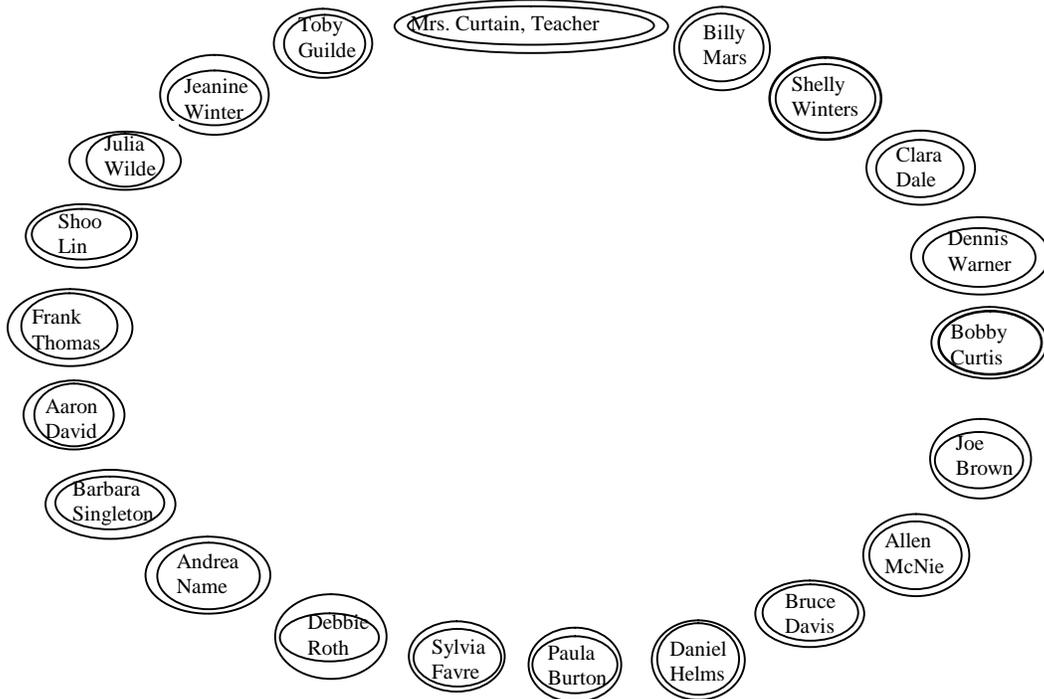


Can We Say The Hellos Now ?

by

Franklin H. Ernst Jr., M.D.



Named Hellos Exchanged.

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CAN WE SAY THE HELLOS NOW ?

Writer was invited by the teacher, Mrs. Curtain, to a local kindergarten class for a second visit, 5 months after his initial visit.

Soon after writer's first visit to the classroom, Mrs. Curtain had instituted a program in her kindergarten class for her 5 year old students to exchange named hellos with each other a few times a week.

About an hour into writer's second kindergarten visit, one of the students asked her: "Can we say the hellos now?" Shortly thereafter, the 20 five-year-old students were seated on a rug in a circle. Starting first with Billy, teacher had each one go around the circle to give a named hello to each other of his classmates. Billy started with "Hello Shelly" and Shelly gave Billy back a "Hello Billy". "Hello Clara" and she gave her named hello back to Billy, "Hello Dennis", "Hello Bobby", etc as Billy exchanged named hellos with his 19 other classmates and ending with "Hello Mrs. Curtin" who returned his hello similarly, "Hello Billy."

This process was repeated 19 more times, once by each student. It took about an hour. Of the 20 students each one giving 20 names, there were a few student hesitations in recalling the name of the next five year old in his circle. If a student paused more than four seconds someone else in the circle would supply it to him, not unusually the one waiting next in turn to be given his named hello.

The face of each student would almost routinely brighten for each of the 40 times he got a named hello. 40? Each student was given his name back the 20 times when it was his turn to initiate the hellos around, and then another 20 times as each other student initiated a named hello to him in their respective turn of going around the room in his turn of giving 20 named hellos in sequence to his classmates.

Mrs. Curtin later pointed out the Chinese girl in the class, Shoo Lin. Teacher mentioned that this girl had begun to come out of her shell. Shoo Lin had started the school year being physically round-faced and plumpish, two coats and a sweater on at all times. She would stay almost motionless and expressionless until spoken to, sitting in her place in class after arriving, never volunteering for anything, rarely talking when spoken to. Since Mrs. Curtin had begun to have the students exchange, carry out this named hello exercise three times a week a few months earlier, Shoo Lin had shortly become a participant AND from the start knew the other students names. During this particular exercise writer witnessed and reported here, he saw her give a recognizable smile about a dozen times. She was now hanging up her two coats after arrival and was wearing only her sweater during class.

