

Chapter Eighteen

Assertive Behaviour and Transactional Analysis

Objectives:

To develop an understanding of:

- **Assertive Behaviour**
- **Transactional Analysis**

Structural analysis

Descriptive model

Kinds of transactions

Phenomenon of transactions-strokes, life positions, scripts, games

Diagnosis of Transactional analysis.

Confronting conflict is not easy for some people. When faced with the need to negotiate with others, some managers may feel inferior, lack necessary skills, or be in awe of the other person's power. Under these conditions they are likely to suppress their feelings (part of the avoidance strategy) or to strike out in unintended anger. Neither response is truly productive.

A constructive alternative is to practice assertive behaviors. **Assertiveness** is the process of expressing feelings, asking for legitimate changes, and giving and receiving honest feedback. An assertive individual is not afraid to request that another person change an offensive behavior and is not uncomfortable refusing unreasonable requests from someone else. Assertiveness training involves teaching people to develop effective ways of dealing with a variety of anxiety-producing situations.

Assertive people are direct, honest and expressive. They feel confident, gain self-respect, and make others feel valued. By contrast, aggressive people may humiliate others, and unassertive people elicit either pity or scorn from others. Both alternatives to assertiveness typically are less effective for achieving a desired goal.

Being assertive in a situation involves five stages. When confronted with an intolerable situation, assertive people describe it objectively, express their emotional reactions and feelings, and empathize with the other's position. Then they offer problem-solving alternatives and indicate the consequences (positive or negative) that will follow. Not all five steps may be necessary in all situations. As a minimum, it is important to describe the present situation and make recommendations for change. Use of the other steps would depend on the significance of the problem and the relationship between the people involved.

Assertive behavior generally is most effective when it integrates a number of verbal and nonverbal components. Eye contact is a means of expressing sincerity and self –confidence (in many cultures), while an erect body posture and direct body positioning may increase the impact of a message. Appropriate gestures may be used, congruent facial expressions are essential, and a strong but modulated voice tone and volume will be convincing. Perhaps most important is the spontaneous and forceful expressions of an honest reaction.

Components of Assertive Behavior

1. Make eye contact, looking at another person when you are speaking is an effective way of showing sincerity and ensures the person that you are talking to him or her.
2. A whispered monotone will seldom convince another person that you mean business, while shouting often causes the other person to react defensively. A level, well- modulated statement is convincing without being intimidating.
3. Your verbal messages are more effective if you are relaxed, face the person, stand or sit appropriately close and hold your head more erect.
4. A message can get added emphasis from appropriate gestures, while nervous fidgeting or overenthusiastic gesturing can be distracting.
5. Effective assertions require an expression that agrees with the message. It doesn't come across to express anger while smiling or laughing.
6. Spontaneity is important, since hesitation may diminish the effect of an assertion. However, judgment is needed to select an appropriate occasion.
7. Express your feelings honestly and ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM. It is not necessary to put the other person down (aggressive) in order to express your feelings (assertive).

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOR STYLES

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Characteristics	Allow others to choose for you. Emotionally dishonest. Indirect, self-denying, inhibited. In win/lose situations you lose. If you do get your own way, it is indirect.	Choose for self. Appropriately honest. Direct, self-respecting, self-expressing, straight forward. Convert win/lose to win/win.	Choose for others. Inappropriately honest (tactless). Direct, self-enhancing. Self-expressive, derogatory. Win/Lose situation which you win.
Your own feelings in the exchange	Anxious, ignored, helpless, manipulated. Angry at yourself and/or others.	Confident, self-respecting, goal oriented, valued. Later: accomplished.	Righteous, superior, depreciatory, controlling. Later: possibly guilty.
Others' feelings in the exchange	Guilty or superior. Frustrated with you.	Valued, respected.	Humiliated, defensive, resentful, hurt.
Others' view of you in the exchange	Lack of respect. Distrust. Can be	Respect, trust, know where you stand.	Vengeful, angry, distrustful, fearful.

	considered a pushover. Do not know where you stand.		
Outcome	Others achieve their goals at your expense. Your rights are violated.	Outcome determined by above-board negotiation. Yours and others rights respected.	You achieve your goal at others' expense. Your rights upheld; others violated.
Underlying relief system	I should never make anyone uncomfortable or displeased... except myself.	I have a responsibility to protect my own rights: I respect others but not necessarily their behavior.	I have to put others down to protect myself.

From: "Managing Stress Before It manages You", by Steinmetz, Blankenship, Brown, Hall, and Miller, 1980.

SYSTEMATIC ASSERTIVE SKILLS

BROKEN RECORD

Calm repetition--saying what you want over and over again. This teaches you to use persistence without you having to rehearse arguments or angry feelings beforehand, in order to be "up for dealing with manipulative verbal side traps, argumentative baiting, irrelevant logic, while sticking to your desired point.

