



## **“How to have Successful Conversations” Building Successful Relationships – Socially and at Work**

### **Conversing with EASE™**

#### **EQUALITY**

Equality in a conversation refers to the individuals involved feeling equal rather than in a hierarchy, i.e. a mindset that perceives each person of having equal importance. If one person is perceived to be more important than another, the imbalance this creates will not enable the flow of a truly successful conversation.

Equality is not referring to “air time”. One person may do most of the talking and the other most of the listening. This can be quite appropriate and contribute to a successful conversation for both parties involved. Treating your conversational partner as another human being and not as an object will help create a sense of equality.

#### **AUTHENTICITY**

It is important to be authentic in your conversations. Dishonesty will shine through and then you will lose the trust of others. Whilst honesty is necessary, it is also important to think through HOW you say the truth. Being too blunt or insensitive may lose the message as your conversational partner may go on the defensive and stop listening to you.

It is also good to recognise that people may ask for the truth but not necessarily want to hear it. It is worth checking out what someone really wants to hear if they have asked for feedback, before giving your message. Therefore, sincerity and honesty should be accompanied with sensitivity and respect for the other person. This way you will be able to realise the maximum, positive impact when you are speaking to another.

#### **SATISFACTION**

A successful conversation will be satisfactory to both parties involved in the conversation. Showing interest by asking questions, followed by active listening, is generally a good strategy when conversing with people you don't know very well, or may be catching up with after a long spell. However, if the questioning is one-sided it can seem like an interrogation to the person answering all the questions.

Similarly, people don't want to be 'lectured' to when they are in a social situation. Getting the balance between questions, information giving and two-way discourse is more likely to lead to both parties feeling satisfied with the conversation.

#### **ENDING**

A successful conversation will have a good or, at least, a satisfactory ending. Conversations that finish abruptly, or are broken off – such as, with someone walking away, hanging up on the phone, storming out – leave both parties aware that there is unfinished business. Next time the two persons meet they will feel the 'atmosphere' between them. They may not even converse together for a shorter or longer period of time.

Sometimes it is necessary to end a difficult conversation with the acknowledgement that the subject has not been concluded, but now is not the time to continue. If this is the most satisfactory ending at that moment, ensure you arrange to go back and conclude that difficult conversation.

## Basic Conversation Behaviours : **CHANTERS™**

### **C**LARIFY

We use same words but may be using a different interpretation. It is important, therefore, to check your understanding of what another person is saying if you think there may room for misinterpretation. Conversations often go wrong because we THINK we understand what someone is telling us, or ASSUME that they have heard what we wanted to convey, but have not clarified that this is the case.

### **H**ONESTY

Being honest and open with the people you converse with will help build trust and enable you to relate authentically. It is difficult to converse successfully if you are concerned that the other person is not speaking the truth.

### **A**CTIVE LISTENING

The purpose of active listening is to understand what the other person is trying to convey, not only through their language - the words - but also in their body language - the dance - and their tone of voice - the music. Active listening requires you to concentrate 100% on the person who is talking and, if necessary, to quell your own inner chatter. Listening to your silent thoughts (the inner chatter) takes your focus away from the person doing the speaking and on to yourself.

### **N**ON-JUDGEMENTAL

Communicating whilst purposefully being non-value judgemental about the people you are speaking with is extremely difficult. We are programmed to make judgements about people, but our prejudices and assumptions can be proved wrong and those judgements may stop us from having a successful conversation. Being value-judgemental is about, for example, opinions being right or wrong, ideas being better or worse.

### **T**RUST

Building trust takes time, and can be broken in an instant. By applying these behaviours at all times, they will enable you to be viewed as trustworthy and help you become trusting of others. It is up to every individual to act in a trustworthy way, in order to help build, establish and maintain trust.

### **E**MPATHY

Showing empathy when it would be appropriate to acknowledge how it must feel for the other person will go a long way to establishing a good relationship with another. This is not about showing sympathy, but trying to understand how things might feel if you were walking in another's shoes.

### **R**ESPECT

It is important to respect and value the difference in other people's opinions if you are going to build successful relationships. You do not have to agree with their point of view but, if you value the difference they bring, you will be more receptive to learning from others and, possibly, adopt a different mindset. This behaviour links with being non-judgemental.

### **S**UPPORT

Showing support is important when conversing with people. If you do not agree with someone, or an idea they are mentioning, you don't need to feign support. However, be mindful not to belittle their ideas and opinions.

# TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

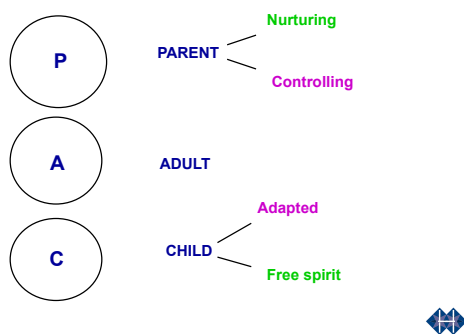
Transactional Analysis (TA) is a model of communication that describes what happens in a conversation between two people. One transaction occurs when person A speaks to person B. A second transaction happens when person B replies, and so on. The analysis pertains to identifying the ego state that each person is speaking from and to, and understanding what is going on at the unconscious level during a conversation. An understanding of TA will help you to negotiate conversations successfully, however difficult they may seem at the outset.

