



Old habits can mess up the present!

Transactional Analysis can help us replace old habits with better behavior.

Hi, Wayne Hart here sharing some thoughts about applying TA.

We often repeat patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions, that we learned long ago. We do it easily, automatically, and without giving it a moment's thought. But that pattern of behavior may not be the best one for the current situation.

Consider practicing a 3-step process: being ware of your experience, categorizing it, and making a choice to continue or change. TA provides tools you need to do this.

It all starts with being aware of the conditions and our experience. Exactly what does that mean? Conditions include our environment...the social and material world outside of us. It includes our personal physical condition as well...things like health, fatigue, and hunger. Awareness of our experience involves monitoring our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Feelings include emotions and body sensations. And we monitor the connection between conditions and experience...asking what conditions might be contributing to, or triggering, our pattern of thinking, feeling, and action...as well as how our patterns define the conditions. In other words, does the traffic jam cause us to be frustrated, or does our thinking define the traffic jam as something frustrating.

Once we identify the pattern of thought, feeling and action, we classify it. Why would we do that? Patterns have very different characteristics. We all have the power to choose the best one for the current conditions. To do that we need to recognize which one is active and compare it to alternatives.

TA gives us several ways to categorize. The most common way is to classify in terms of ego-states. That is what TA calls a pattern of thoughts, feelings, and actions. The reason for that term, ego-states, is interesting, but the subject of another conversation. The simplest TA categorization looks at our functioning in terms of three different ego-states called Parent, Adult, and Child.

- Our Parent patterns are associated with controlling and nurturing thoughts based on how things "should" be. Sticking with the traffic jam example, Parent patterns think things like, "They should add another lane to this highway" or "I should relax and make the best of this," with emotions like impatience and calm respectively.
- Our Adult patterns are associated with objective interpretation, reasoning and problem solving thoughts based on how things "are." Adult patterns think things like, "How long might this traffic congestion last?" and "Maybe I could take an alternate route" with not much emotion at all. They are sort of matter of fact.
- Our Child patterns are associated with how things "feel." Child patterns think things like, "Why does this always happen when I am in a hurry," and "I knew it was a mistake to go this way," with emotions like anger, frustration, and regret.



SELF-REGULATION in 3 STEPS
Feb. 22, 2023 by Wayne Hart, Ph.D. TA-Now.Com



We can also go deeper and categorize where in our personality structure the energy is coming from. It may be ego-states formed in the past that re-play under certain conditions. These habits may or may not be best suited to present events. Or the energy could be coming from a more fresh, current-moment-focused ego-state. In that case our pattern is more likely to be productive and successful.

The third step is making a choice to continue using the original ego-state or energize a different one that is more suitable to the current situation. Step 2, categorization, gets us into a state that makes choosing easier. Categorizing is the bridge between automatic responses and intentional wellbeing.

Doing this takes some education and practice. But, once we learn, it is useful and powerful for being our best selves in all kinds of conditions. And we can help others be their best selves as well.

You are welcome to download the text of this video. And Transactional Analysis Now offers the Applying TA Basics Workshop, which is a good place to learn about TA. We offer the TA User's Group which is a good place to get coaching and support for becoming better at using TA. And we offer TA Practitioner training and supervision for people who want to apply TA in their work-lives.

Be aware, classify your ego-state, and choose a better ego-state if appropriate.

I'm Wayne Hart, on behalf of TA-Now.com, wishing you an "I'm OK, You're OK" life experience.