

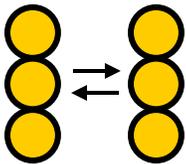


Transactional Musings

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“Get-a-Level Head” continued

The following is a continuation of a section from the “Handbook of Listening - Transactional Analysis of the Listening Activity” by F. H. Ernst Jr., M.D., pages 102-119.



“Get-a-level Head”
“Get-a-level” refers to the specific activity of the person squaring up his head and face so as to have it be vertical in the horizontal plane, so that a level headed physical posture is evident; so that a straight forward presentation of attitude is apparent to the other person, whether he was the listener or the talker. This one procedure, also became known as the **ERNST PHENOMENON**. This technique (more reliably than any other) has the effect of activating (cathecting) the Adult ego state in the talker and/or listener.”

The example of Holly:
“In her twentieth session, Holly was level most of the time. Her eyes were pinking intermittently. About every 3 to 8 seconds her head moved to one angle or another. Periodically she held up her Parental pointing finger to tell of events between herself and her husband, to tell about their children, and to tell about her own background. Her choice

of words and voice tone remained objective. There was a lack of impassioned pleading. She returned to the leveled countenance for 6 to 20 seconds at least once every 20 seconds during that session. At first glance it looked as if she might be trying to persuade the doctor that she was expounding on the right, correct and only true way of raising children as contrasted to her husband’s lack of good quality child-raising techniques. Looking and listening closely to her descriptions, it became apparent that she was looking, watching, listening, and carefully assessing how she was being listened to by others she was talking to. AND she was also listening to herself and assessing how she might be influencing the resolution of events in her home.”

“Holly wanted to get well of intermittent hives. She knew she alienated Howie by her “If it weren't for you” game and “I’m only trying to help you” game. He, her husband, played back his complimentary game of “Yes, Holly, you’re entirely right,” his variant of “Holly-you're-always-right.” In the past, her payoff event for these game sequences had been either to (1) yell and

scream him out of the room, out of the house (a Get-Rid-Of payoff for her game) or he’d go to sleep for a Get-Away-From game payoff for his game, or (2) she’d go quiet, as would he, and they would “put each other on silence for hours or days” for a mutual “Get-Nowhere-With” each other quality of mutual payoff. First he and then she had come to recognize that after this latter event had gone on for twelve or more hours then the chances of her breaking out with giant hives would greatly increase. Although previously a hard “Cool it, Man” player (Frigid Woman), they infrequently locked onto this game now for a mutually repelling set of payoffs.”

“But,” she continued in this twentieth session, “sometimes I get to telling him about how I want to go live closer to my family” (head tilted 15 degrees), “and how much my mother and

Special points of Interest:

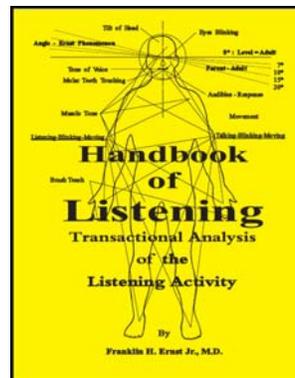
“**T**he leveling procedure/technique aids in organizing, in securing an organized approach, even though sometimes only briefly. It aids in setting aside internal agitation and disorganized kinds of behavior.”

“**S**quared up listeners are “straight shooters.” Leveling with an individual, being on the square, both in the physical and psychological sense, regularly induces increased self confidence and also confidence when it (leveling) is coming from the other person.”

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"Game People Play"

by Eric Berne, MD

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"STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS"

"Observations of spontaneous social activity, most productively carried out in certain kinds of psychotherapy groups, reveals that from time to time people show noticeable changes in posture, viewpoint, voice, vocabulary, and other aspects of behavior. These behavioral changes are often accompanied by shifts in feeling. In a given individual, a certain set of behavior patterns corresponds to one state of mind, while another set is related to a different psychic attitude, often inconsistent with the first. These changes and differences give rise to the idea of EGO STATES."

"In technical language, an ego state may be described phenomenologically as a coherent system of feelings, and operationally as a set of coherent behavior patterns. In more practical terms, it is a system of feelings accompanied by a related set of behavior patterns. Each individual seems to have available a limited repertoire of such ego states, which are not roles but psychological realities. This repertoire can be sorted into the following categories: (1) ego states which

brother want to see our children" (head brought up to an 8 to 10 degree tilt), "and I can just see him start to go blank. Then he goes to bed. Night before last (head level, eyes pink) Suzie, our oldest, got sick again and started fussing. So by the time I got to bed I wanted to talk some more, to tell him I shouldn't have brought it all up" (head to side 20 degrees, pink eyes) "and that he was right, that we probably shouldn't go to live near them. But I'd gone too far already. He just said, 'Yes, yes, you're right. You're entirely right, dear,' and he rolled over and went to sleep."

