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*Theme: “TA Training in India –
Impact on Personal and Professional Self”*

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EDITORIAL SECTION

Editors' Note

We bring to you the 7th issue of the SAJTA. Our endeavor as the editorial team has been to publish articles that not only stimulate and add value to our Transactional Analysis community, but also to our non-TA readers. This has led to us exploring different themes for the SAJTA. The theme for this issue is –‘TA training in India – Impact on Professional and Personal Self’.

We, as a team, continue to retrospect in improving the journal in all aspects. In this regard, we have decided that every year we will have two issues:

- **January issue:** which will be based on a theme
- **July issue:** which will be an open issue, without any theme.

This widens the creativity of the authors to present their ideas in the open issue and not feel constrained by the theme. We hope that this will motivate and encourage many more of you to write. We aspire that this format will give Trainers and Trainees access to myriad articles, which will encourage open dialogue and enhance thinking in learning groups.

In this issue, we have published 4 articles, written by authors from 3 different fields in Transactional Analysis - Psychotherapy, Education and Organisation. The first 2 emphasize the application of Transactional Analysis in the Professional realm, while the latter 2 are personal accounts of change and growth through TA training. Interestingly, all 4 authors are women - a heartening break from the glass ceiling culture.

TA training is very unique and dynamic, in the way it is structured and run. While the exam process is kept consistent with the regulatory bodies that hold them – SAATA (our

regional body - South Asian Association of Transactional Analysts) and IBOC (the International Board of Certification), the training in each group is totally influenced and impacted by the trainer's philosophy and style of training. To quote Rosemary Napper 'No two Transactional Analysis training groups are the same' (TAJ 2009). And that is what makes it unique and dynamic!!

The first article by Chitra Ravi, is a narrative of her journey from being in Transactional Analysis training to becoming a Trainer and a TSTA (Teaching and Supervisory Transactional Analyst). She goes deep into elucidating her own process of learning and unlearning and how her training style is a radical shift compared to the dogmatic style of the Indian Educational System. Chitra also highlights in her writing, how through potent questioning, her personal philosophy and methodology of training emerged. Her approach provides a safe place for learners, without being judged, to learn at their own pace.

The next article has been co-authored by Karen Pratt and Chitra Ravi, on the impact and value of contracting. Although both authors work in different Transactional Analysis fields, they elaborate on the common process of contracting, which forms the cornerstone of their respective areas of work. While Karen focuses on the importance of contracting in a multi-culture, virtual group setting, Chitra focuses on ownership and responsibility as being the crux of contracts. Karen shares her own process of what informs her thinking, to co-create contracts with Educational groups. Chitra expands on the value of psychological and process contracting in Psychotherapy groups. Interestingly, both their ideas converge, as they write about the significance of working with transference and counter-transference in their groups and the value of contracting in creating authentic relationships and learning.

The third article is by Vidya Ramaswamy, who explains her movements and processes of understanding and updating fixed, unhelpful patterns set in her childhood. She describes her youthful quest for perfection and how her Transactional Analysis training served to make her aware. Realizing the non-linearity of life through the Spiral of Growth and the myriad options and chances she could give herself, the author shares how she allows for choices in life. Vidya goes on to detail aspects of epiphanies she has had, which have transformed her acceptance of self and have allowed her to be more permissive rather than restrictive. With several personal examples, this is a candid and personal account.

Merlin Mythili is our next author, who has explored how she has uncovered her tactics of structuring her time, to best suit her ability to interact socially. In this personal narrative, she unravels the Transactional Analysis concept of basic hungers, as she explains how they play out for her and why. Merlin then associates these hungers with how she spends her time and mingles or keeps away from others. Her exploration leads her to understand the psychological games she plays, wittingly or unwittingly and their outcomes. Armed with this knowledge, the author shares her way of accepting herself, using her time with heightened awareness and striving for autonomy, much like a natural child.

Nisha Rao, Managing Editor, SAJTA

Ragini Rao, Co-Editor, SAJTA, , VP Research and publications SAATA

Announcement

In January 2015, over the lunch table at the Multi Level Learning event, the role of Managing editor for the SAATA Journal was coined, without any formal job description. As we progressed, the role has evolved and today, this role has become extremely pivotal for running the Journal. The role is expected to hold together all aspects of the journal – right from scouting for articles, encouraging authors, aligning articles with themes, editing, publishing, supporting reviewers and editors, holding difficult conversations fairly often and of course remembering to breathe while doing all this!

I have had the privilege to be in this role since its inception and this has been a fruitful and meaningful experience for me. I take this opportunity to let our readers know that I am stepping down as Managing Editor, while I continue to be on the team as a Co-editor. This has been an important project in my life and I feel extremely safe to hand this over to Nisha Rao, who takes over as the new Managing Editor. Nisha has a natural appetite for this role and her love for this work has triggered envy in me! This has been an organic hand over through this current issue and is in effect already. I congratulate Nisha on her new role and trust that she will take SAJTA to newer heights.

I would like to introduce Rosemary Kurian, Trainee (Education), as a new addition to the editorial board. Rose, is a Trainer and Educator and runs her organisation Lyminality, offering programs to facilitate change and growth. We welcome her warm energy, creativity and positive outlook to the team.

- Deepak Dhananjaya, Co-editor (previously, Managing Editor)

Guidelines from the Editorial Board

From our experience in editing the SAATA journal thus far, we have put together some guidelines for contributors to future editions of the journal:

- Write on topics – experiences, opinions, research - which can be explained primarily using transactional analysis concepts.
- Keep sentences short and precise. Where there are multiple ideas, construct them as two or more sentences.
- Use simple and easy-to-understand words. Remember that your audience may not be transactional analysis literate or even use English as their first language.
- Avoid the use of casual phrases, expressions and slangs, unless quoting verbatim.
- Follow APA style of formatting, references, citations and bibliography (<http://www.apastyle.org/>).
- Review the paper for redundancy, where the same idea is expressed multiple times.
- Double-check transactional analysis terminologies and their definitions, e.g. names of games, components of script, drivers, injunctions etc.
- Quote the original authors of the concepts.
- Provide English translations to any vernacular quotation that are made in the article.
- Total word count should be less than 2000 words.
- The article should not be published anywhere before.
- Figures should be grouped as one image. Label figures and tables.
- Submit the article in word format.

- As part of our learning, we have now decided to only accept single part articles that align to the theme of the issue. Multi-part series will only be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the relevance and timeliness of the topic.

We hope this is useful as you all contemplate contributing to the journal.

For queries, feedback and suggestions, write to us at journal@saata.org.

Theme for July 2019 Issue

Open Issue: Articles on any topic are welcome

Deadline for submissions: **May 15th 2019**

Email : journal@saata.org

Please follow the [guidelines](#) before you submit.

Editorial Board

Volume 5, Number 1, January 2019

Deepak Dhananjaya, CTA (Psychotherapy), Co-Editor

Nisha Rao, Trainee (Education), Managing Editor

Ragini Rao, TSTA (Psychotherapy), Co-Editor

Rosemary Kurian, Trainee (Education), Co-Editor

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

Transactional Analysis Training in India – my personal experience and perspectives, exploring, expanding, being inclusive

Chitra Ravi

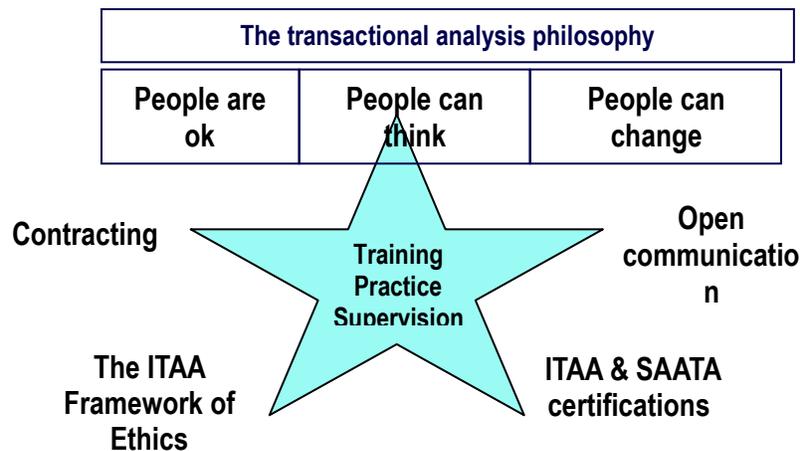
Introduction

As a community, we are in the continuous process of engagement and evolvment, to build curiosity and newness to our training culture and system. My objective of writing this article, is to share my experiences as a trainee and ongoing reflections of presently being a Transactional Analysis trainer in India, then move onto how this shaped my work and philosophy as a TSTA. In doing so, I hope it will be a stimulating read for colleagues, trainees, as well as those who are keen to learn about Transactional Analysis training here.

I begin with the five core aspects that govern Transactional Analysis training, which I see as the fulcrum and which governs all work. My years as a TA trainee enumerate the main motivation for becoming a Transactional Analysis trainer. As individuals, we usually carry what we have learnt as participants, to how we work. This happened with me when I began as a Transactional Analysis Trainer, till I made gradual changes thereafter to form my own philosophy and methodology of training. Finally, I acknowledge the evolution of TA training in India.

