



Doctorate Program
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026801



Transactional Analysis and Existential Therapy

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Objectives

• **At the end of this discussion, every candidate will be able to:**

- Explain the concept of Transactional Analysis.
- Discuss the basic concepts Transactional Analysis.
- Describe the different ego states: Parent, Adult, and Child.
- Differentiate between the main types of transactions.
- Explain life scripts, life positions, and stroking.
- Discuss the role of Transactional Analysis in communication and interpersonal relationships.
- Apply Transactional Analysis concepts in psychiatric nursing and therapeutic communication.



Objectives

- **At the end of this discussion, every candidate will be able to:**
- Explain the concept of existential therapy and describe its historical development.
- Explain the major concepts of existential psychotherapy.
- Describe the four ultimate concerns of existence.
- Differentiate between normal anxiety and neurotic anxiety.
- Explain the role of meaning, freedom, responsibility, and self-awareness in human behavior.
- Discuss the applications of existential therapy in mental health and psychiatric nursing

Introduction

Human behavior is shaped not only by thoughts and emotions, but also by the way individuals communicate and interact with others. Every conversation, reaction, or relationship reflects deeper psychological patterns that influence personality, self-awareness, and interpersonal dynamics. Transactional Analysis, developed by Eric Berne, provides a powerful framework for understanding these patterns through the concepts of ego states, transactions, life scripts, and psychological games.



Introduction

Transactional Analysis is more than a communication theory; it is a comprehensive approach that helps individuals understand how childhood experiences, internal beliefs, and unconscious patterns affect present behavior and relationships. It explains why misunderstandings occur, why some relationships become unhealthy, and how communication can either strengthen or damage human connections.



Introduction

Human beings constantly search for meaning, identity, freedom, and purpose while facing the realities of anxiety, loneliness, uncertainty, and death. Unlike approaches that focus only on symptoms or behavior, Existential Therapy explores the deepest dimensions of human existence and asks fundamental questions about what it truly means to live authentically.



Introduction

Existential Therapy emerged from existential philosophy and was influenced by thinkers such as Viktor Frankl, Rollo May, and Irvin Yalom. This approach emphasizes that individuals are not passive victims of circumstances, but active participants responsible for creating meaning and making choices in their lives.



Introduction

Existential therapists believe that psychological distress often develops when individuals avoid confronting the essential realities of existence, including death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. Rather than eliminating all suffering, existential therapy helps individuals face life courageously, develop self-awareness, accept responsibility, and create a meaningful and authentic existence.



WHAT IS TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS ?

- TA is a theory about how and why people interact the way they do.
- A method of understanding behavior in interpersonal dynamics.
- TA is a way of understanding:
 - ... one to one relationships.
 - ... why communication fails and how it can be corrected.
- TA combines theories of human development, personality and communication in a powerful psychological system that provides a framework for understanding human interaction process and making personal change.



Transactional Analysis Definition

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS (TA)

is a method of understanding communication between people;

T.A. is a system of analysing and understanding human relationships;

Transactional analysis was first developed by an American psychiatrist, Eric Berne, drawing on the theories of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud.



Transactional Analysis

- It was introduced by Eric Berne.
- Transactional analysis is a technique used to help people better understand their own and other's behaviour, especially in interpersonal relationships.
- It is a good method for understanding interpersonal behaviour.
- It offers a model of personality and the dynamics of self and its relationship to others that makes possible a clear and meaningful discussion of behaviour



TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

- Developed by Eric Berne in 1950s.
- Impact of childhood experiences on adult life.
- Transactions=communication
- **Communication exchange:**
 - Person initiating conversation provides transaction stimulus
 - Stimulus=message of communication
 - Person receiving the stimulus provides the response
- Study the interactions between people.



FATHER OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

- Eric Berne (1910-1970)



Why TA?

It may help you to

- Recognize how you communicate with others
- Consider your options for how you can communicate differently to improve the communications you are involved in
- Improve effectiveness of your communication