"I thought to myself" (leveled face, clear eyes) "right then, 'Hey, this is it. I wonder if I'm going to get hives tomorrow. I hope not, but I may.' You know I could see then, he didn't say my name once after I started all this stuff up to try to get him into a corner" (angling of her face for 6 seconds). "Then yesterday morning I got the hives bad. I started to itch all over. The lotions wouldn't work. When he came home for lunch he began to call me 'Holly', to say my name to me. Then (leveling again, pinkened eyes), I saw he wasn't mad, he did care. He did want me." (Head now way over 25 to 30 degrees.) "You know," (smiling and coming upright) "my hives got well by, by supper time." (Leveling) "I guess then it's my Parent who gets on him" (finger up and pointing with an 8 to 10 degree tilt to her face) "and he gets inconsiderate and unwilling to listen to me or hear out my views." (Smiling, shaking her head side to side, then leveling and going ahead.)

"During the twentieth session, she watched carefully for information as to

what she could learn about her own behavior from the doctor and what she (her Adult) could better keep track of, on how and when her game-playing self adversely affected the outcome of the events at home. This was predominantly ADULT. For more than 50 percent of the total number of seconds in that session, she was on-the-level, was able to keep track of her hurt feelings and able to deal with her feelings about how "he was being so mean to me, not on my side." She also was able to listen to him and check out her own feelings, keeping her Adult active most of the time."

"Characteristically, when a person is actively angling and someone inquires "What is your angle about?" the angled person will laugh, then level, and within a few seconds discontinue the activity he had previously been embarked on as if to say "Aw shucks, you caught me." This single act of "leveling" the head and then holding it a few seconds will, with rather good regularity, lead the way towards a rearrangement of the internal way of thinking with corresponding modifications of the rest of the expressive behavior, such as tone of voice, the setting of other muscles of the body. Several persons have also told of having alternative views of a situation come to mind; putting it differently, the person's own ADULT becomes more available to himself. This is the kinesthetics of behavior and experiencing."

"If during the demonstrating of leveling, the person's elbows can rest on some level surface, such as the arms of a chair, table, or his knees, there will be the added information about

where a physical, horizontal ("level") is. Several people, in order to be able to assume their own level with minimal conspicuousness in social settings, have practiced leveling in front of a mirror, as with one hand cupped under the chin, to then be able to verify for self what it feels like (with their own body muscles) to be leveled."

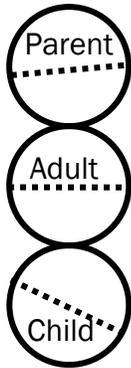
"Ferris in a prison psychotherapy group coined the term "my **Adult locators**," referring to his eyeglasses. He had been in several different groups and locked up for many years. He had no prospects, as far as he could tell, of being released in the near future; nevertheless, he "glommed onto" using "my eyeglasses as my Adult locators" within 3 months and 25 group sessions. Then he began to note that he could interrupt his own repetitive sequence of (1) a laughing remark, (2) righteous anger at someone followed by (3) a provocative statement and then (4) a remark and/or physical attitude meant to infer to the second person "You don't know what you're doing," or "You don't know what you're talking about," for a game of "See-what-you-made-me-do!" With this Move #4 in the above sequence he would have a head angle of 25 to 30 degrees to the side and head tipped back 10 degrees. The sequence usually ended in a pouting silence. After having located this sequence and found the usefulness of being able to have his own "Adult locators," Ferris could be asked by doctor or other person at Move #1, #2, or #3 of the above sequence, "What's your angle about?" and he would be able to interrupt

TRANSACTIONAL DIAGRAM

TALKING
Person



LISTENING
Person



ANGLING MANUEVERS OF LISTENING
and LISTENING ANGLES

Parent has a 3 - 10 degree tilt of head and eyes.
(more angle? - "You better watch out!")

Adult is Level Headed.
Head and eyes are level.

Child has a 7 - 20 degree tilt of head and eyes,
maybe more; indicates defiant or compliant
child; fighter, believer, flirter.

his activity, his program for earning a big get-away-from pout. He found he could instead exchange his "angle" for a mutual laugh with the other person. He found that his eyeglasses were so very reliable for himself that he was able to discontinue the procedure of putting his hands to his face to get his own level. His "Adult locators" now allowed him to play his game as far as he wanted to. He next became adept at listening for his own tone of voice. He wore his glass frames regularly. He would listen for his tone or he could look over the rims of his glasses and catch himself in his game (just) before he would have, for example, told the persons important for his release to "Kiss my ass." After six months of being in the group he secured his release. At this writing, 30 months after release, Ferris continues to be outside of prison. He writes back every once in a while saying, "I'm watching my angle, Doc." He became enthusiastic about "Adult locators" to the extent of persuading his best friend to wear eyeglass rims without lenses. For Ferris, his

"Adult locators" continued to be both effective and efficient for him in his continued social rehabilitation (cure). For the first time in the last 10 years of his 28-year life, he became "trouble free" for 30 sequential months out of prison."

"This procedure of leveling can be and has been called "a trick," "educating the patient" and other similar terms. It has been haughtily referred to as "training" and "just plain educating the patient." The fact that leveling has afforded many a person a chance to obtain relief from his symptoms continues to be repeatedly reaffirmed."