The uniqueness of Transactional Analysis are the five core aspects that govern its training

What I observe, is that in just the first half day of the TA 101s that I facilitate, the philosophy of ‘I’m OK- You’re OK’ (Berne, 1966 p.270) seeps into the room! I therefore deem it important to bring to the fore, the key aspects that hold Transactional Analysis training in good stead.

Figure 1: The five core aspects govern Transactional Analysis Training

Transactional Analysis Training is held together and governed by five core aspects, which inform trainers and trainees in every aspect of the work and the relationship. All five together provide a deep sense of humaneness, clarity, definition of boundaries, safety and purpose.

i. **The Transactional Analysis philosophy** (Stewart, 1989 pp.3-4) of OKness, not only influences the professional life of those in Transactional Analysis Training and Practice, it permeates every aspect of life. It provides a deep sense of being unconditionally respectful of oneself and another.

Personally, it has given me a visceral checkpoint of whether I'm OK with whatever's happening with me or with another and provides me with choices of what can happen next.

ii. **The other two aspects of Contracting and Open Communication** (Stewart, 1989 pp.3-5), work in tandem, providing explicitness, clarity, mutuality and clear boundaries in defining what can and cannot be done between people in relationships. It avoids any hidden agenda, manipulation or game playing (Berne, 1964). A question to be asked when in doubt, "Why am I doing what I'm doing? What is my contract for doing this?"

iii. **The ITAA Framework of Ethics** (ITAA Training and Examinations Handbook, Section 3, Ethics) provides a rock-solid framework for Transactional Analysis practice, to guide every area of practice, supervision and training. Being a part of the ITAA community as a member, provides safety and clarity. When any of us, as trainers and trainees, are faced with an ethical dilemma, the ethics matrix is a ready reckoner, easily used to instantly gain perspective.

iv. **The Global** (ITAA Training and Examinations Handbook) **and Regional Certifications** (SAATA-Certifications), provide clear structure and direction on the various levels of certifications offered by the IBOC (International Board of Certification) and SAATA (South Asian Association of Transactional Analysts) respectively. They have high rigor, are robust and provide motivation and validation for professional practice and training.

My journey to becoming a Transactional Analysis trainer

As a trainee, I benefitted from the Transactional Analysis framework and my training group, during my training of approximately six years, before my CTA certification. The structure of the Transactional Analysis training had provision for the group to ‘loosen up’ and make changes in non-threatening ways. Emphasis was on ‘learning by doing’. Group members presented Transactional Analysis concepts in a progressive manner, from simple to complex. We were provided with adequate opportunities to practice therapy, under supervision.

With my limited exposure to therapy, I waited till I was adequately confident to venture into this area, allowing myself to gradually build my skills as a therapist. For the first time, I saw myself taking risks, making mistakes and still being fine with it. I grew fast, thereafter! Whether it was for presentations or therapy work, there was provision for group feedback, followed by supervision, both providing opportunities for adequate reflection and growth. Working with my

trainer and the group for so many years, provided me with a protective space of growth, in a way that was valuable to me.

In the year 2010, I began in a manner similar to what I had experienced during my training - a multi-layered group, for the first three years. After year 3, I began to see some repetitiveness in this ‘ongoing group’, with new members joining in every year. The need was to cover basic concepts every year, as well as concepts required by senior members requiring a greater degree of complexity. Thus in 2013, I sensed the need for a separate group of newbies. I chose to run the ‘foundation year’ focusing on personal growth and application of Transactional Analysis to oneself. I found that this new group had a different energy and zest, since it was homogeneous and therefore different from the group with the older members. By the end of that year, I was becoming aware of different kinds of needs to be catered to, for the various levels of trainees, in line with the certifications that were offered.

Thereafter, nothing but change became constant. As aptly put by Newton, 2003, “Transactional analysis thrives on its accessibility and flexibility of use; at its best, training generates a sense of adventure, support for experimentation, and a drive to freedom.” p.330. Flexibility became the order of the day. Each year, I would reflect along with the different groups, as to what could be done differently. I found it valuable to have highly learning-focused groups, each having different learning needs, as they progressed in their journey of becoming practitioners, as well as towards completing each of the SAATA and ITAA certifications. Today, I have four layers of training groups. What I connect with, is how important it is for Transactional Analysis trainers and educators to align with the theories of adult education as described by Newton in her TAJ article, 2003.

The shaping of my Personal Training Philosophy

From being a trainee of TA to becoming a trainer of Transactional Analysis, answering the four questions below, which I have pondered over at several stages over the past decade, has brought alive my training philosophy.

- **Why do people come into Transactional Analysis Training?**

People come into TA training for a variety of reasons.

Many participants of the TA 101 workshops enter Transactional Analysis groups when they are looking for personal growth or are facing some crisis in their lives. Some are already in therapy or counseling.

Some attend to acquire new perspectives for professional use. Transactional Analysis provides simple models and concepts that can be used easily in Corporate training and Human Resources culture-building programs.

Education is another area of work, which Transactional Analysis serves well and often, educators are quite struck by the TA philosophy and explore how they can make shifts to institute Adult learning.

Mental health professionals attend, to incorporate this simple yet powerful framework into their repertoire.

- **What kind of education have they been exposed to in India?**

“Training is never neutral; it is based in each culture's idea of itself. It is the cultural script that is passed on. It can challenge or reinforce individuals' script beliefs about ability and achievement.” Newton 2003 p.321.

Taking from the quote, even in the Indian context, the culture of the school and college

education has had a significant impact on student's scripts. The education system here, has often been dogmatic (Newton 2003, p.322), with the teacher imparting knowledge, by being the expert on the subject being taught. The students are often expected to absorb and verbatim 'pour out' the learning at each examination. This format leaves no scope for choice or freewill in the structure and process of the schooling curriculum.

My own experience of schooling, had been of a place where I have had to carry a large bag load of textbooks and note books to school each day, write huge amounts of notes and often learn subjects by rote! Not knowing answers to questions asked, had often left me feeling ashamed, being punished and struggling to keep pace with teachers. The curriculum was obviously pre-decided and so was the teaching methodology. There was very little scope for choice in the teaching/learning system. I summarize quoting Grant, 2004, "As adults, people often reenter education, fearful of not being treated as OK human beings. They may have memories from earlier schooling of being criticized, put down, or even humiliated." (p.272).

On the other hand, as a trainee of Transactional Analysis with the philosophy of OK-ness, my experience was starkly different from what I had experienced as a child. During my schooling, the power was only one-sided and there was no question of having my voice! My years as a trainee allowed me the space to express, diverge, argue and negotiate. I learnt to find my voice, as well as to hold my ground where it counted the most. A key learning was to maintain a balance between the need to share my views and at times, give into another's views, when contextually required.

- **What finer aspects shaped my thinking and philosophy as a Transactional Analysis**

Trainer in India?

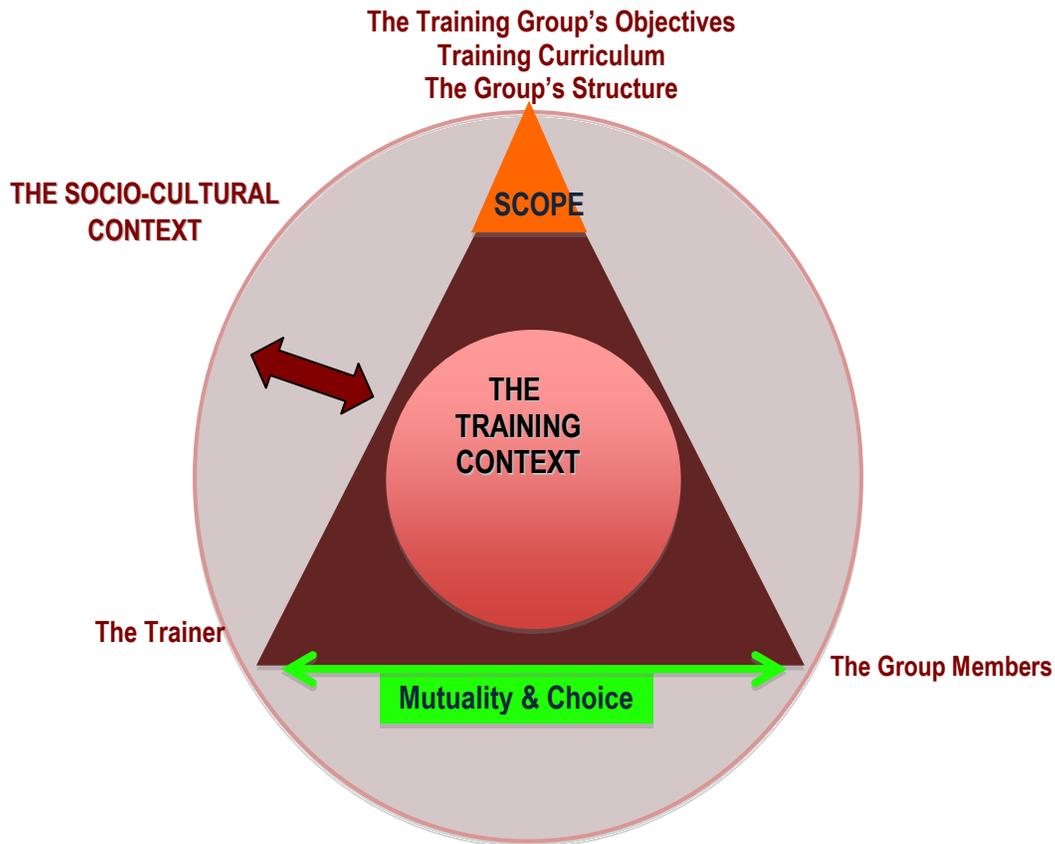
I was mindful of my own struggles of being a learner in the dogmatic cultural framework. I continuously explored how both my trainees and I could make shifts from this traditional system, to one that held human values from a deep sense of OK-ness.