FOGGING

Accept manipulative criticism by calmly acknowledging to your critic the probability that there may be some truth in what he/she says, yet allows you to remain your own judge of what you do. Once learned you can receive criticism comfortably without becoming anxious or defensive, while giving no reward to those using manipulative criticism.

FREE INFORMATION

Recognize simple cues given by a social partner in everyday conversation to indicate what is interesting or important to that person. Once you learn to recognize free information when you perceive it, it allows you to feel less shy in entering into conversation while at the same time prompting social partners to talk more easily about themselves.

NEGATIVE ASSERTION

Accepting your errors and faults (without having to apologize) by strongly and sympathetically agreeing with hostile or constructive criticism of your negative qualities. Once learned this allows you to look more comfortably at negatives in your own behavior or personality without feeling defensive and anxious, or resorting to denial of real error while at the same time reducing your critic's anger or hostility.

NEGATIVE INQUIRY

Actively prompting criticism in order to use the information (if helpful) or exhaust it (if manipulative) while prompting your critic to be more assertive, less dependant on manipulative ploys. Once in close

relationships while prompting the other person to express honest negative feelings and improve communication.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

Accepting and initiating discussion of both the positive and negative aspects of your personality, behavior, lifestyle, intelligence, to enhance social communication and reduce manipulation. This allows you comfortably to disclose aspects of yourself and your life that previously caused feeling of ignorance, anxiety, or guilt.

WORKABLE COMPROMISE

In using your verbal assertive skills, it is practical, whenever you feel that your self-respect is not in question to offer a workable compromise to the other person. You can always bargain for your material goals unless the compromise affects your personal feelings of self-respect. If the end goal involves a matter of your self-worth, however, there can be no compromise.

IMPORTANT READING

Pushing up to a point: Assertiveness and effectiveness in leadership and interpersonal dynamics

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Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

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Domain	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Conflict	Avoidant, Trivializing.	Candid, Constructive	Belligerent, Demanding.
Negotiation	Weak opening, Ready concessions	Strong opening, integrative solutions	Extreme opening, aggressive tactics.
Teamwork	Silent without opinions, conformists	Egalitarian, open, engaged	Confrontational, dominance-seeking
Influence	Suppliant, appeasing	Active, forthright, persuasive	Bullying, Cajoling
Decision Making	Equivocal, indecisive	Proactive, inclusive	Unilateral, selfserving

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

Whether people interact in assertive or nonassertive ways, there is a social transaction in which one person responds to another. The study of these social transactions between people is called transactional analysis (TA).

Different models of TA

Structural ego state model -Typically, according to TA, there are three ego-states that people consistently use:

- Parent is our 'Taught' concept of life
- Adult is our 'Thought' concept of life
- Child is our 'Felt' concept of life

Parent

Parent is now commonly represented as a circle with four quadrants:

- Nurturing - Nurturing (positive) and Spoiling (negative).
- Controlling - Structuring (positive) and Critical (negative).

Adult

Adult remains as a single entity, representing an 'accounting' function or mode, which can draw on the resources of both Parent and Child.

Child

Child is now commonly represented as circle with four quadrants:

- Adapted - Co-operative (positive) and Compliant/Resistant (negative).
- Free - Spontaneous (positive) and Immature (negative).

Here are some simple clues as to the ego state sending the signal:

Signal type	Parent	Child	Adult
Physical	angry or impatient body-language and expressions, finger-pointing, patronising gestures,	emotionally sad expressions, despair, temper tantrums, whining voice, rolling eyes, shrugging shoulders, teasing, delight, laughter, speaking behind hand, raising hand to speak, squirming and giggling.	attentive, interested, straight-forward, tilted head, non-threatening and non-threatened.
Verbal	always, never, for once and for all, judgmental words, critical words, patronising language, posturing language.	baby talk, I wish, I dunno, I want, I'm gonna, I don't care, oh no, not again, things never go right for me, worst day of my life, bigger, biggest, best, many superlatives, words to impress.	why, what, how, who, where and when, how much, in what way, comparative expressions, reasoned statements, true, false, probably, possibly, I think, I realise, I see, I believe, in my opinion.

When we are trying to identify ego states: words are only part of the story. To analyse a transaction we need to see and feel what is being said as well.

- Only 7% of meaning is in the words spoken.
- 38% of meaning is paralinguistic (the way that the words are said).
- 55% is in facial expression.

There is no general rule as to the effectiveness of any ego state in any given situation (some people get results by being dictatorial (Parent to Child), or by having temper tantrums, (Child to Parent), but for a balanced approach to life, Adult to Adult is generally recommended.

