

# PAC CONCEPT IN COMMUNICATION (TA)

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HUT<sub>351</sub> – Professional Skill Development

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# PAC as communication style

- Break in communication – cause of unhappiness, lack of productivity, dissatisfaction, demotivation – at workplace
- What can be done? – identify the area of problem – PAC concept under transactional analysis theory helps to do that
- Transactional analysis was developed by Eric Berne in late 1950's – part of Psychiatry
- It is the study of social interactions or transactions – involves three ego state – Parent – Adult-Child – ego states are state of mind – conflict arises or communication breaks when we are controlled by the ego state

- *“Any indication (speech, gestures or other nonverbal cues) that acknowledges the presence of another person is called a transactional stimulus. All transactions are initiated via the use of a transactional stimulus. When two individuals encounter each other and the receiver reacts in a manner related to the transactional stimulus, that individual has performed a transactional response. The key to successful person-to-person communication generally lies in identifying which ego state (in the speaker) initiated the transactional stimulus and which ego state (in the receiver) provided the transactional response.”* (GoodTherapy, 2016: )

# Three types of Egos – communication styles

**P** **PARENT**  
= Controlling

**Authoritative** style assuming control or superior knowledge

**A** **ADULT**  
= Rational

**Respectful** style that allows different perspectives (without judgement). This style is rational and unemotional; useful for discussions, and co-operative planning

**C** **CHILD**  
= Rebellious or Obedient

**Impulsive** style of communication. It is spontaneous and can be irresponsible

# Parent Ego

- The Parent ego state is comprised of the behaviours, thoughts and feelings copied from our parents, or other parental figures.
- Language - 'you / I should', 'under no circumstances', 'always' and 'never forget', 'don't lie, cheat, steal' – raised voice and dominating tone – also words of anxiety, concern, fear, wishes of good luck when in threat, etc.
- Body movement: raised or pointing fingers, stern and rarely smiling, showing aloofness
- Eyes: usually looking straight at you

# Parent Ego..contd...

- There are two principal parent ego states:
- **Nurturing:** more positive and pleasant qualities of what parents and society do for a person.
- **Critical:** corrective behaviour of real parents and the prohibitive messages of society.
- Parent can also be described as an ego state that is TAUGHT.
- Our parent is formed by external events and influences upon us as we grow through early childhood.
- As adults we have the ability to change the messages, but it does require awareness and effort.

# Adult

- It draws on our understanding and analysis of our external and internal environment.
- Objectivity and understanding of reality
- Understanding of the feelings of others
- Adult in us is the means by which we keep our parent and child in check.
- Reflected in logical and self controlled language – “maybe”, “possibly”
- E.g. I see that Suzie’s house was burnt down. Mom was right—I should not play with matches.
- Due to the typically rational and reasonable nature of the Adult, Berne believes that the easiest and simplest transactions occur between Adult ego states

# Child

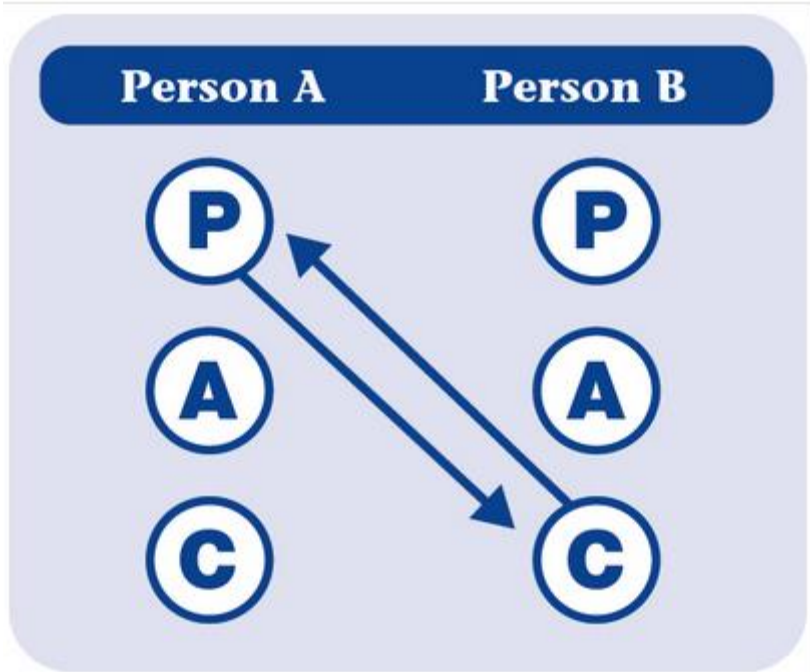
- Individuals behave, feel and think similarly to how they did as a child.
- E.g. person who receives a poor evaluation at work may respond by looking at the floor, or crying, or getting angry.
- The child is the expression of feelings, thoughts and emotions that are being replayed from childhood.
- The child ego state can also be described a 'FELT' ego state.
- The child ego state has two main parts:
- **Adapted:** human response which has some negativity in it, some resistance, some reaction and some deeper hostility.
- **Free:** playful and spontaneous part of human behaviour, from infancy to an old age.