The shifts often did not happen dramatically or quickly. They were gradual, contextual and ensured at each stage, that sufficient protection was held in the process of the change in mindsets and experience.

I was exploring my personal philosophy, especially while preparing for my TSTA (Teaching and Supervising Transactional Analysis) Exam. I realized how it much it influenced my training and what emerged for me is captured in the following paragraphs.

My philosophy as a Transactional Analysis Trainer -

Figure 2: The Subtle Balance of Facilitation in my TA Training Group Triangle, in line with my Training philosophy (Depicted by the Author, Adapted from TCI, Cohn 1981), capturing the interactions and dynamics of different parts that are at play in Transactional Analysis Training Groups



In Figure 2, the three parts, which constantly interact with the other are:

The top of the triangle represents the **Training Group's Objectives, Curriculum and Structure** - those aspects that need to be achieved and followed, as per what has been defined by the entire group, including the leadership and membership.

The **Trainer** forms another corner of the triangle, in making choices by taking the training context, which reflects the level of the group and therefore uniquely, the percentage of shared-responsibility between the trainer and the members varies, regarding the structure of the curriculum, etc.

The third corner is the **Group Members** - in voicing their views, taking a stance, initiative, etc. In new groups, the shared responsibility is more with the trainer and lesser

with the participants. As the levels and maturity of the groups increase, trainees take on a larger share of the responsibility.

The interaction and dynamic between the trainer and group members is held by values of **Mutuality and Choice**, represented by the green arrow, at the bottom of the triangle.

The **Training Context** defines the level of the group that is being facilitated. The different groups can be:

- i. The beginner's level
- ii. The intermediate and practitioner's level
- iii. The advanced level

The **Socio – Cultural Context** defines to what extent anything is being done and considers implications of social and cultural influences, taking into account potential impact within the group, as well contexts in the outside world.

Mutuality and Choice has 3 capacities, as I now understand and live by:

1. Freewill

Life is about making choices

This was the most important take-away that I personally had, in the span of almost two decades with Transactional Analysis. I have felt the need to support and encourage the aspect of 'choice' for trainees too. I am aware of times when I am encroaching on the trainee's right to choose and have asked a quick question to myself "Is this my need or needed for the other?"

2. Self-experience

Choices have conviction when they emerge from internal experience

Love what you do and do what you love and you don't have to work a single day.

Inspired from: "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." (Attributed to the ancient Chinese sage Confucius)

This is a permission that I have given myself and I invite in trainees too. They are encouraged and reminded to track their internal process during training, therapy practice or supervision sessions, to be in touch with their internal experience. The permission is to do anything, only if you choose to do it. The permission to carry on anything long-term, only if you love doing it.

3. Self-responsibility

Life is about taking charge and reaching the stars that each sees for themselves.

The phrase 'being pushed' is replaced with 'being in charge'. The power to decide is vested with the individual, rather than the trainer. This is the exact opposite of the historical dogmatic stance.

It also encourages trainees to become mindful of transference hooks, as well as the need to be in a transference trance with the trainer. In the training group, trainees are encouraged to clarify when they do not agree with the trainer's point of view and not readily conform. Also, they have a right to choose the pace at which they learn, complete certifications, etc.

- **What kind of methodology and process do I use, that's in line with the TA Philosophy of OK-ness?**

The aspect to be considered is the fine balance of interaction between the three parts in the triangle, which is dynamic. It is also uniquely dependent on the training context (level of the training group), as well as the constantly changing socio-cultural context.

Quoting Grant, 2004 “Humanistic psychology implies a valuing of the individual, a belief in human beings' capacity to grow and change, a belief that human beings can become autonomous, increasing their self-awareness and moving beyond their past self-limiting beliefs.” p.273.

Adapting from Knowles (1980), cited in Grant 2004 p.274, what stood out for me, was how would it be possible to facilitate a learning environment characterized by elements such as trust, respect, freedom of expression and acceptance of differences, with the central aspect of **mutuality** and **choice**? I explored co-creation (Summers & Tudor, 2000) of a space where trainees would be motivated to learn. They would see the year's goals as theirs, rather than the dictum of a curriculum. They would participate in planning for each session and therefore commit themselves towards it. They would actively participate in “doing” what needed to be done towards achieving the objectives set out.

The above is aptly captured by Newton, 2003 in her statement “Teaching transactional analysis is also "doing" TA.” (p.321)

Some aspects of the methodology that I use in running training groups

- Contracting with group members, being mindful of all levels, including contracts at the psychological level (Berne, 1966, p.16)
- Providing a climate that has choice, trust (safety), mutuality and stimulation for learning.

- Having the group explore the Core Competencies of the field (Section 5, The ITAA Training and Examinations Handbook). Designing the curriculum, in line with the level of the group, as well as inputs gathered from group members each year.
- Ending each training group with a 45-minute process review, for psychological processes to be expressed openly. A group member has the space to confront any aspect that emerged during the two-day session. Confronting is possible with another group member or the trainer. This is explicitly contracted for at the beginning of the process review.
- Inviting Self-Responsibility: Each member takes responsibility for their learning and growth, through regular attendance, preparation, additional learning initiatives and regular supervision.

Evolution of Transactional Analysis training in India, from then to now

Over the years, Transactional Analysis training in India has been ever expanding, from having a few PTSTAs and even fewer TSTAs, to where it has reached today. We presently have approximately twenty trainers and the number is growing each year! The need for Transactional Analysis training has been consistently growing and spreading across states and regions.

Indian trainers, under the SAATA banner are uniting to see how best we can have well-planned, formalized and organized Transactional Analysis learning initiatives and workshops that reach hungry learners. The younger and new-gen trainers in India are bringing new thinking and creative ways, challenging the old! Our regional SAATA certifications have a high level of rigor and bring sufficient challenge to the table. The SAATA Training community is constantly seeking new methods and ways to ensure this.

The highly defined boundaries that we earlier had about ‘my trainees’ and ‘my trainers’ only exist to the extent of being the formal ongoing structured support and as ‘sponsors’ of the certifications. However, currently we have valued flexibility in catering to the needs of trainees across groups. We seek collaboration in exploring what the region’s trainees need. For example, Exam Workshops are being facilitated for the basic diploma certification as well as for CTA certifications to support and encourage trainees from various groups to receive help, not only from the facilitators of such workshops, also from co-participants as well. Peer learning, as well as peer supervision, has been seen to benefit at all levels.

Increasingly, we are collaborating with Transactional Analysis TSTAs and PTSTAs from outside of India to visit, ensuring mutual benefits. While earlier, we would write inviting them, lately many trainers express their own interest to visit and train here.

This has been truly gratifying!

For me, the words that capture this spirit are ‘abundance’ and ‘generosity’ (words oft used in our side of the world)! We’re hoping that in the years to come, SAATA and its trainers create models that can be replicated in many other parts of the world.

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Chitra Ravi has a Masters Degree in Psychology, is a Teaching & Supervising Transactional Analyst (Psychotherapy). She's the Vice President - Operations of the International Transactional Analysis association and a member of the Board of Trustees of SAATA.

She has been in the field of Psychotherapy for almost two decades. She is the founder of Seed TLC, Bangalore, which provides foundation and advanced Transactional Analysis Training courses in the field of psychotherapy. She also offers her expertise in the form of Leadership Coaching and Leadership Training to Corporates. Chitra can be contacted on chitra.seed@gmail.com

The value of Contracting in TA training groups

Karen Pratt & Chitra Ravi

Introduction

Karen Pratt (TSTA-E) and Chitra Ravi (TSTA-P) explore the value of contracting in TA training groups and how it facilitates open communication. The article is in two parts, as each of us explores how we flesh out and live into various aspects of contracting.

Karen writes about her experiences of running Educational TA training groups using a virtual platform, with trainees from diverse backgrounds. Using the co-creative approach, she explores aspects including frame of reference, Parent introjects around learning, multiparty contracting between people from different fields as well as discussing explicit and implicit contracting. She explores how Clarke's 5 P's add a framework to work with transference and counter-transference in a training group.

Chitra emphasises the value of contracting in how training groups can collaborate to arrive at a shared agenda for the training period, including the administrative, professional and psychological aspects.

Special focus has been placed on how we account for and work with unconscious elements that emerge via transference and counter-transference in the trainee-trainer and peer-group relationships

Note: References apply to both articles.

Contracting in Educational TA training groups

I run an advanced educational TA training group (spread over 3 years) and a Foundation group (spread over 2 years). Currently, the Foundation group has trainees from different parts of

South Africa and India, and the 3rd year advanced educational group has trainees from different regions in India and one person from Kenya.

One of the greatest gifts that TA has given us, is Berne's (1966) model of the three levels of contracting. The administrative level is usually clear and straightforward enough. The procedural and psychological levels are where most of our attention goes, as we co-create the groups (Summers & Tudor, 2000). I believe that these two levels are often intertwined - a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities can play out on the psychological level. Contracting has been especially powerful for me as a way of creating a strong foundation and solid base for learning within a diverse group.