The theory builds on Jung's work on ego states. Each person has a Parent, Adult and Child ego state. We are born into our Free Child, with no language. The Child ego state is concerned with FEELINGS. The Free Child is at play; the Adapted Child responds to reprimands, control, rules and regulations. The child that wishes to please responds from the Adapted Child ego state.

We develop our Parent ego state from the day we are born, from our parents or the adults that bring us up. Our Parent ego state is divided into the Controlling Parent – the parent that sets us boundaries and rules – and the Nurturing Parent – the parent that looks after us, feeds us and gives us cuddles. As we learn to develop our Adult ego state from our parents, it is understandable why we begin to sound like our parents as we converse in this ego state!

The Adult ego state develops from a young age and is the ego state we use to negotiate and problem-solve. When we wish to be assertive we must speak from our Adult ego state and address the listeners Adult ego state. The Adult ego state is concerned with THINKING.

## Ego States



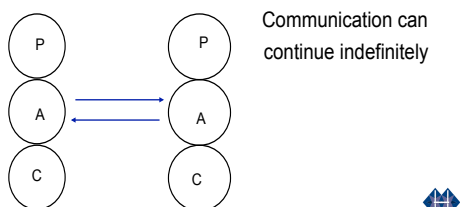
There are three types of transactions:

### COMPLEMENTARY TRANSACTIONS

In a complementary transaction, person A and person B are both conversing in the same ego state. As the conversation changes, both change ego state together. Complementary transactions are comfortable and can go on indefinitely. Consider both people to be dancing in step!

### A Complementary Transaction

When the ego state addressed is the ego state which responds, we have a complementary transaction



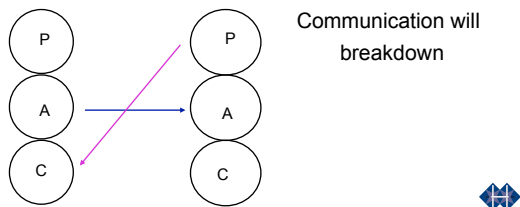
## CROSSED TRANSACTIONS

When person A addresses one ego state and person B responds from a different ego state, a crossed transaction occurs. There is usually a cross of Adult-Adult to a Controlled Parent-Child transaction. As the Child is addressed, the person whose Child ego state is addressed FEELS being put down. They may unconsciously respond back from their Adapted Child ego state to the Parent ego state, thus bringing the conversation back to a complementary transaction (and one that can be concluded successfully). Another option is to get into an argument, whereby parties are talking from their Controlling Parent to the Child ego state, both trying to put down the other person and “win” the argument. When this happens, conversation breaks down and will not have a satisfactory ending unless one person consciously tries to find as satisfactory a conclusion in the moment. However, both parties will be aware that there is unfinished business.

A third option is for Person A to stay within their Adult ego state, remain assertive and hope to alter Person B’s behaviour by not responding in the way they would like.

### A Crossed Transaction

When there is a crossing of ego state in response to the initial address



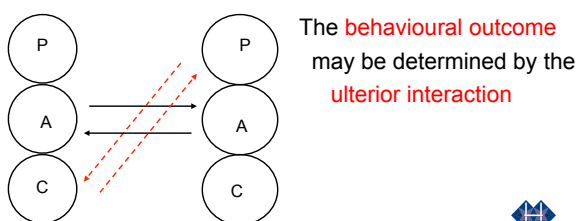
## ULTERIOR TRANSACTIONS

An ulterior transaction occurs when there is a hidden message, left unspoken. Both parties may be aware of the hidden message (accurately reading between the lines). However, if Person A is trying to signal something to Person B, it may be that Person B chooses to ignore the message or may not even ‘receive’ it.

Ulterior transactions are usually the method of choice when it is perceived that the conversation is too difficult or embarrassing to be had (giving hints rather than speaking the words.) However, it is not a desirable way to converse as it relies on mind reading! The message can also be ignored, leaving the other person wondering whether it has been deliberately ignored or just not ‘heard’.

### An Ulterior Transaction

When there is a **hidden message** at the psychological level



## Key Points of TA

- It all happens in the unconscious
- Complementary transactions can go on indefinitely; comfortable
- Crossed transactions will result in a break down of communication if they are not resolved (brought back to a complementary transaction)
- Ulterior transactions MAY be the behavioural outcome of the conversation. However, they may not – assumes that the other person is going to understand the unspoken message AND act on it. Never a good idea to hope that people will “read between the lines “ – need to be explicit and make the assertive request!
- People communicate in patterns. You cannot change someone else’s behaviour, but you can influence it, by changing the pattern
- Learning how to deal with a put down and handle your emotions if hooked into your Child ego state is essential when learning to become more assertive or how to deal with bullying behaviour

## Other elements that contribute to Successful Conversations

### Use of SPACE™

Self-awareness of one’s own SPACE™ and the impact this has on our conversations:

**S**TYLE

**P**ATTERNS

**A**SSUMPTIONS

**C**ULTURE

**E**NERGY

### WORDS-MUSIC-DANCE

- The impact of each element that makes up our communication
- The relevance of congruence
- Barriers and Bridges
- Leakage

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