"Leveling has offered the opportunity to many a person to locate a psychological and physical position, an attitude with which and from which a significant number of individuals have been able, within a short period of time, to be more in charge of their own behavior, to be better able to organize their feeling experiences (on a realistic basis)."

"Once objective thinking can be initiated and feeling

states sorted, that is, once the Adult ego state is separated from "troubled Child" and activated, then better control and management of internal distress can be obtained. The leveling procedure could be called, "not letting a patient work through his problems" and has been called "artificial," but for those treaters, whether "artists" or "scientists" who are intent on successfully reducing the distress of the ill and troubled person and are intent on using procedures which will aid their patients (clients or students) in overcoming and reducing suffering; then the objective is to use those methods which do no harm to others and will provide personal relief."

"Persons with intermittent panic attacks as the reason for entering treatment have referred to leveling as "When I held it (the level) for a while it was like a temporary sanctuary that I could find." "It was a refuge from my panic." "I did what you said to keep it (symptoms) from taking over."

resemble those of parental figures (2) ego states which are autonomously directed toward objective appraisal of reality and (3) those which represent archaic relics, still-active ego states which were fixated in early childhood. Technically these are called, respectively, extero psychic, neopsychic, and archeopsychic ego states. Colloquially their exhibitions are called Parent, Adult and Child, and these simple terms serve for all but the most formal discussions."

"The position is, then, that at any given moment each individual in a social aggregation will exhibit a Parental, Adult or Child ego state, and that individuals can shift with varying degrees of readiness from one ego state to another. These observations give rise to certain diagnostic statements. "That is your Parent" means: "You are now in the same state of mind as one of your parents (or a parental substitute) used to be, and you are responding as he would, with the same posture, gestures, vocabulary, feelings, etc." "That is your Adult" means: "You have just made an autonomous, objective appraisal of the situation and are stating these thought-processes, or the problems you perceive, or the conclusions you have come to, in a non-prejudicial manner."



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"Mastery of the universe is proportional to the symbols man has by which to represent his universe."

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"Leveling" as a procedure has been taught and used by several known athletes with success in their sports."

"In treatment, the leveling technique is often introduced as early as the middle of the first session. Factors taken into account before introducing "leveling" this early include: is a patient being alternately level and then angled two or three times early in the first visit? Is that person objectifying (vs. objecting to, e.g., "there's no reason at all for me to be feeling that way") his presenting situation initially? These individuals indicate having access to different qualities of their own personality structure within themselves."

"A person can be asked early in treatment if he wants to have more control of himself; be more in charge of his own internal switch that turns the trouble on and off. When answering affirmatively the person can then be shown the leveling procedure."

"The leveling procedure/technique aids in organizing, in securing an

organized approach, even though sometimes only briefly. It aids in setting aside internal agitation and disorganized kinds of behavior."

"The procedure for locating the level position of the head is described to some patients as being a method to better locate an objective viewpoint, an unbiased view of a situation at hand. Since "bias, prejudice and opinion" are ordinarily thought of as "being bad," the doctor had some increased leverage when introducing it as a way to control personal bias, prejudice and being opinionated."

"Squared up listeners are "straight shooters." Leveling with an individual, being on the square, both in the physical and the psychological sense, regularly induces increased self confidence and also confidence when it (the leveling) is coming from the other person."

"Being on-the-level is quite regularly humorless. In one instance, a student who had just seen a demonstration of "leveling" as "Adult - locating" tried it the same evening at a dinner party. Introducing it (leveling) to

her guests with "I have a new trick I just learned," then she invited her guests to follow her example by placing their hands on the side of their heads to level their faces. The very considerable amount of pleasure which was being had by the guests and the hostess up to that point and for the previous 30 enjoyable minutes vanished within 30 seconds and remained absent until one of those present began to "angle" himself "in fun" again."

"Her party had come to a dead standstill in terms of fun. No jokes were told. The laughter died out. The individuals, rather impressively surprised at the turn of events, were reasoning to each other and with each other, for that interval. The hilarity and euphoria of the particular situation were eliminated for that "leveled" interval. The enjoyment and the laughs came back into the situation almost as soon as the guests again began to tilt their heads and angles were again "allowed."

To be continued

Adult ego state

In looking over Dad's copy of "Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy" by Eric Berne, M.D., I found on page 191 that he had tabbed and noted: "Adult" and circle with level line in the middle.

Eric Berne writes about the "Finer Structure of the Personality." An excellent discussion. On page 194 he says: "Turning now to the Adult, it appears that in many cases certain child-like qualities become integrated into the Adult ego state in a

manner different from the contamination process. The mechanism of this "integration" remains to be elucidated, but it can be observed that certain people when functioning *qua* Adult have a charm and openness of nature which is reminiscent of that exhibited by children. Along with these go certain feelings toward the rest of humanity which may be subsumed under the classical term "pathos." On the other hand, there are moral

qualities which are universally expected of people who undertake grown-up responsibilities, such attributes as courage, sincerity, loyalty, and reliability, and which meet not mere local prejudices, but a world-wide ethos. In this sense the Adult can be said to have child-like and ethical aspects, but this remains the most obscure area in structural analysis, so that it is not possible at present to clarify it clinically."

To be continued