There are various aspects to which I pay particular attention - different frames of reference, different approaches in the various fields of TA, past experiences of learning and the different medium of learning - a virtual training room as opposed to a face-to-face environment. After discussing each of these below, I describe how I use this to facilitate contracting in the groups.

A) Frames of reference

I intentionally account for the different learning experiences, hopes, dreams, anxieties and other unconscious aspects of trainees, who might hold some shared values and beliefs of their frames of reference (Schiffs, 1975), but have other beliefs that are quite different from each other. Family and religious values might be different between different regions of India and Africa. We might need to take into account the importance of somebody leaving a session early for an important family ritual that seems unusual for another person from a different culture. Some aspects might emerge in the initial contracting whereas other might only emerge as the group develops. Perceptions and expectations of how power is experienced in the group might

range from a hierarchical to an egalitarian approach (Meyer, 2014). This is another characteristic that would need to be considered. It is more about the agreed permission to constantly be reviewing our group process, that allows new challenges to be openly noticed and discussed, than the need to have considered each aspect in depth, right at the start of a group's formation.

B) Different fields

The different approaches in the fields of TA also need to be taken into account in the contracting. Many of the trainees in India have already done three or more years of TA training with a psychotherapy trainer. So, there is a shift in the frame of reference when they join an educational group.

The scope of practice and professional contracts in educational work are different from those in therapy. Educational contracts are developmental and are about accessing resources, strengths and ongoing learning. I conceptualise this as expanding the integrating Adult (Tudor, 2003). Another important feature, is that educational work almost always takes place in a more public way than therapy and there will always be multiparty contracting (Newton, 2011). For example, work in a small team of managers wanting to enhance their self-awareness and communication skills will have various stakeholders involved, as well as take place within a certain context and impact the other stakeholders in the system. Work with students in a school will need to take into account the students themselves, but also parents, teachers and the potential impact on other students not directly part of the programme.

The philosophy and approach of educational TA 'in the field' is what guides the way we work in the learning group, which then feeds back into the professional contracts of TA educators.

C) Past experiences of learning

There might be different Parent introjects around learning. For example, some trainees from India might have experienced a hierarchical style of teaching when they were at school, with the teacher doing much ‘telling’ and not leaving much space for autonomous learning. In contrast to this, other trainees might be involved in a current teaching capacity, in a more alternative system of education, where there is much more freedom for the learners to choose what they want to explore.

My own learning at school was a top down approach, with the teacher ‘filling us up with knowledge’ - definitely on the ‘schooling’ end of Barrow’s (2011) learning - schooling continuum. In contrast, my TA training was at the learning end of the continuum within mostly a radical imago (Newton 2003). Some trainees might be hoping to be told what they are doing wrong and how they can improve - constructive criticism is what they believe offers good learning. In contrast, my belief as a trainer is that people will discover valuable things about themselves when they are offered reflective questions, leading them to consider what they want to deepen in themselves, or the direction in which they want to move. The meta-programmes of NLP (O’Connor & Seymour, 2011) help me to conceptualise this as the difference between ‘moving away from’ and ‘moving towards’ something.

D) Virtual learning

Using technology has its own challenges. There have to be creative ways of ensuring authentic connection, despite there being no physical contact. Ways of ensuring engagement and connection, as well as ensuring safety and protection, need to be addressed. The three cornerstones of virtual work are described as connection, trust and safety. (Britton, 2017)

Occasionally the technology fails for an individual - there has to be an understanding around how we work with this.

Contracting in action

I have found that using an Appreciative Inquiry exercise (Cooperrider, 1995), at the beginning of the year, offers an engaging and creative way of contracting. Trainees pair up with somebody most different to them and share their story of a highpoint of transformational learning - whether it was learning to paint, learning maths, learning a musical skill, etc. They uncover what values underpinned this high point and then share these in the bigger group. When people share their stories of high energy and passion around a common theme, relationships and intimacy begin to develop. The hidden elements on the psychological level are gently surfaced and respectfully held. This serves to co-create the learning contract for the year in terms of the qualities that each person owns and wants to create in the group. It also deepens connection and sets the scene for closeness, even through a screen!

This initial contract is constantly revisited as the process of the group unfolds. There is always time to review all the levels of the contract and re-contract as the needs of people change. So for example, when trainees first begin to present a topic to their peers, the feedback from peers might remain at a superficial level. As the year develops, trainees begin to ask for deeper feedback. It's an interesting phenomenon that sometimes this isn't explicitly named, but implicitly emerges as the level of trust and connection grows.

I also consciously model a way of offering feedback that I sense will match the developmental level of each trainee, and package it in a way that will be accessible and most useful to them. Rigorous feedback that is too far removed from where a trainee is currently in

their level of self-awareness and skill, will not be able to be accessed and used creatively. Zull (2002) links the biology of learning with Kolb's experiential learning cycle. He proposes a metaphorical transformation line that learners need to be invited to cross - it takes the learning from passive and internal, to active and external. In order to do this, I hold it in my mind to find a bridge between what is known and already part of the person's current experience, invite them to reflect on what happened, make new meaning of it and consider options.

Working with multiparty contracts

The contracts (especially in the advanced education group) are often multi-party contracts between a local trainer, the trainee and me. In encouraging each trainee to step into their autonomy, there needs to be freedom for them to work with multiple trainers and supervisors to enhance and expand their understanding of themselves as TA educators. If possible, we set up a three-way conversation online.

I particularly hold in mind the aspect of psychological distance (Micholt, 1992), so that there is no unconscious collusion between two of the parties, against the third. It could easily be that two Indian people unconsciously feel closer to each other, than to me as a South African, as they share a deeper understanding of a similar culture; or for me as the educational trainer unconsciously colluding with the trainee who is entering the educational field, and placing the psychotherapy trainer at a distance. We discuss the hoped for outcomes for all the role players, especially the trainee, in his/her involvement and connection with two TA trainers.

So, for example one educational trainee might be involved in a leadership or mentoring role as a senior trainee in a psychotherapy group, having opportunities to do some of the teaching. We would discuss what usefulness this would offer to the trainee as he moves towards

his identity as an educator. It might be that the trainee teaches a model of classical TA to the psychotherapy group, and then in his own reflection considers what aspects might be the same and what might be different, if this model was used in an educational context. And of course the act of teaching, whatever the specialisation of the group, is wonderful practical application of the educational philosophies of teaching and learning and an opportunity to get supervision on the process of teaching.

Modelling

These different aspects of contracting are both openly discussed and more powerfully, modelled in the style of the training group. We work within the co-creative TA paradigm so there is quite some flexibility in co-creating how the process works to meet the ever-emerging learning needs (Summers and Tudor 2000). I hold a deep respect for all the fields in TA and attempt to be sure that there is no competition between the fields, but hold an awareness that there is a difference in the contract and desired outcome in educational work. In many of the educational TA frameworks that we explore, it becomes apparent that the actual model that is being taught is useful, but more often it's how the educator models and lives into their philosophy of how people learn and change, that is even more powerful. I have earlier discussed how I model giving feedback to best match each trainee, to meet them where they are.

The 5 Ps - thinking about transference and countertransference in an educational setting

Jean Clarke (1996) describes the synergistic use of TA concepts by educators and adds an extra two P's to the original 3 P's - Berne (1972) described **Permission**, Crossman (1996) wrote about **Protection**, and Steiner (1971) focussed on **Potency**.

Clarke has added the idea of **Practice** and **Perception** as two additional factors.

Practice refers to ongoing opportunities for trainees to work with theories, try them out and make their own sense and learning from the experience.

Perception refers to the ability to notice what is really going on in the process of the group and work with that. This is where the work with transference and countertransference comes in. I like to use the concept of parallel process, originally described by Searles (1955). Mazzetti (2007) and Cochrane & Newton (2018) describe it as a useful framework for understanding the unconscious processes that can be surfaced in supervision. I believe it can also give insight for learning.

It is often the case that the dynamics of the model being discussed begins to show up in the dynamics of the group. Without awareness, the trainer can fall into a negative parallel process, which inevitably results in a psychological game. Noticing what is going on inside of me gives me a clue to really notice the dynamics and to catch the potential -ve parallel process and model a +ve parallel process.

For example: A trainee has presented the theory of functional ego states and how it applies in a learning context, to the group. She is asking the group what they have learned from their work in pairs. I notice her becoming quite Parental in telling the trainees how they should think and I notice the trainees become adapted in their responses. I feel myself becoming judgmental and have the urge to tell the presenting trainee how to facilitate learning - this is becoming a -ve parallel process. For all of us, there are likely historical figures who had powerful positions in our own learning and we are unconsciously drawn into an old (less helpful) pattern of learning.

So, using Perception and noticing what is happening within myself, I can choose to ask questions and invite the presenting trainee to think through what might be emerging in her

interaction with the group and gain awareness of using different options, which are more present-centered and empowering.

Working across cultures

Having trainees from both India and Africa provides a rich tapestry, in which learning at a deep transformational level can occur. Through contracting and co-creating an atmosphere of openness and trust, assumptions and cultural differences that are at the unconscious level can be explored with openness and curiosity, and become a rich source of expanding the integrating Adult (Tudor 2003).

