

UNDERSTANDING TRANSACTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Transactional analysis has wide applications in clinical, therapeutic, organizational and personal development. It helps people who want to change and transform themselves completely rather than to adjust with their existing pattern. Whatever we do, think and say are our transactions and that primarily depends on the type of data recorded since our childhood in the brain. The present paper examines the impact of our transactions on our interpersonal relationships as well as on our own affectivity. The role of our childhood recordings on our transactions is also discussed in detail. Attempt has been made to suggest some strategies to utilize our positive recordings in our day-to-day encounters unconsciously. These suggestions are completely based on research outcomes in the field of neurobiology.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Wilder Penfield a neurosurgeon from McGill University Montreal once during a brain surgery while patient was under only local anesthesia touched the temporal cortex of the brain of the patient with a weak electric current through a galvanic probe. His patient reported that there is a piano and someone is playing. I could hear the song. Dr. Penfield found that the recollections could be clearly derived from patient's memory with the help of electrode. He named this phenomenon as physical experience. The same physical experience can be reproduced when the electrode is reapplied. Thereafter Dr. Penfield conducted several experiments and recorded the results. He concludes that whatever we see or hear since our childhood is recorded in our brain as it is. Not only the picture that we see or words that we hear but the feeling associated with the event is also recorded. Both feeling and event are linked with each other in such a way that they cannot be separated at any point of time. These recordings are chemical recordings and the phenomenon is the same as it is in the tape recorder. This experiment of Dr. Penfield provided the foremost neurobiological support to the theory of transactional analysis given by Eric Berne (1951).

According to the theory of transactional analysis whatever we see, listen, experience or feel since our early childhood are as it is recorded in our brain. Up to the age of five the data (e.g., dos and don'ts, sweet words, nurturing words, shouting, face expressions

of love or anger, eye expressions of love or furrowed brows etc) coming from our parents and other elderly persons in the house are recorded under taught concept. In our early childhood these all are recorded without any analysis or filter because at this time our adult brain that can think is not yet developed. At this time whatever we feel (e.g. Joy, Fear, or Anger etc) are recorded under felt concept. At the age of ten months we starts moving from one place to another and gets the first hand experience of touching different objects. At this stage the development of our adult takes place and at this time we are able to think, analyze, and filter the data that are coming from various external sources. These filtered data are recorded under thought concept and it continues throughout our life, whereas the data under taught and felt concepts are recorded up to the age of five only. According to Berne, the data recorded under taught concept is Parent data and known as Parent Ego State. The data recorded under felt concept is Child data and known as Child Ego State. Adult data are recorded under thought concept and known as Adult Ego State. Later many other behavior scientists under modern transactional analysis conceptualize that these Parent and Child Ego states can be both negative and positive. The positive parent ego state is nurturing, supportive, caring, constructive, and firm etc. The negative parent ego state is overprotective, autocratic, invasive, fault finding, decisive, controlling, fighting, and violent and so on. The

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positive child ego state is creative curious, playful, accommodating, assertive, exuberant and the like. The negative child ego state is egocentric, inconsiderate, fearful, rebellious, desperate, impulsive, and the like. The adult ego state is holding the data that are processed through why, what, where, when, who, and how. Adult is accountable for processing the data coming from parent ego state, child ego state or adult ego itself. There are physical as well as verbal clues exist in a person's behavior that clearly indicates that which data source a person is using: parent, child or adult? The parent ego's physical clues are like furrowed brow, pointing index finger, head shaking backward or forward, horrified look, foot tapping, hands on lips, arms folded across the chest and the like. The parent ego's verbal clues are like "Do what I have said, how many time I need to tell you, stop these nonsense, good work done, always, never, have to, naughty, silly, shocking, disgusting, lazy, and the like. The child ego's physical clues are like tears in eyes, rolling eyes, shivering, delight, laughter, nail biting, nose thumbing, and nervous laugh etc. The child's verbal clues are "I wish, I want, I don't care, I guess, bigger, best, and better" and the like. When the adult ego is in charge of behavior then the physical clues include balanced movement of face, eyes, and body along with blinking of eyes at certain interval. The verbal clues of the adult comprises of what, when, who, how, how much, what way, true, false, possible, probable, unknown, objective, I think, I see, in my opinion etc. Adult ego is a processing unit of our brain. Our behavior is always in balance when we use our parent or child's data through our adult. In other words the data should first be processed in our adult. Our adult should always be in charge of our behavior. Whenever we use the data directly from our parent or child, our behavior becomes more neurotic.