# Need to identify ego states of each other

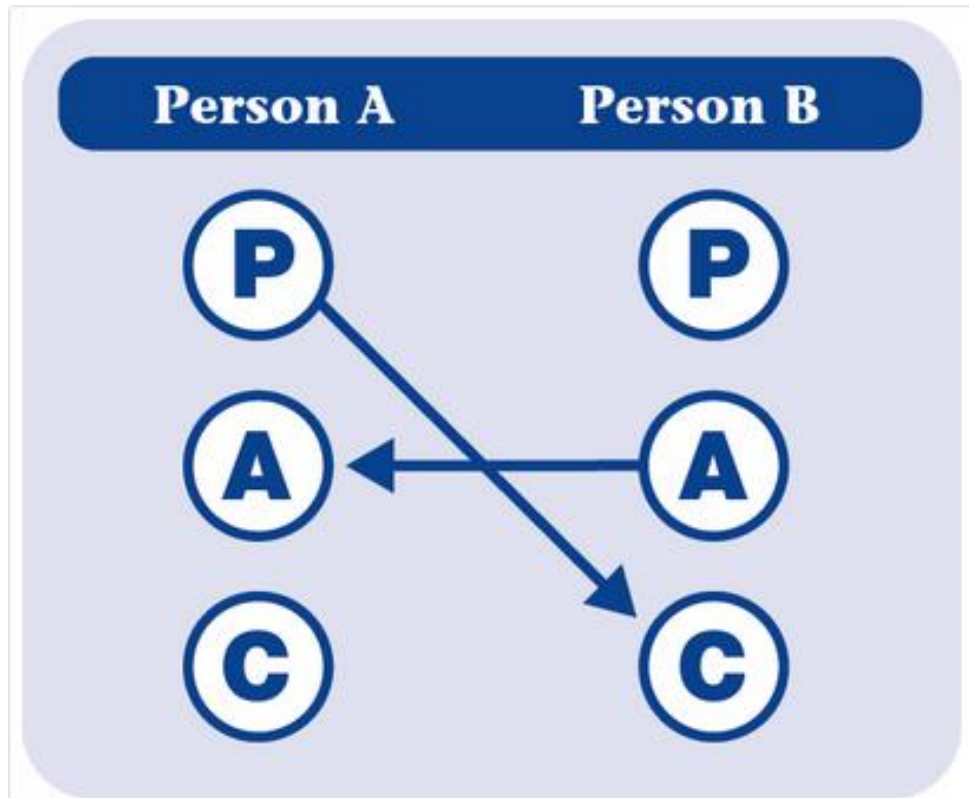
- Why – for better communication and long lasting relationships
- Conflicts arise - crossed mental states - when one is in parent ego and other in adult ego
- Three schemes of transactions
- Complementary transaction – when stimulus and response parallel – what the speaker intends and the receiver responds – both parent ego or both adult ego or parent and child ego – Boss: “Never give up!”. Junior: “Yes sir. I’ll try”
- Crossed: Boss: “Never give up!”. Junior: “Its easy said than done” – egos have crossed as it was not intended that way
- Ulterior – transaction at two levels – social (adult to adult) and deeper (parent to child) – extra attention, a good morning, a pat on the back by the boss

# E.g. Parent-Child Communication Style



- Common in families and workplaces
- Parent style adopted by – elder or senior
- Child style – younger (child – sibling), junior
- Same can be in case of husband and wife
- This style layered with emotions and judgment
- Can be appropriate in case of emergencies – over time it fails
- P-C – “You should have done a better job at that”
- C-P – “Yes, I should have. You are right. I’m sorry”.
- Will go on till someone makes a change – leading to conflict in families/workplace – till further change
- C-P: “It doesn’t matter what I do, it’s never good enough!”

# Conflict - change



- No problems with paths parallel
- Paths cross when one changes communication style.
- Parent ego style meets Adult ego style - change of habit and a conscious effort to adopt a rational, unemotional response, despite the presence of the authoritarian words or body language.
- Adult to Adult
- Person A "You should have done a better job of that",
- Person B "Yes, I agree there could be some improvements. Can we please organize a time to discuss some ideas that I have to make some changes".
- Person A "Ok. Lets meet after lunch"

# What to do

- Take the emotion out of the communication by changing your words and tone of voice
- Adopt an open body position rather than crossed arms (often read as defensive), or hands in pockets (often read as superior or dismissive).
- open-ended questions to create a friendly environment- gives respondent chance to give full answer, rather than just 'yes' or 'no'. Questions starting with 'How', 'When', 'Where' and 'Who' rather than 'why'.
- E.g.
  - How would you go about that?
  - When would be the best time to start?
  - What is the most important change that we could make?
  - Where are the books that I could collect to start reading about the new system?

# References

- <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/transactional-analysis>
- <https://www.rcsaustralia.com.au/pac-communication-model/>
- <https://www.browningyork.com/pac-model/>
- P.D. Chaturvedi and Mukesh Chaturvedi (2018) *The Art and Science of Business Communication: Skills, concepts, cases, and Applications*, Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd.