive strokes you can get.

Everything you have learned so far up to this lesson can be used to find out what your life plan is. Your transactions, your basic position, your stamps, your racket, the ways you fill your time, and the games you play are all part of your life plan. Looking at these will help you to explain why you chose to live the way you have, and what you may want to change.

Child *decisions*, such as, "I will never let anyone get close to me," affect everything you do now, perhaps without your even knowing it. But you *can* know it; you *can* decide not to head towards an unhappy ending; and you *can* change your whole script, line by line. That means that you can stop playing at life, and start living it. A group leader trained in TA

can work with you to understand and know your life script. He can ask you questions from what is called a "script checklist," questions for you and him to use in digging out your life script. For example, he might ask: What was your favorite childhood game? When do you imagine you might die? What might your tombstone say? What will you be doing five years from now if everything goes well? Or, if everything goes badly? What do you like best about yourself? What do you like least about yourself? What would be "heaven on earth" for you? You may go over this script checklist in a group or outside the group.

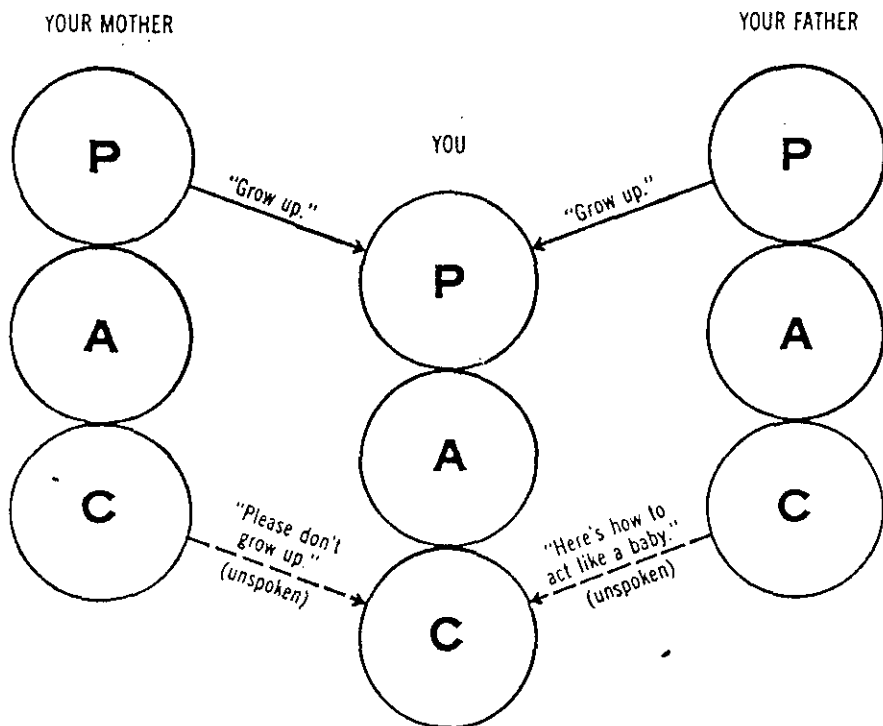
Your script depends mainly on your Child decision about how you were going to live your life. That decision was based mostly on the messages you got from your parents, especially from the Child in them. While the Parent and Adult of your mother and father were probably telling you good things, the Child in them could have been sending out very foolish messages. For example, both your parents could have been advising you

to grow up and act your age, while the little Child in your mother was wishing you would stay a baby. In the meantime, the Child in your father could have been showing you how to act like a baby (have temper tantrums, drink too much, be irresponsible, etc.). Or your mother and father may have told you to get as much education as possible, while the Child in each of them could have been bragging about how well they did without finishing school. The Child in them could be jealous of you doing better than they did, without their Adults knowing they really feel that way.

The three sets of circles in Diagram V tell you how a script is formed. They show you, your mother, and your father. They also show how messages from your parents can be unclear, or even crazy. A foolish message from the Child in your mother and father is called a "witch message" because it is the kind of message that advises you to develop a harmful life script. It is not always put in words. For example, your mother may have helped you not "grow up" by never letting you finish a job, even though she might have thought she was being good to you. All of us have received some witch messages from our parents because no parents are perfect. A TA treatment group is a good place to decide on a new life script, if that is what you want.

Important words: life script, options, decision, script checklist, Parent messages, witch message.

DIAGRAM V



WHAT TREATMENT IN A TA GROUP CAN MEAN TO YOU

If you join a TA group you will be told the ground rules. Your group leader will give you permission to think, feel, and say anything you choose. You will not be allowed to hit anybody or destroy any property, but you will be free to feel like doing those things, and to say so. You will be free to enter what is called a "contract," a clearly stated agreement you and your group leader will make to work on your goals. This contract will tell him what you see as important for you.