TRANSACTIONS

Eric Berne in his theory of transactional analysis floated the idea that whatever we do, think, and say are our transactions and that primarily depends on the type of data recorded since our childhood in the brain. Transaction is a unit of social interaction. The transaction includes transactional stimulus and transactional response. When two people are interacting with each other and one of them is speaking something or giving some indications

through body language or action to other person then that is actually a kind of transactional stimulus. When another person is giving some response to that stimulus by the way of some action, face expression, body posture and gesture, or spoken words then it is transactional response. According to Berne's assumption we transact from our negative or positive recordings of our parent and child ego states through our adult in order to deal with the external situation, object or person. We may be desperate, angry, aggressive, fearful, depressed, or judgmental while using our negative recordings directly from parent or child ego state with little or no control of our adult ego state. On the other hand we may be supportive, caring, nurturing, assertive, or creative while using our positive recordings that are processed in adult ego state.

Each time when we are exposed to any situation, object, and person we tend to concentrate on them to control or to convert them into our favor. Whatever way we adopt or action we take to control those stimuli, what matter the most is the source of our brain utilized for our transactional response. If our transactional response is emitting from positive recordings of our brain positive consequences will occur and if the same is emitting from negative recordings, negative consequences are bound to occur. The mantra is very clear:

"Transactional Response from Positive source = Positive Transactional Response = Positive Consequences"

"Transactional Response from Negative source = Negative Transactional Response = Negative Consequences"

For example if one of our friends gives us negative transactional stimulus by saying that "I will never come to your house in future". To this stimulus if we give negative transactional response by saying that "who cares". Definitely the consequences would be negative and we may lose the friend forever. Instead of negative response if we give positive response by saying that "we love you so much that we can't afford to lose you." Certainly the consequences would always be positive and our positive affectivity will be enhanced.

We can give name to our negative transactional response as transactional reaction, which comes from negative recordings of our brain. We all know that we can only control ourselves not others. On the other hand we may say that we can control others by

controlling our transactional response. We can win over external negative forces by both negative and positive course of actions; nevertheless if we want to follow the negative action, we need to be more negative than the external negative force because one cannot win over negative force by being less negative. There is a saying that iron cut iron, but the iron which is used for cutting must be sharper than the other one. We have to decide whether we want to cut iron or shape the iron through melting process (positive approach). To beat criminal who is a killer by our negative action, we need to kill him otherwise he will kill us. Nonetheless we will become a killer in a process. There are many side effects too of being negative, as at one end we can win but on many other fronts we may lose because of the presence of negativity in our mind. Positive always win over negative, therefore it is better to adopt positive transactions, as this also helps us to produce many other positive consequences. Many ask me that how to deal with criminal minds with positive transactions? I think there are many positive solutions available to control negatives but the problem is that we don't know them or know only few that are not working actually. Generally we know only two or three positive transactions to convince others and we implement those commonly in almost all the situations, and if we fail to convince others, either we fight or take flight. There are hundreds of positive transactions but we don't know them. We need to find or developed those unidentified positive transactions.

IMPORTANCE OF TRANSACTIONS

Our transactions are exceedingly important to develop positive interpersonal relationship with our parents, partner, children, colleagues, friends, seniors in the organization in which we are working, and with our relatives. These transactions also plays very significant role in shaping our mind with regard to development of positive attitude, traits, emotional intelligence and enhancing our self-esteem and self-efficacy. The language that we are using in our day to day life (transactions) has definite impact on our mind. More we use negative words and sentences more our mind will become negative and with the result our attitude and personality traits will become negative, our self-esteem and efficacy will be badly affected. Over all our negative affectivity will increase tremendously. The negative affectivity

indicates the absence of happiness and presence of negative emotions like fear, anger, frustration, boredom, dullness, disappointment, sadness, distressed, annoyed, nervous, envious, disgusted, and embarrassed and the like. Reverse would be the consequences if we use positive transactions, means the positive affectivity will be augmented. The positive affectivity indicates the presence of happiness and positive emotions like astonished, excited, optimism, hope, confidence, contentment, fulfillment, serenity, and cheerful etc. Positive affectivity is correlated with personality trait extraversion and negative affectivity is correlated with neuroticism 0.4 to 0.9 (Carr 2004). The positive affectivity is associated with greater job satisfaction and marital satisfaction. The negative affectivity is one aspect of the avoidance - oriented behavior inhibition system whereas the positive affectivity is part of behavioral facilitation system. Transactions have exponential relationships with our personality dimensions. Our negative transactions facilitate our personality dimensions to become negative. It forces our emotional intelligence to become poor, traits and attitude to become negative, and self-esteem and efficacy to go down. Interestingly our negative personality dimensions assist our transactions to become negative. In fact due to this very reason an inward spiral is created and our negativity increases endlessly. We can convert this negative inward spiral into upward positive spiral if we consciously use positive transactions.

Neurobiological researches are showing that our brain is divided two parts. Emotional brain and thought brain. The balance is created by a team of neurotransmitters that are released in our brain and helps to transfer information from one neuron to another. The area of our brain which is more active tend to snatch more blood and oxygen and with the result the other part of the brain that is getting less blood and oxygen become less active. Our transactions help us to regulate the proper blood and oxygen supply to all parts of the brain and help creating balance between emotional and thought brain. With the help of well thought positive transactions we can control the flow of neurotransmitters. As for example if we ask ourselves that "What am I thinking?" This sentence accesses the basal ganglia. Basal Ganglia are one part of our brain that integrates feelings, thoughts and movements. Similarly if we ask ourselves that

“What do I want now?” This transaction accesses the cerebellum. The cerebellum carries out executive functions in our brain and connects the prefrontal cortex, where the cognitive integration takes place (Siegel 2010).