Where previously Transactional Analysis suggested that effective communications were complementary (response echoing the path of the stimulus), and better still complementary adult to adult, the modern interpretation suggests that effective communications and relationships are based on complementary transactions to and from positive quadrants, and also, still, adult to adult. Stimuli and responses can come from any (or some) of these seven ego states, to any or some of the respondent's seven ego states

The descriptive model-This model shows how we function or behave with others. The model used here is divided up into nine and S. Temple's (1999) term "mode" is used here as it differentiates it from the structural ego state model mentioned above. It is differentiated into effective modes and ineffective modes.

Ineffective modes

Negative Controlling Parent - communicates a "You're not OK" message, and is punitive.

Negative Nurturing Parent - communicates a "You're not OK" message. When in this mode the person will often do things for others which they are capable of doing for themselves. When in this mode the person is engulfing and overprotective.

Negative Adapted Child - expresses an "I'm not OK" message. When in this mode the person over-adapts to others and tends to experience such emotions as depression, unrealistic fear and anxiety.

Negative Free Child - in this mode the person runs wild with no restrictions or boundaries. In this mode they express a "You're not OK" message.

Effective modes

Positive Nurturing Parent - communicates the message "You're OK". When in this mode the person is caring and affirming.

Positive Controlling Parent - communicates the message "You're OK". This is the boundary setting mode, offering constructive criticism, whilst being caring but firm.

Positive Adapted Child - communicates an "I'm OK" message. From this mode we learn the rules to help us live with others.

Positive Free Child - communicates an "I'm OK" message. This is the creative, fun loving, curious and energetic mode.

Accounting mode - communicates "We're OK" messages. The Adult is able to assess reality in the here and now. When the Accounting mode is in the executive position it is possible to choose which of the other effective modes to go into, dependent on the situation. This is then called Accounting Mode. When using the descriptive behavioural model the term Accounting Mode helps to differentiate it from the structural model where it is referred to as Adult. When stable in this Accounting Mode we are taking account of the present context and situation and deciding the most appropriate mode to come from. We are then able to respond appropriately rather than flipping into archaic or historic ways of being, thinking and behaving which are likely to be inappropriate and unhelpful.

Kinds of transactions

	Reciprocal complimentary	or	Crossed transactions	Covert transactions
Ego state addressed	Both partners are addressing the ego state the other is in		Partners address ego states other than that their partner is in	The explicit social conversation occurs in parallel with an implicit psychological transaction.

Strokes are recognitions, attention or responsiveness that one person gives another- it can be both positive and negative, conditional and unconditional in nature. People are hungry for strokes and when

there is a lack of positive strokes they may even seek negative strokes. Transactions can be experienced as positive and negative depending on the strokes within them. Stroking can be physical, verbal and nonverbal and people have particular strokes that they will accept and reject.

Transactional analysis - life positions

Life positions are basic beliefs about self and others, which are used to justify decisions and behaviour. There are a number of ways of diagramming the life positions. Franklin Ernst drew the life positions in quadrants, which he called the OK Corral (1971).

blame model

The Transactional Analysis 'Okay Corral' can be linked to 'blame'. Commonly when emotions are triggered people adopt one of three attitudes relating to blame, which each correlate to a position on the Okay Corral:

- I'm to blame (You are okay and I'm not okay - 'helpless')
- You are to blame (I'm okay and you are not okay - 'angry')
- We are both to blame (I'm not okay and you are not okay - 'hopeless')

None of these is a healthy position.

Instead the healthy position is, and the mindset should be: "It's no-one's fault, blame isn't the issue - what matters is how we go forward and sort things out." (I'm okay and you are okay - 'happy')

Transactional analysis - the script

The script is a life plan made when we are growing up, it is directed to pay off. It is based on our early decisions based on our experiences of life. Script is reinforced by parents or other influential people and experiences.

Redefining (deliberately (but unconsciously) distorting the reality to match our preferred ways of seeing things) and discounting (take something as worth less than it is) are important ways of writing scripts. Injunctions(things one must not do) and Drivers (things one must do) are also important parts of scripts. Scripts can fall into Tragic, Heroic or Banal variety. Based on this five working styles have developed:

- be perfect
- be strong
- try hard
- please others
- hurry up

The importance of recognising these in ourselves and others is that we can then work to the best of them rather than be driven by them.

The way we structure our time is also influenced by our script.

transactional analysis - time structuring

The way in which we structure time is likely to reflect the different hungers. We all structure time in a variety of ways:

- Withdrawal
- Rituals
- Pastiming
- Activities
- Games
- Intimacy

Obtaining balance means ensuring that we have sufficient time for play and intimacy and if this does not occur then it would be beneficial to explore what we might be avoiding.

Games

Games are learned pattern of behaviour, series of transactions that is complimentary, ulterior and proceeds towards a predictable outcome. Each game has a payoff for those playing it. Games may vary in flexibility, tenacity and intensity. Based on the degree of acceptability and potential harm games can be of first degree, second degree and third degree. Games are also studied based on their aim, roles, social and psychological paradigms, dynamics and payoffs.

