

# What is transactional analysis?

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Analysis was founded by Dr. Eric Berne – an innovative and creative thinker who brought together some of the most effective ideas in psychotherapy (analytic, cognitive behavioural, phenomenological) into a powerful body of theory and practice.

Although psychoanalytically trained, he espoused the values of the humanistic movement believing that change is possible and that human beings have a natural aspiration to live in harmony with themselves and others.

Perhaps his most significant contribution was that he sought to demystify psychotherapy and use concepts, language and methods, which were understandable to all. He developed theories, that have both simple immediacy and subtle depth. One of his most revolutionary innovations was the treatment contract, by which he invited his clients to choose their own goals and agree with him a plan for their psychotherapy. In recent years many new trends in transactional analysis have emerged producing exciting and effective approaches to working with individuals, couples and groups.

The Institute's programmes seek to build upon Berne's work, incorporating new developments in Transactional Analysis and integrating new ideas from other approaches to psychotherapy and counselling while retaining the original theoretical framework, values and accessibility. The most significant of these developments has been termed Relational Transactional Analysis. For further details of this approach click on the heading What is Relational TA in the navigation panel.

Transactional Analysis: NOUN; A system of psychotherapy that analyzes personal relationships and interactions in terms of conflicting or complementary ego states that correspond to the roles of parent, child, and adult. Transactional Analysis is a therapy modality used to create growth and change.

A man by the name of Eric Berne from San Francisco in the 1950's developed the concepts and tools of Transactional Analysis and introduced them to the public in his book " Games People Play. " Berne referred to Transactional Analysis as social psychiatry, meaning a form of therapy or counseling used by every day people.

The concepts of Transactional Analysis are simple, straightforward, easy to use and understand, user-friendly, and not full of medical terminology or psychobabble like most other therapies. The tools and understanding provided by Transactional Analysis can create positive change to people, relationships, and the work environment when applied. Transactional Analysis is a theory of communications and interpersonal interaction. Sometimes the communications between two people have a hidden message, meaning, and agenda.

The result of this hidden message is a game.

The purpose of the game is to get a need met, without asking directly for what we need or want. People learn how to play these games to get our needs met as children, and they worked then. Now, as adults, they are the source of problems in ur every-day relationships with ourselves and those around us, because things get much more complicated as our age

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progresses. Transactional Analysis is also a theory on personality and psychological structure.

The concept of the parent, adult, and child ego “ states” also originated in Transactional Analysis.

These ideas help people to understand, explain and change their behavior and have better relationships with others. Through these ideas, people begin to understand ourselves and how we operate, as well as others. Relational TA Relational Transactional Analysis is a term that has evolved in recent years to describe a paradigm shift in the theory and practice of transactional analysis, which mirrors similar shifts that have been occurring in the wider psychotherapy, counselling and psychological fields.

Over the past two decades within TA, there has been a move away from a focus on cognitive insight as the path to psychological change, towards an appreciation and emphasis on the working through of, the conscious and more significantly the unconscious relational dynamics that arise between the therapist and the client. Relational TA therefore is a framework or way of thinking about the work, about the role of the practitioner and about methodology.

Many of the original models of transactional analysis, which are still in existence today, are concerned with the process of strengthening the Adult ego state - the ability to function successfully in the here and now and take control of self-defeating behaviours. Naturally as part of our training we teach these models. These relate mainly to cognitive behavioural processes

however - and therefore rely on a capacity to think consciously about things and take charge of the situation.

Although they are often effective and supportive of increased levels of functioning, these kind of approaches are often not adequate when dealing with deeper injuries to the self, which tend instead to manifest through powerful unconscious transference and countertransference processes, which cannot be tamed, controlled or mastered in quite the same way. Relational TA therefore, is interested in those processes and methodologies that appreciate, contextualise and seek to understand and engage with the language and power of the unconscious.

These processes require quite different models and frameworks and within our training we teach and emphasise such models, all of which have been developed within the relational TA community to support practitioners as they engage with clients at this more fundamental level of relating, uncovering and analysing as they do so, any unhelpful relational patterns that the client has developed as a way of defending themselves and in the process, offering new relational possibilities.

Relational TA practitioners therefore have a range of TA models to draw upon, those that work at the cognitive behavioural level and those that work at a more psychodynamic level and different relational TA practitioners will and do, draw quite differently upon them, which is one of the things that makes relational TA so exciting and diverse, what they all have in common with each other however, and therefore what unifies them, is a set of concepts which are a central feature of their work, these include: The

importance that is placed on relationship, in all its forms - with the self, with the other and with the inter- subjective (what happens when we get together).

The belief that the most profound change happens through experience (as opposed to cognitive insight), and most overtly through relational experiences that embody and enact different meanings from those that relationships once did for the client. The central focus of bringing to light the unconscious relational patterns that shape all of our experiences of ourselves and of our selves with others. A recognition that providing different relational experiences from those that are expected and/or longed for by the client, can be extremely exacting for both parties, and within this the practitioner as well as the client will be called upon to extend, challenge, change and get to know them-self in some new way. The belief that the practitioner is an active participant in the work and is not and cannot be a neutral observer within this.

This suggests a two person rather than a one-person approach - the client is not there to be done to, nor the practitioner to be a benign provider of what was once missing for the client; both parties are actively involved in the process of finding new and more authentic ways of relating with each other. That central importance that is placed on the way that the practitioner uses the pushes and pulls of their own subjective experience (or countertransference) with the client, to inform when and what intervention will best enhance the client's knowledge of self and of the other. An appreciation for the fact that certainty is neither possible nor necessarily desirable in the search for meaning.

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Recognising that the meanings that we have or will arrive at have been shaped and co-created and filtered through our individual social contexts, there is a belief that shifting from an individual perspective into a multiple perspective adds a depth and richness to the endeavour that enhances rather than detracts from it. In line with this 'both/and' thinking is valued over 'either/or'. That the client is seen as and is treated very much as an adult, who is capable of a reciprocal, adult relationship with the practitioner.

Within this the maternal metaphor in which the practitioner acts as a temporary replacement for unsatisfactory parents, there to meet their client's unmet relational needs, is made problematic. Instead, the "activity of relatedness" and a "love of truth", (Cornell and Bonds-white 2001), where both parties are willing to acknowledge reality about themselves is emphasised.