I have been deeply touched by some relationships that have emerged in groups that I facilitate. I remember particularly a coach-training programme a few years ago, when two people with great diversity, were paired together as coach and coachee. The South African man was in his late 50's and a religious leader (called a Dominee) in the Dutch Reformed Church - a form of Protestant Christianity, with the common culture and language being Afrikaans - one of the eleven official languages of South Africa. This man, not that fluent in English, was paired with a young Indian man. On the surface it might seem that they would have very little in common. But after weeks of shared learning through the coaching practice sessions, the Dominee wrote to tell me that this was one of the most profound experiences of his life. He had learned more about himself through this relationship, than through all his years of theological training and formation.

Conclusion

One of Berne's key contributions to psychology was holding the elements of both psychodynamic processes as well as observable behaviour. One of the important results of this approach, was that it positioned TA as a social psychology as well as an individual psychology

(Stewart, 1992). The approach of social psychology is that although an individual might want to understand and begin to change their individual patterns of belief and behaviour, these challenges are integrally linked with the community and the social relationships within it.

I personally feel a strong resonance with this, and I believe that within the continents of both Africa and India, tools to empower groups and communities are crucial to peaceful and empowering development. In equipping educational trainees to become transactional designers (Summers & Tudor, 2000) and impacting both individuals and communities, what better environment for training than working within an environment rich with diversity. And the framework of contracting, in all its richness, provides the container for such learning to flourish.

Karen Pratt, TSTA (E)

The value of Contracting in Psychotherapy TA training groups

Ownership and Responsibility of Contracts

A few months back, I had checked with Karen Pratt if we could co-author an article for SAJTA and we ‘contracted’ to write about ‘The value of Contracting in TA training groups’. After this, I needed to undergo some pending health-related procedures and suddenly got busy and felt stuck in doing my share of this article. What brought me back to doing my bit, was living up to the ‘responsibility of my contract’ with Karen, that needed to be fulfilled! Having said that, I also see that there are certain contexts in which any of the parties can re-contract and invite flexibility in a situation.

Goldberg 1977, cited in Sills 2006, p.4, says “a contract is a mutual commitment, speaking of giving the client (or another) the ‘responsibility for collaborating in his own living experience’”.

In the above sentence, giving another the responsibility, is in line with the Transactional Analysis philosophy of ‘People are OK, can think for themselves and can make decisions’ (Stewart, 1989 pp.3-4). Contracts empower and establish equality in the process of any work being done.

Contracting has been one of the central concepts of Transactional Analysis. It is binding and makes a valuable difference to work. It brings focus in helping clients, trainees or any other party in ‘owning’ the process and honoring mutual boundaries. Contracts are no different where it comes to any setting - practice, training groups, supervision, coaching, consultancy, etc. They need some flexing in order to fit them into various contexts and situations.

In this article, I explore contracting and how it occurs in Psychotherapy Transactional

Analysis training groups, especially those contracts that are implicit, as well as process contracts.

Outcome based contracting versus Process contracting

Stummer (2002, p.121) marks transactional analysis as contractual psychotherapy and distinguishes it from other schools of therapy. He mentions various theorists for behavioral and outcome-based contracts:

Berne and Steiner discussed contracting to decide a course of action and as behavioral tools to effect cure.

Stewart proposed that contracts be sensory based, finishable and include markers for script change.

For Moiso, 1976, such contracts are useful during a specific phase of treatment (e.g., to control a symptom)

Stummer (2002 p.121-122) “I do not believe, that behavioral, outcome focused contracts are appropriate for all clients at all times. These explicit or implicit contracts must be adapted to the client to minimize the ruptures in contact called process contracting”

I have seen the value of explicit, outcome-based contracts and how process contracts work towards establishing open communication and mutuality in the here and now, in any relationship.

The Training group’s annual contracting involves all levels - administrative, professional and psychological (Berne, 1966 p.16)

In the very first session of a training group, I see the importance of clear contracting, for both the training group and trainer to see the road ahead for us, together.

A) Administrative contracts

They are clarified through questions that are posed to the group. Work is done in sub-

groups, to establish the norms of the group. Aspects like timings, ground rules and nomination of the internal and external apparatus for the year, etc. are established.

B) Professional contracts

I see some of the administrative contracts also aligning with professional contracts (Berne, 1966). Professional contracts involve the explicit spelling out of all contracts that involve professionalism in the group, as well as those towards the professional field chosen. The field's core competencies are revisited, each group member tracks their own personal competencies against the requirement. Discussions involve members exploring how they would build the pending competencies during the coming year. Contracts concerned with the various mandatory external courses that need completion in the course of the year, which have financial and time-schedule implications, are agreed.

Contracts are also made during the two-day session for the structure of work done over the two days, check-ins and check out sessions, at the beginning and closing of the training days, respectively. Supervision Contracts are also defined.

C) Psychological contracts

Group members contract for any aspect that they have felt needs to be changed for comfort at the psychological level. As aptly put by Sills (2006, p.3) views "A contract as an agreement made between two or more people concerning the type of activity or relationship that they will have with each other." Psychological contracts are those that establish several relationship aspects, like the norms of the relationship, the group's confidentiality, safety and process group.

The transferential and counter-transferential aspects of the trainer-trainee relationship belong to realm of the unconscious elements that hold a particular relationship. Many aspects can

emerge in the trainer-trainee relationship. Transferential processes emerge between particular members with the trainer, as well as between one member and another.

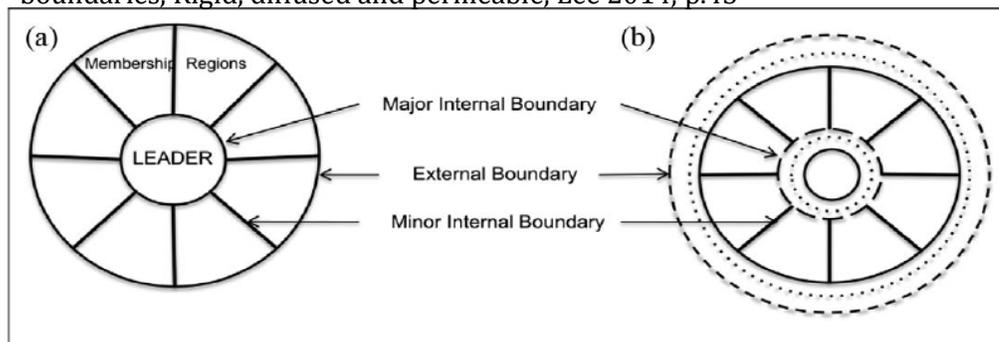
For example, a trainee addresses the trainer as “Sir”/“Ma’am” or even refers to them as “gurus” instead of using the trainer’s first name. These terms have been culturally used to denote reverence or an expert, someone to be looked up to. With it, the trainee tends to bestow an unequal amount of power onto the trainer. In inviting the trainee to become mindful of the unconscious elements that are held within the transferential relationship, the trainee is invited to reclaim his/her power and restore an I’m OK-You’re OK life position (Berne, 1966).

Process Contracts and their relationship with boundaries

Adapting the group structure diagram from Berne, 1966, p.149, Lee in her article in 2014 explores boundaries of membership and leadership and possibilities of working and engaging with the here and now process.

This can only happen if the leader and members make the experience authentic and vital for a safe place to be and to learn (Lee 2014, p.41).

Figure 1, Structural Diagram of the process group (a) and Self-Other boundaries, Rigid, diffused and permeable, Lee 2014, p.43



Boundaries are between the leadership and the membership as well as between the group

and the external world, (Figure 1) (Berne, 1963).

Boundaries between person with self, person and others, and person and environment can be represented as follows, (Lee, 2014, p.43):

- **Diffuse** (lax and weak)
- **Rigid** (fixed and inflexible) _____
- **Permeable** (flexible and open) - - - - -

- If the group boundary is diffused, there will be little or no containment and structure. This implies greater lack of protection and risk of harm.
- If the boundary is too rigid, there is no space to grow and change, although some strong boundaries are necessary initially, to establish the foundations of safety and the group contracts for working together.

I see this as important in beginner’s groups, where clearly defined boundaries hold the requirements of the group, since the contract is initially between the group member and the trainer. Time boundaries, whether timing of the day, or for the start and close of the group, or the amount of time that each trainee shares or fees etc., are already pre-established as administrative contracts.

Another example is for contracts regarding the time taken by group members to express their thoughts and feelings. I often use the analogy of a pie, to clarify the sharing of almost equal pieces of a time-pie between the group members. Often, those who are more exuberant, vocal or vociferous, consume a larger share of the group pie. This is where group members learn to draw boundaries with each other, use their here-and-now psychological processes, learn to confront each other and use process contracts. As a trainer, contracts for personal responsibility are stated,

to avoid overly rescuing those who see themselves as ‘weaker’ than those who they perceive are powerful. Gradually, some of these boundaries become more flexible and are contextual, rather than rigidly held.

Boundaries between the leadership and membership involve transferential and counter-transferential processes, especially in beginner’s groups, and become progressively lesser with advanced groups. As the level of the group matures, there is a steady increase in the awareness of the life position that each member has with the other/s. Questions that can be explored by the trainer:

Are there members in the group who:

- Easily agree with me?
- Have adulation and do things for me, which are more than necessary?
- Need many strokes constantly from me?
- Look at me for confirmation, even when talking to another member?
- May mute out their voice because of my impatience?

Choices of intervention and use of process contracts with trainees would be dependent on the readiness of the trainee and/or group. Using any intervention would be dependent on whether it would facilitate, intimidate or be shaming for the trainee. While using contracts as interventions, empowering questions to evoke process contracts, may be used to work with the trainee.

