

# Transactional Analysis

Susan Peabody

Transactional Analysis (TA) is a method for understanding ourselves that was created by Eric Berne. Dr. Berne was talking to a patient one day and the patient said, “Dr. Berne, you are not talking to the CEO of a corporation, you are talking to a seven year old.” Dr Berne describes this as a turning point in his career. From this conversation, he created TA which he describes in his book, *The Games People Play*.

Dr. Berne explains that we have three internal personalities called ego states. One is that of a child, that today we refer to as the Inner Child. The second one he calls the Parent. And finally, we have an adult personality that he calls the Adult. These personalities take turns inhabiting our consciousness. When they are not in our conscious, they reside in our unconscious.

Dr. Berne had a student by the name of Thomas Harris who wrote the classic book, *I'm OK; Your' OK*. In this book the author uses the metaphor of a tape recorder in our brain which turns off and off at will.

The goal of TA is to become aware of what personality is out and how to control it. Hopefully we can learn how to put the Adult in charge at all times, unless you are in a therapeutic situation.

TA took off as a discipline and many books were written. They all take a different look at TA. Hugh Missildine described the Inner Child from the past. Charles Whitfield talks about the playful Inner Child. John Bradshaw created a healing therapy and described the Inner Child at different ages starting with the Inner Infant.

Today TA has evolved and we now mostly talk about the Adult and the Child.

Susan Anderson in her book, *The Journey from Abandonment to Healing*, introduces the Outer Child which she says comes out when the Inner Child needs protecting. He/She is often angry and defensive.

Here is a list of the most common personalities we talk about in recovery.

**Inner Child:** This personality is wounded as a result of neglect and abuse. She cries a lot and is often very frightened and nervous.

**Outer Child:** This personality is your gatekeeper. Her job is to protect the Inner Child. Her personality varies in each person. She is often called the Angry Teenager.

**Inner Critic:** This is the voice of your critical parent. It sounds like your own voice because often we believe what the critical parent said and now we say this to ourselves.

**Loving Parent:** This is our adult personality that comforts our Inner Child.

**Healthy Adult:** This is the recovering personality. She is mature, confident, optimistic, and interested in getting healthy.

**Enlightened Adult:** This is our spiritual side which manifests itself in recovery. She is serene, happy, wise, and loves God

The immediate goal of TA is to get to know each of our personalities intimately and then learn to vacillate between each one. When were they born? Why were they born? What kind of trauma brought them into your consciousness.

Please note that our inner personalities don't really change in recovery, but they can be managed.

I give names to my inner personalities as a way of identifying them.

*Susie* is my Inner Child

*Gretchen* is my Outer Child (Angry Teenager)

*Kathleen* is my Inner Critic

*Susan* is my Adult.

*Susannah* is my Enlightened Adult

The long-range goal of TA is unification of all the personalities into one stable person. I hope you find all your parts and rejoice in who you are.