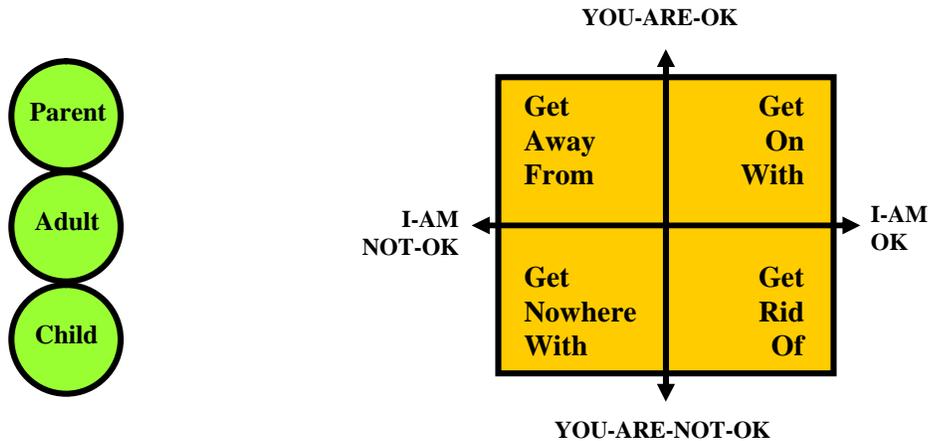
Dennis at the start of the school year was hyperactive, going from one place in the room to another, rarely seated for a full 30 seconds, making noise, interrupting others in conversation, etc. Mrs. Curtin described him as a real “Dennis the Menace” at the beginning of the class year. As seen in the classroom on the particular visit of this writer, Dennis was composed, orderly, waiting his turn in class activities.

His teacher reported that the mother of Dennis had told her that now her son, when out shopping with her, knew and said hello to many more people by name than she was aware he

knew and many more than she knew. For example at one store he introduced her to the mother of one of his classmates and told that this other mother was a nearby neighbor of theirs.

TEACHING PAC AND OK CORRAL TO FIRST GRADERS

In the early 1970s a few elementary classroom school teachers and teacher aides enrolled locally in an Introductory Course About Transactional Analysis. One of the teacher aides, Ocie, gathered some 15 of her first graders into a teaching group, held with her teacher's permission, to teach them about the Parent-Adult-Child stacked circles and the OK Corral.



Parent-Adult-Child

OK Corral: Grid for What's Happening

Ocie reported in her own TA seminar sessions about some of the responses of her first graders as she taught them about the Parent, Adult, Child circles. Teaching about Adult, one of her students referred to his Adult as “my brain.” Another one in her circle likened the Child in his six year old self as “the baby in me” which the others in Ocie's circle of five to six year old first graders agreed was also in them. About Parent there was almost immediate recognition by the members of having behaviors in themselves “like mommy” and “the daddy in me.”

OK CORRAL TAUGHT TO PRE-READERS

In a personal communication from Connie Wittig, an elementary school teacher of First Graders (pre-readers) in Cleveland, Ohio, she told of making up a chart with a square divided like the OK Corral into four quadrants ¹. In the right upper portion of each of the four quadrants were sketches of two persons, a Prince and a Princess next to each other for Get-On-With; a Prince with a Frog to his right for an “I’m OK and You are not OK” which results in a Get-Rid-Of action by the principle person in a pair in the right lower quadrant. For the Get-Nowhere-With quadrant there were two Frogs next to each other for an “I’m not OK, You are not OK” and for the Get-Away-From left upper quadrant a Frog with a Prince to its right for an “I’m not OK, you are OK.” She taught these sketches in the dynamic sense of what people do when confronted with one of the four qualities of outcomes in their classroom events. Further, Mrs. Wittig made up picture badges from which each student picked the one to represent himself in her classroom.

Students were asked to stick their individual pinned badges into the quadrant that expressed where they “were coming from” at the start of the day (eg in a get-away-from mood, a get-on-with mood, a get-nowhere-with mood, or a get-rid-of mood) and change their individual badge placement in the classroom Prince-Frog Chart, the master chart at the front of the class. They learned to change the location of their own individual badge on the master chart at the front of the room from one quadrant to another as their “mood” would change, change it to another quadrant during the day when they felt differently.

One boy, Kyle, got angry and withdrew from a classroom activity, **first** going to the classroom OK Corral Frog-Prince chart and moving his badge to the Get-Away-From corner of

¹ Connie Wittig: personal conversation author had with her in 1972. She is the first known teacher to have taught Transactional Analysis in schools. She was very careful to keep the Parents in the loop as noted in the July 1975 issue of the Transactional Analysis Journal, Vol. 5, No. 3, page 323, Article Abstracts edited by Arlie D’Angelo.

the OK Corral. When recess came he did go outside but kept to himself away from any group activities. He returned to class when recess was over. About 20 minutes later, Mrs. Wittig, the teacher, told of noticing Kyle was back participating in the assigned class activity. She looked over at the OK Corral chart and found he had in fact first changed the location of **his badge** to the GOW, Prince-Prince quadrant of the OK Corral. She described this movement of their badges by students in her class was not at all unusual. Students were achieving a considerable increase in their classroom self-governance and as Mrs. Wittig said: “They know what they are doing, and they like it.”

Mrs. Curtin, the local kindergarten teacher mentioned above, learned about Wittig’s OK Corral chart and made a similar one for her kindergarten class with notable interest by her five year old students. Each student similarly had his own badge and was free to move it from one quadrant of that classroom OK Corral (Frog-Prince Chart) to another as his mood changed, as he wanted to and did do it. The increase by students in self regulation again was very evident to her **and** to the visitor in her classroom.

IN SUMMARY

The Howdy Diagram, the PAC diagram and the OK Corral diagrams have been successfully taught to pre-readers in a public education setting and routinely have resulted in both improved self-management by students, and improved **learning** of classroom instruction in the classroom.

NOTES

The young students are self reflecting, sees others reflect, see interaction among each other, the teacher sees interaction, the students learn, and the students teach each other.

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