For example, questions like these encourage the member to think and decide on the course ahead:

“If you were to have your own view on this, what would it be?”

“What would you like from me in doing this?”

“What would be a reason for you to seek this from me?”

“If you were to confront me right now, what would you say to me?”

Types of boundaries and their impact on relationships (Lee, 2014):

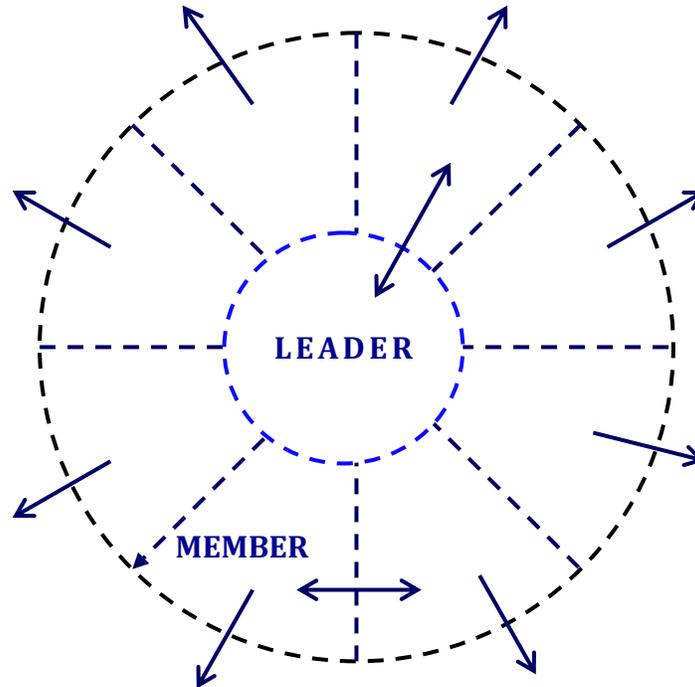
The types of boundaries we develop and experience influence the way we think, feel, and behave in relating to others (Lee 2014, p.43).

Ideally, boundaries need to be permeable to permit change, acknowledge differences, facilitate balanced empowerment and provide flexibility that fosters new experience and relationships.

The different lines describing the quality of the boundaries, can be used to diagram the leadership style and the group process when analyzing the cohesion, development, and process of the group (Figure 2).

Figure 2 shows different aspects of the training group, lines differentiating leadership, membership permeable boundaries, arrows indicating internal and external forces (Adapted from Lee, 2014, p.44)

Figure 2, shows different aspects of the training group, lines differentiating leadership, membership permeable boundaries, arrows indicating internal and external forces (Adapted from Lee, 2014, p.44)



Process Reviews as a means of giving a space for psychological processes to emerge

There are various psychological processes that emerge during the two days that need a space for the group to access and express them. At the end of every two-day training group session, process reviews of 45 minutes are contracted for, at the beginning of the year. These have no agenda and are provided for the group members (and trainer) to express any form of process that they are sitting with and would like to 'leave behind' and not 'carry as baggage' back home. This 'process' could be any feeling of anger, fear, etc. or any other process that needs expression. It is expressed directly in the first person to another member or the trainer. The recipient has the option to either respond or not. Members are encouraged to clarify instead of

justifying.

As a trainer, I see it as important to establish safety via contracts, at the start of the process review. Some contracts include encouraging trainees to use 'I' when addressing another. This allows the person to take ownership of whatever's being conveyed. Another is that the addressee has the right to respond or not. I also have a contract of asking clarifying questions when I see that generalized statements or those that sound persecutory are being conveyed.

For example, a trainee Mary (names changed), expressed to another that she was rudely interrupted in mid-sentence, earlier in the day.

The other trainee (Jane) justified herself by saying that what she was saying was much more important to her.

On the other hand, Jane could acknowledge Mary, agreeing that she remembered interrupting her and then go on to clarify that she was excited about what she had to share and that she had missed the fact that she had interrupted another.

This becomes a new way of relating, that gets established while using process reviews and process contracts, in the here and now.

As a trainer, I deem it important to intervene only when I find that the trainees are interlocked in their Scripts and are not finding their own way of making shifts.

I've found process reviews valuable in encouraging open communication and coming back to the 'here and now'. Initially, some trainees dislike process reviews, gradually most learn to look forward to them. They offer a space for members to 'sit and reflect' and see if there's anything that emerges from their unconscious for them to account for and express. The emphasis in training groups for process reviews is also focused on conceptualizing as well as building of

process competencies of psychotherapists.

Using Stummer's quote again, "These explicit or implicit contracts must be adapted to minimize the ruptures in contact." (2002p.122).

Even during the day of a training group, a rupture in contact can emerge either between two members or between a member and the trainer. I have seen how powerful it has been for the trainer to use process contracting and invite the member/s to openly share their process and not wait for the process review. Two things get established here:

- The thumb rule is that process takes precedence over any form of content. The group learns to be in the here and now and establish contact with self and others. Any rupture is expressed directly.
- The members learn to do this within the group and practice this in their own professional settings and personal life, outside the group, thus allowing them to integrate their learning into their personality.

Goldberg 1977, cited in Sills 2006, p.4-5, "a mutual commitment, speaking of giving the client (trainee) the 'responsibility for collaborating in his own living experience'. He describes two types of relationship, the status relationship in which there is inequality of power and authority and there is reliance and the belief of the greater expertise and knowledge of the therapist (trainer). The second is the contractual relationship which is an arrangement between equals, when explicitly formulated, rejects coercion and fosters personal freedom".

Our endeavor has been over the years to establish a contractual relationship, which empowers trainees and also facilitates them in empowering their clients. In doing so, creating? an I'm OK, you're OK relationship.

Chitra Ravi, TSTA, (P)

Karen and Chitra write

It has been a fascinating journey to consider the various aspects of contracting as lived out in two different fields of TA training groups, in two continents and working in different ways - face to face and virtually. The value of open discussion and mutual agreement is key to authentic relationships and learning.

While we wrote two separate pieces, what held us together was the theme and the title - something that we both consider fundamental. The other aspect was how we lived the theme in our own processes - contracting and re-contracting as we progressed. It held us committed to what we had both agreed.

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TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS IN PERSONAL CONTEXT

My Spiral of Growth – the TA way!

Vidya Ramaswamy

Introduction

I have often wondered about what it means to grow, change and evolve. Even as a young girl, I recall that most grown-ups around me were aspiring to reach an elusive destination where ‘everything in their lives would be just as perfect as they imagined it to be’; and that, ‘that’ would somehow allow them to finally experience peace and happiness. I too, began chasing this destination, glorifying the apparent linearity of my growth, desperately waiting ‘to arrive’.

I recall vividly my 14-year-old self, leafing through Robert Feldman’s book, ‘Understanding Psychology’, at my neighbor’s house; instantly feeling connected to the words that I was reading. From not knowing that there was a subject that focused on the human mind and its eccentricities, to deciding on that summer evening, that I wanted to pursue this fascinating field, this seems like a watershed moment in retrospect. In hindsight, I probably fantasized that studying this subject would aid me in my journey of ‘becoming that perfect human being that I was striving to be’. I had set out to prove my worth by obsessively driving myself to ace my course, disconnecting from the enjoyment of the journey itself and tirelessly trying to get it just right.

I realized along the way, that I had been hurrying through life with a certain urgency that did not seem to be bringing me any closer to my ‘perfect destination’. I began questioning what it really means to grow and evolve. If I was indeed growing into an adult, why did I continue to experience certain uncomfortable feelings that I remember experiencing as a child? Was I growing or was I stuck somewhere far behind on this ‘straight line’ that I thought was life?

I could no longer keep up the performance of getting it all ‘perfectly right’. As I was coming undone by letting go of my ‘perfectly performing persona’, I was struggling to make sense of my well-concealed depressive feelings. It was then that I began befriending the eccentricities of my own mind and my true learning of psychology began, experientially and academically. It seems like what began as an unadulterated wish of the 14-year-old to help people make meaning of their struggles, somewhere got lost behind the ‘charade of getting it perfect’ and proving myself to the world.

As I was moving along this path of personal transformation, I stumbled upon Transactional Analysis in 2012. Below, I share my personal shifts and movements through my learning journey.

Growth and change are not linear processes

During my foundation year of Transactional Analysis, one of my most significant learnings was that growth and change are not linear processes. I was deeply fascinated by the work of Pam Levin who speaks of the cyclical nature of life “Like the stages of growth in all of nature, the patterns of adult life are cyclic, seasonal and based on a continuation of the stages of growth in childhood. We return to certain themes and issues over the course of time. We grow through the physical and emotional changes typical of each stage in childhood, and then go back again and again. Going through each stage in childhood, or in adulthood is an opportunity. We can use this time to develop a part of our power or ability as human beings” (Levin, 1982, p. 129).

A little over two years into my training in Psychotherapy, I witnessed the abrupt passing on of my father and in the year that followed his demise, cancer became my personal tryst with destiny, as I assumed the challenging role of primary caregiver to my mother, who was

diagnosed with cancer. Having encountered such a significant loss and carrying the anxiety of an anticipated loss, I was aware that I had moved into the Stage of Being (Levin, 1982). I felt the need to withdraw from active doing, desired to rest often and longed for nurture. I did not view this as movement backwards; instead my awareness of the cyclical nature of development enabled me to harness the possibilities that lay in this stage, so that I could emerge from this stage with resilience. I received and gave myself permissions (Crossman, 1966) - to be, to stop hurrying to feel okay, to be held and nurtured.