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Here a question comes to our mind that why we transact from our negative recordings while we know already that the consequences would definitely be negative. For example we know that anger is an enemy of our wisdom and always manufacture adverse consequences but even then we get angry quite often to adverse external stimuli and use aggressive negative transactional response, and rationalize the same by saying that it was the need of the hour. In the same manner on majority of occasions in our day-to-day life we use negative transactional response and face adverse consequences. Can we stop these behavior if yes then how? Can we erase our negative recordings? We can't erase any recordings of our brain. Yes we can switch them off through practice. Also we need to nurture our positive source and debase our negative source on continual basis.

STRATEGIES TO TRANSCAT FROM POSITIVE SOURCE

There are few strategies through which we can switch off a major portion of our negative recordings and can learn to extend positive transactional stimulus and response in all our interpersonal interactions.

1. Self Awareness

“Awareness Equals Responsibility” (Nadler 2011) means our ability to respond positively in all situations or be responsible. We need to explore our inner landscape such as awareness of our strengths and weaknesses, mood swings, varying feelings, behavior and common pattern of our behavior in day-to-day life, our impact on others, and personal story. Indisputably our unwillingness to investigate our inner landscape not only weakens our motivation but can also corrode our ability to inspire others through our positive transactions. Give answer to following questions and read the same three times every day.

- What are my strengths?
- What are my weaknesses?
- Do I have frequent mood swings?
- How much my behavior is consistent?
- How much people trust me?
- What are my skills?
- How much I am competent?

2. The Emotional Audit

Whenever we face some extreme adverse situation or exposed to intense negative transactional stimulus from someone we get immediately charged with negative emotions because fear and anger are our first line of defense against any adverse circumstances. And when we are emotionally charged with negative emotions, in fact, we are emotionally hijacked and the bulk of blood and oxygen flows towards the emotional part of the brain. With the result, very less amount of blood and oxygen left there for our thought brain. At this situation we lose our thinking power and begin to give response from our negative source e.g., directly from our negative parent and child ego states. The emotional audit is designed to ask strategic questions that can changed the focus when we are emotionally charged. The emotional audit questions and their answers refocus the activity away from emotional brain and support the flow of blood and oxygen towards our thought brain in order to gain more cognitive control. The types of questions to be answered are as follows:

- What am I feeling? (Accesses the basal ganglia, which integrate feelings, thoughts, and movements, and the temporal lobes, which regulate emotional stability by labeling affect).
- What am I thinking? (Accesses the basal ganglia)
- What do I want now? (Accesses the cerebellum, which carries out executive functions and connects to the neo-cortex, where cognitive integration takes place).
- How I can do the way I want? (Accesses the Neo-cortex, which allows us to learn from mistakes).
- What do I need to do differently? (Access the neo-cortex and interior cingulate gyrus. The neo-cortex handles the executive functioning like planning and goal setting etc. The interior cingulate gyrus is the gear shifter of the brain. It checks all the idea and chooses the best option).

3. Reappraisal

The reappraisal technique is taken from cognitive restructuring. In this technique we give new constructive meaning to our bad experiences. Under this technique we should ask few questions and give answer to them. The questions are as follows:

- What can I learn from this experience?
- How can I turn this into a meaningful experience?
- What may be other interpretations that could be more accurate for this experience?
- What best I can do in this situation?

4. Convert negative transactions into positive ones

We must identify how many times in a day we use negative transactions. We need to convert all our negative transactions into positive ones and put conscious efforts to use the same in all our interactions.

The negative sentences given in the table are only few examples. Normally we speak hundreds of negative sentences like these. Initially converting the negative transactions into positive ones and practicing the same in our all encounter would be a painful exercise because it requires conscious effort, but after few months speaking positive sentences and utilizing positive source will become our habit.

Table Few examples of negative and positive transactions are given in the table.1 below:

Negative Transactions	Positive Transactions
• I can do nothing in this situation	• Let's look our alternatives
• My boss will not accept my proposal	• I can create more effective presentation
• Nobody cares for me	• I prefer to take care for others
• I am fed up of people	• I can control my emotions
• My situation is becoming bad to verse	• Let me see what is positive for me in this
• That person is doing nothing and getting everything	• Every person has got some quality
• He is very cunning fellow	• He has his own limitations
• It is worthless to be honest in this world	• I feel proud of myself of being honest even in most vulnerable time
• "I am as I am." I can't change	• I prefer to adjust in any situation
• I am scared how I will organize the event	• I believe on my competencies and I will utilize them best
• What would happen if things go wrong in future	• I am capable of handling any situation patiently.

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