Some common games are- Why don't You. Yes But; If it weren't for you; Why does this always happen to me; See what you made me do; You got me into this; Look how hard I have tried; I 'm only trying to help you; Let's you and him fight; Now I 've got you, you son of a bitch.

Games can be analysed using Karpman's drama triangle i.e by the roles of persecutor, victim and rescuer. There can also be sudden switches in role when the victim or the rescuer becomes the persecutor

Games vary in the length of time that passes while they are being played. Some can take seconds or minutes while others take weeks months or even years. People play games for these reasons:

- to structure time
- to acquire strokes
- to maintain the substitute feeling and the system of thinking, beliefs and actions that go with it
- to confirm parental injunctions and further the life script
- to maintain the person's life position by "proving" that self/others are not OK
- to provide a high level of stroke exchange while blocking intimacy and maintaining distance
- to make people predictable.

Ways to deal with games

There are various ways to stop a game, including the use of different options than the one automatically used. We can:

- cross the transaction by responding from a different ego state than the one the stimulus is designed to hook.
- pick up the ulterior rather than the social message e.g. when a person says "I can't do this, I'm useless". Rather than saying "let me do this for you" instead say "It sounds like you have a problem. What do you want me to do about it?" (said from the Adult ego state)
- the opening message to the game always entails a discount. There are further discounts at each stage of the game. By detecting discounts we can identify game invitations and defuse them with options. (A discount is when we minimise, maximise or ignore some aspect of a problem which would assist us in resolving it. Such as saying in a whiny voice "This is too difficult for me to do", so we automatically help them).
- replace the game strokes. Loss of strokes to the Child ego state means a threat to survival. We get a great many strokes from games, even if they are negative. However, if we don't obtain sufficient positive strokes, or give ourselves positive strokes, we will go for quantity rather than quality of strokes and play games to get them. This loss of strokes is also a loss of excitement that the game has generated.

Another way to think about this is to consider the game role we or the other person is likely to take. One way to discover this is to ask the following questions:

1. What keeps happening over and over again
2. How does it start?
3. What happens next?
4. And then what happens?
5. How does it end?
6. How do feel after it ends? (John James, 1973)

We can then consider the reason we might have taken up a particular role, where we might switch to, and then consider how to do things differently. We need to consider what our own responsibility is in this - if the situation is too violent for us to get involved what options to we have? We could call for help, get others to come with us to intervene and so on. We need to choose the appropriate assistance and take the action required.

Transactional analysis - diagnosis

It is helpful to be able to assess or diagnose which ego state in the structural model, or which mode in the descriptive model, somebody is in. In this way we can respond appropriately as well as ensure which mode we are addressing.

However, when we work with other staff or are relating with young people, we are responding on the behavioural level. It is not always possible, or appropriate, to be undertaking more in-depth types of diagnosis

Behavioural diagnosis

Words, tone, tempo of speech, expressions, postures, gestures, breathing, and muscle tone provide clues for diagnosing ego states.

Parent mode words typically contain value judgments, Adult words are clear and definable, and Free Child mode words are direct and spontaneous. For example, a person in Adapted Child mode may cry silently, whereas when in Free Child mode we are likely to make a lot of noise. "You" or "one" usually come from Parent. This can switch even mid-sentence. If we are leaning forward it is likely we are in the posture of the Parent mode, whereas if we are in Adult mode we tend to be erect.

These are indicators not guarantees. Assessment needs to be supported by other methods of diagnosis.

social diagnosis

Observation of the kinds of transactions a person is having with others. For example, if eliciting a response from someone's caretaking Parent it is likely that the stimulus is coming from Child, though not necessarily the Adapted Child mode. Our own responses to someone will often be a way of assessing which ego state or mode they are coming from.

historical diagnosis

The person's past also provides important information. If, as a child we had feelings similar to those we are experiencing now, it is likely we are in Child ego state. If our mother or father behaved or talked in the same way that we are behaving or talking now then we are probably in a Parent ego state.

phenomenological diagnosis

This occurs when we re-experience the past instead of just remembering it. This means that diagnosis is undertaken by self-examination. This is sometimes accurate and sometimes very inaccurate as the Child ego state may be afraid to allow our Adult to know what is going on.

(For details on Transactional analysis please refer to en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transactional_analysis)

Question

1. What is Assertive Behaviour? Evaluate the role of Transactional Analysis in developing an assertive behaviour.
2. Describe the role of assertive behaviour for developing employee and organizational effectiveness.
3. What is Transactional analysis. Describe and Compare Structural analysis and Descriptive model.
4. What are the different kinds of Transactions? Discuss the different Phenomenon behind transactions-strokes, life positions, scripts, games