As the recycling continued through the various stages of development, I found myself in the Stage of Identity, where I rebuilt my sense of self and grew my identity, in the aftermath of my grief and loss; albeit with a sense of power. I now allow myself to access vulnerabilities inside of me that make me ‘real and human’ instead of donning the cloak of the perfectly put-together robot!

Even as I sit here to write this article, still very much in touch with the rawness that these two experiences continue to evoke in me, I have deep gratitude for the resilience that I have developed through my training in Transactional Analysis. Slowly, but steadily, I am reconnecting with the essence of my younger self’s wish and growing to acknowledge that I am ‘enough’ and ‘okay’. In the following paragraphs, I will share a few more aspects of my journey along my spiral of growth.

Awareness and the Power of Choice

My introduction to the philosophy of Transactional Analysis as summarised by Wollams & Browns (1978):

- i) We are all born OK

- ii) All of us have the capacity to think
- iii) People decide their own destiny and these decisions can be changed had a profound impact on me.

For me, these basic tenets upon which Transactional Analysis rests, carries hope and a possibility for change that can begin unfolding in the very moment that one desires it enough. I believe that the first step in this movement towards ‘change’ is awareness. In the past, I have often underestimated the power of awareness, because I saw, that despite being aware of certain unhealthy patterns that I was grappling with, nothing changed. In fact, it was rather infuriating, and I wondered if ignorance was truly bliss!

During one of my personal therapy sessions, when I brought this up for discussion, I realized something which had a profound impact on me. I learned that awareness has played the role of bringing something from my unconscious to my conscious, which therefore implies that awareness has assisted me in becoming cognizant of a part of my life-script (Berne, 1972), thereby offering me an opportunity to also move out of it. Berne (1972) defined as, ‘a life plan made in childhood, reinforced by parents, justified by subsequent events, and culminating in a chosen alternative’ (p. 445).

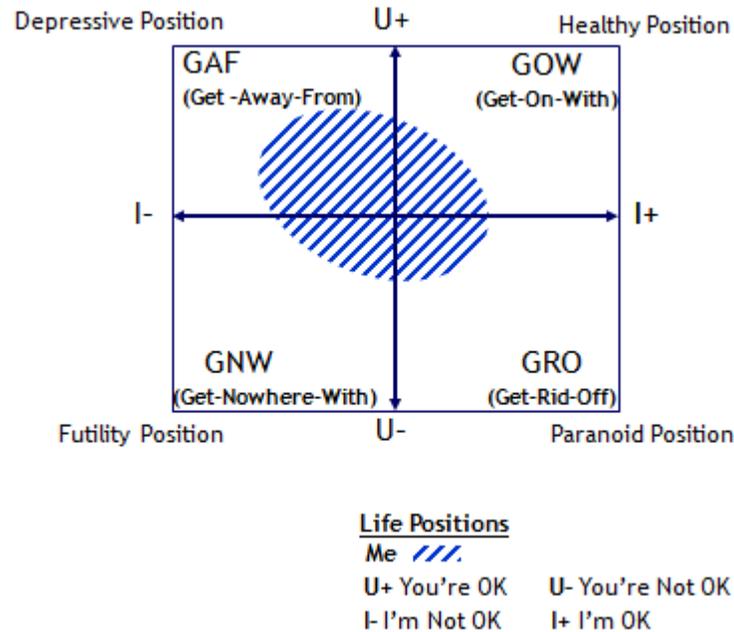
Working through various aspects of my life-script has been a liberating journey. I learned that there exists a split-second window of opportunity between a familiar ‘trigger’ and a typical reaction to it. To arrive at a place where I became aware of the story that I had written for myself and options that were now available for me to change unhealthy aspects of my story, was and continues to be a powerful experience.

Am I worthy of love?

For as long as I could remember, I experienced an all-pervading sense of anxiety that seemed like it had become such an integral part of who I was, that I feared what life might be like if I did not have this experience. I realized that it kept me safe – safe from assuming responsibility, safe from making a mistake and safe from getting hurt. As I used the second-order structural model of ego-states (Berne, 1961), I realized that a significant part of this fear comes from my mother's C3 i.e. Child ego-state of my mother – a fear of 'not being able to make it on her own'. This understanding helped me develop compassion for my mother as I realized that she too has had unmet needs as a child, due to her own childhood experiences.

I realized that this fear I carried, served me in keeping myself smaller than the other, letting the other decide for me or to take charge, assuming a life-position (Berne, 1972, p. 110) of 'I'm not OK, you're OK'. This seemed to be a coping strategy from my childhood where I had made a childhood decision that, "I was worthy of love only if I kept myself small"; often falling ill to be stroked. Following (see Figure 1), is a representation of my life-position in the OK Corral (Ernst, 1971). I experienced that I could be seen in my full potency as a resilient Adult and still get my stroking needs met in healthy ways.

Figure 1: My OK Coral (Ernst, 1971)



I also realized that in growing up with an overwhelmed mother, I possibly experienced an engulfment (Lee, 1998) that led me to cope, by either feeling overwhelmed with life, like her; or by dissociating from my body to escape the overwhelm. Most emotions, when I felt them were overwhelming – fear, anger, sadness and sometimes even joy. In fact, I often didn't know whether I was experiencing a racket feeling (English, 1971) or a real feeling (English, 1971). The scale of emotional awareness (Steiner, 1996) was a tool that helped me differentiate between my own feelings. As I obtained and gave myself permissions to contact, name and differentiate my feelings, I now feel an increasing okayness to access and display my real feelings.

Also, I see how by assuming the position of the over-adaptive, 'nice girl' in my primary group, I derived a sense of okayness. I felt loved only when I was being the 'good girl who always obeyed mother'. I was repeatedly confronted and challenged by my training group and my trainer about my excessive niceness. Through my personal therapy sessions, I received verbal

and nonverbal permissions (Crossman, 1966) to counteract my injunctions (Goulding & Goulding, 1976) of ‘Don’t Exist’ and ‘Don’t be You’ as well as received unconditional positive strokes (Steiner, 1971) for my being which challenged my ‘Be Perfect’ and ‘Please Others’ drivers (Kahler & Capers, 1974). This in turn has enabled me to reflect on my pressing need to be the ‘delicate, nice, gentle person’. I ask myself today if I am willing to sometimes be ‘the rowdy in the room?’ Am I willing to disappoint the people I love sometimes? Am I willing to be real and still feel worthy of love? I continue to be reflective about these questions.

The Do’s and Don’t’s!

When I look back at my life, I can see that there have been phases where I have ‘made myself do’ and ‘do with perfection’ and phases where I have needed to recover from having burnt myself out from the expectation of ‘perfect doing’. I often worked myself into a frenzy about being productive, denying myself time for relaxation and fun. It seemed as if my very existence was tied to doing!

I explored the concept of Impasse (Mellor, 1980) and became present to the stuck-ness I felt with regards to being consistent. The Type I impasse is (see Figure 2) between my P2 whose messages were ‘Be Perfect’ and ‘Try Hard’ and C2 whose decision in response to my P2 was “I will do only when I can do perfectly” / “If I don’t try hard, I am not doing it correctly”. The Type II Impasse is between my P1 whose message is ‘Don’t Exist’ which may have been introjected as “You can exist only when you are being productive and that too with perfection!” and C1 whose message is “Love me as I am / I want to have fun”. Both the impasses seemed to be resulting in this pattern that I still find myself working through, albeit with greater awareness. Even as I sat

down to write this article, I realized that I was waiting for the ‘perfect moment when my environment will be just right and everything I needed to write will flow in a perfect way’!

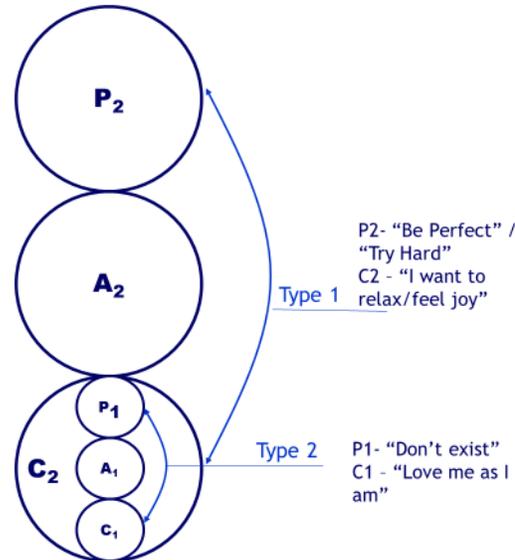


Figure 2: Type II Impasse (Ken Mellor, *Impasses: A Developmental and Structural Understanding*, Transactional Analysis Journal 1980, p. 216)

To quote C.G. Jung, “I would rather be whole than good”. My ongoing journey in Transactional Analysis has allowed me to move towards autonomy (Berne, 1964, p.78) where there exists a possibility to experience and express awareness, spontaneity and intimacy.

As I continue embracing who I was, am and who I am becoming, I allow myself to learn and grow and fall and get back up, thereby welcoming life in its fullest.

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Exploring Autonomy through Time Structuring

Merlin Mythili S

Context

I was at that stage in life, when boredom had set in due to a lack of stimulus, when I decided to do this course in Transactional Analysis. On post -TA training reflection, I recognise, I have mostly been driven by three of the Berne's six hungers (hungers are the needs that drive us to action) and the six hungers being - stimulus, recognition, contact, sexual, structure and incident hunger (Berne, 1970). It is perhaps, this need or hunger for a psychological and social stimulus, recognition and structure, that had made me embark on the TA journey. The need to structure time being the perennial quest of 'what next'?

With almost a year into this advanced training in developmental transactional analysis for organisations, I take this opportunity to pen down my reflections on the impact of my TA training, on both my personal and professional self. In this rumination, I delve upon how my understanding of 'time structuring' has capacitated my awareness of self. It has indeed given me the wherewithal to explore autonomy and assimilate the healing power of being in the here and now.

Time structuring as a manifestation of hunger

Berne (1972) explains that the need to structure time is based on three drives or hungers. The first one being stimulus-hunger - which is the reason why people actively seek stimulating circumstances. The second drive is recognition-hunger - which motivates us to do things in order to seek recognition and acceptance from significant others. The third is structure-hunger - that

prods us to get out of periods of social hiatus and constantly makes one think about how one structures our time when awake.

Since my growing years, I realise I have constantly sought challenging and complex stimuli to spur me into giving my best. I find the need for structure is manifest in all members of my family. My parental influences of all the elders in my family have emphasized (perhaps overemphasized) the need to constantly upgrade skills, to engage in intellectual pursuits and not waste time. Berne (1964) states that “the most common, convenient, comfortable and utilitarian method of structuring time is by using that time to deal with a material activity of external reality”.

I have always watched my parents and elders being involved in various forms of activity that resulted in some constructive, utilitarian or problem-solving outcomes. I have therefore imbibed this transgenerational need to structure my time around utilitarian ‘activities’. I keep diaries, fill up calendars, write, strike and keep adding and striking my things-to-do list, keep accumulating degrees, indulge in creative writing, keep learning new skills, take up life-skill classes, fret over wasting time and worry about not having enough time.

I constantly pressurize myself to engage in various material, social and individual activities due to the following reasons.

1. I enjoy the feeling of heightened alertness that I experience while accomplishing difficult tasks.
2. I bask in the recognition and acceptance that I receive from others, over my ability to succeed or solve a problem.

3. I crave for the satisfaction I get when I think about the time I've spent usefully, at the end of the activity.
4. I feel guilty when I am not doing anything.

As a result, I realise 'activities' take a large chunk of my time structuring pie.

Drivers to Games and Rackets

I am now aware that this incessant need to fill up my time with 'activities' is a result of counter-injunctions or the 'do' driver messages (Kahler, 1975), picked up from my parental influences. Kahler (1975 pp.280), described drivers as "behaviours that last from a split second to no more than seven seconds" ...(with)... "a fixed pattern which may be repeated, unconsciously, hundreds of times a day." They are ways that we have learned to adapt to our environment when we were young, based on our understanding of approved and disapproved behaviours picked up from the elders. Kahler categorized five distinctive sets of behaviours that people consistently displayed as drivers and they are 'Try hard', 'Please others', 'Be Strong', 'Be Perfect' and 'Hurry up'. I am also aware, that while these drivers are indeed the reasons for my success, they have often been the cause for certain dysfunctional behaviours such as a low tolerance for mediocrity, lack of patience with people and things when they move at a slow pace, snap reactions and irritability.

Why should drivers that motivate me to engage in constructive activities lead to dysfunctional behaviour? Because, activities morph into games and games result in dysfunctional behaviour. Let me explain this phenomenon in detail below:

Almost all activities, both in the personal and professional realm require participation and co-operation of a few other members of the social group that I belong to. Therefore, it is

quite possible, that an ‘activity’ supposedly “the safest form of social action next only to ‘withdrawal’ and ‘rituals’” (Berne, 1972, pp.42), may form a matrix for me, in which the other options to structuring time such as rituals, pastimes, games and intimacy get embedded in.

Owing to my obsession with tangible activities, which I have believed are the only way to add meaning to life, I rarely spend time in ‘rituals’ or ‘pastimes’. When I am compelled or feel obligated to participate in them, either in social situations such as informal gatherings, parties, marriages or coffee counter meetings, I do so with a lot of trepidation. I feel awkward, fearful, and extremely uncomfortable and hide behind my fall-back person - who could be a gregarious friend, life partner or a colleague – those very few people with whom I share intimacy.

I therefore understand, that the bulk of my time structured around ‘activity’ (to be accomplished with the involvement of other members of my social aggregation), forms a thriving seedbed for various forms of ‘games’.

‘Games’ are sets of ulterior transactions, repetitive in nature, with a well-defined psychological payoff (Berne, 1964). A game features an ulterior transaction, so there is a con – who is the agent of the transaction. He/she pretends to be doing one thing while he/she is actually doing something else. The con works only when the respondent has a weakness or a gimmick that the con can hook onto. The player pulls off a switch that results in a cross-up and ends with the collection of payoffs, in the form of racket feelings (English, 1971), by both players. The dysfunctional behavior I referred to earlier is indeed the result of these payoffs (racket feelings), in all those instances when my activities morphed into games.

So, how do my well-meaning activities morph into games?

I realise in most of my activities involving other members of my social unit, I need not be the agent of the ulterior transaction or the con all the time. Rather, I end up being the respondent with the gimmick quite often. The payoffs I collect in the form of racket feelings of guilt, helplessness, anger, sense of superiority are the result of the internal and external rackets that I go through at the end of these games. Racket being an internal process by which a person interprets or manipulates his/her environment and justifies a not-OK position (Berne, 1966). These payoffs are a result of unfulfilled expectations I have from other members involved.

Some of the games that I often end up playing are ‘see what you made me do’, ‘they let me down’, ‘see what you’ve done now’, ‘you’ve got to listen’, ‘I told you so’, etc. I have especially reveled in telling my family and colleagues ‘I told you so..’ with a lot of vengeance, whenever they don’t heed my well-meaning advice and they fail in their tasks, despite my cautioning them.

One of the many *Eureka* moments in my learning experiences during my advanced training in TA for organisational development, is this diagnosis of the reason behind morphing of the activity to the game and its dysfunctional behavioural aftermath. It is another *Eureka* moment that initiated me into exploring autonomy as the panacea that would help me to stop this pattern.

Exploring Autonomy through Awareness

Berne (1964) states that “the attainment of autonomy is manifested by the release of three capacities: awareness, spontaneity and intimacy.” On reflection, my obsession with utilitarian activity (an equivalent to the Karma Yoga, being the path for selfless action - one of the four Yogic paths) (Namboodhri, 2012), lends itself into a tool that has helped me recover my capacity to be aware and to be in the here and now.

When Sherlock Holmes discusses his career with Watson, his doctor friend in the short story ‘The Sign of Four’, he says, “The work itself, the pleasure of finding a field for my peculiar powers, is my highest reward” (Doyle, 2003).

So, when the practice of the craftsmanship itself gets seen as the reward, it makes up for the unsavoury payoffs at the end of the game, which started as an activity. There have been instances at work, when the vagaries of influential others have toppled my deserving outcomes, despite having toiled hard and giving my best. I realize that these experiences haven’t stopped me from giving my best in my future activities because I enjoy the pure moments of immersion while being involved in activities that bring out the best in me. These moments are indeed my moments of the here and now. I am aware now, that this immersion and outlook to seeing the process of the activity itself as the reward, has helped me overcome the gimmick or to blunt that handle, making it difficult for the con to get hooked to me. This saves my activity from morphing into a game, or at the very least weakens the payoff feelings.

Lastly, Berne (1964, pp.160) says that “the game-free candidness of intimacy is indeed possible as there is even such a thing as ‘one-sided intimacy’”. No doubt, for me it is a continual struggle against falling back to old ways, but even fleeting moments of ‘one-sided intimacy’, give me the capacity to let go of my guards and move away from ulterior motives and associated patterning in my social interactions and experience the spontaneity to choose not to play games.

My preoccupation with utilitarian ways to fill time urge me to share some of the tangible benefits I experience as a result of this discovery of awareness.

I continue to keep diaries, fill up calendars, write, strike and keep adding and striking my things-to-do list, keep accumulating degrees, indulge in creative writing, keep learning new

skills, take up life skill classes. But I have stopped fretting over wasting time and worrying about not having enough time. In fact, I have found new Adult pastimes such as tending to a small organic garden and relishing the solitary moments of my regular walk time.

Wordsworth in his poem titled ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’ has succinctly encapsulated all that Berne propounded in autonomy. The poem is about how the eidetically perceptive, uncorrupted child (Berne (1974) goes on to lose its naivete:

.....*Shades of the prison-house begin to close*
Upon the growing Boy, ...
*Shaped by himself with newly-learn{e}d art.....*
*Then will he fit his tongue*
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
*The little Actor cons another part;*
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation..... (Wordsworth, 1807)

My understanding of time structuring has given me the wherewithal to explore autonomy. I am now a more aware person who knows that bilateral intimacy of candid, game-free relationships without exploitation, may not be always possible. Nevertheless, the ability to see the activity itself as the reward, has given me the spontaneous freedom to choose not to play a game. Thus, autonomy has helped rescue that liberated, uncorrupted child in me.

...To once again see the meadow, grove, and stream, the earth, and every common sight, in the glory and the freshness of a dream. (Wordsworth, 1807)

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