Transactional Basis

Id – Pleasure Principle

Ego- Realistic Principle

Super-Ego- Ethical Principle

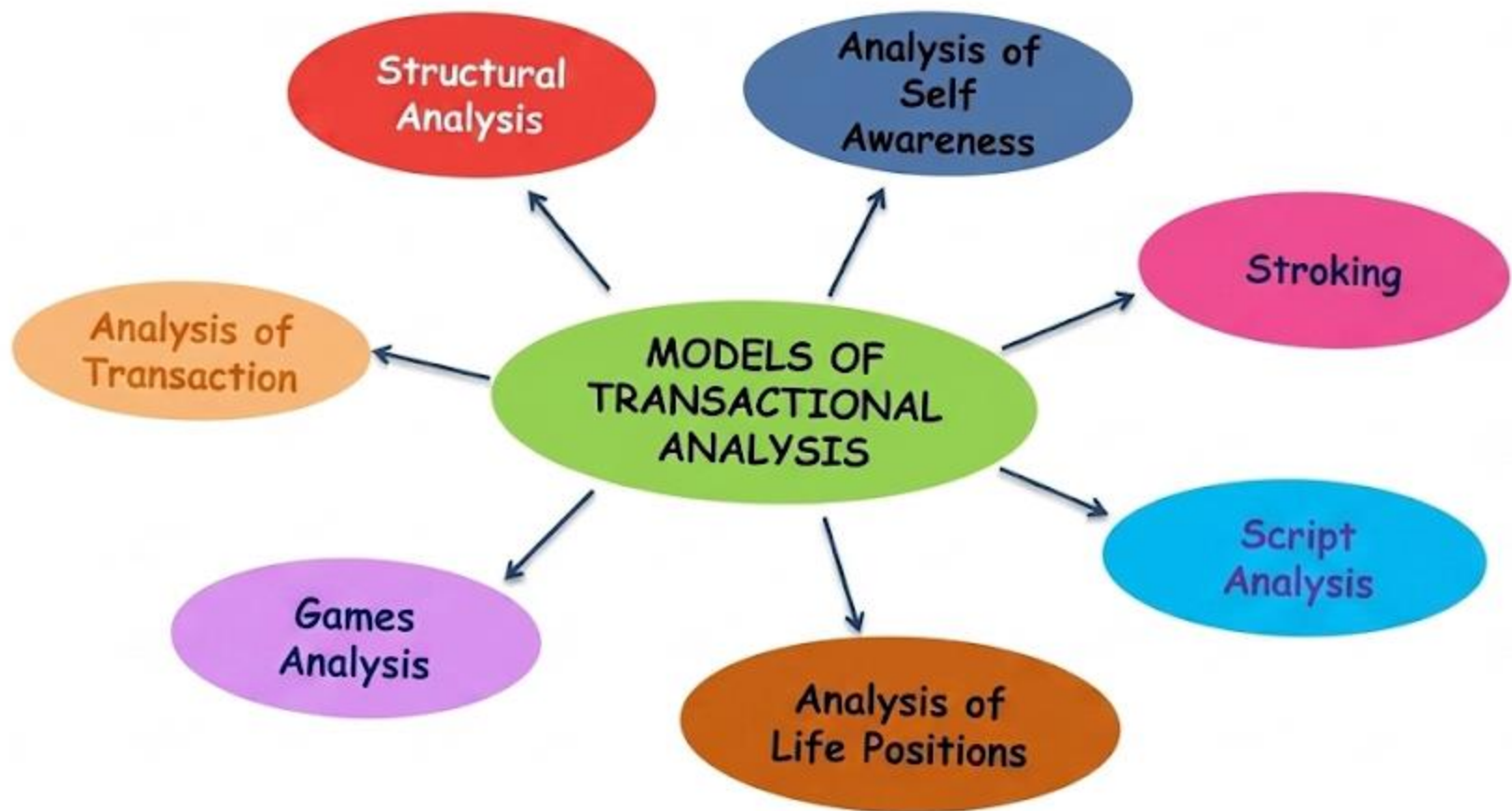


Transactional Basis

The three ego states:

- Parent
 - Controlling/ Critical parent
 - Nurturing parent
- Adult
- Child
 - Free/ Natural child
 - Adapted child





Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis is primarily concerned with the following:

1. Analysis of self-awareness
2. Analysis of ego states
3. Analysis of transactions
4. Script analysis
5. Games analysis
6. Analysis of life positions
7. Stroking



1. Analysis of Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is considered one of the most important concepts in Transactional Analysis because it helps individuals understand:

- their personality
- emotions
- attitudes
- behaviors
- interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships are composed of the self. The self represents the core of personality patterns that provide integration and stability to human behavior.



1. Analysis of Self-Awareness

Self-awareness describes the self in terms of:

- self-image
- conscious experiences
- unconscious experiences

Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham developed a model called the Johari Window to understand personality, behavior, and interpersonal awareness.

The Johari Window explains:

- what is known to self
- what is unknown to self
- what is known to others
- what is hidden from others



	KNOWN TO SELF	NOT KNOWN TO SELF
KNOWN TO OTHERS	1. OPEN AREA (or "Arena") Known to self and to others. (e.g., shared behaviors, knowledge, feelings)	2. BLIND SPOT Known to others but unknown to self. (e.g., behaviors or habits seen by others)
NOT KNOWN TO OTHERS	3. HIDDEN AREA (or "Facade") Known to self but hidden from others. (e.g., private thoughts, secrets, insecurities)	4. UNKNOWN Unknown to self and unknown to others. (e.g., subconscious processes, latent potential)

JOHARI WINDOW: A TOOL FOR SELF-AWARENESS AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- 'Seeking Feedback' → 'Reduce Blind Spot', expanding the 'OPEN AREA'
- 'Self-Disclosure' → 'Reduce Hidden Area', expanding the 'OPEN AREA'

The Johari Window

It consists of four parts.

1.Open Area

This area includes information:

- known to self
- known to others

Examples:

- behaviors
- attitudes
- feelings openly expressed

The larger the open area:

- the better the communication
- the healthier the relationships



The Johari Window

It consists of four parts.

2. Blind Area

This includes information:

- unknown to self
- known to others

Examples:

- habits
- attitudes
- weaknesses noticed by others
- Feedback from others helps reduce the blind area.



The Johari Window

It consists of four parts.

3. Hidden Area

This includes information:

- known to self
- unknown to others

Examples:

- secrets
- fears
- private emotions
- Self-disclosure helps reduce the hidden area.



The Johari Window

It consists of four parts.

4. Unknown Area

This includes information:

- unknown to self
- unknown to others

This area may contain:

- hidden talents
- unconscious motives
- unexplored abilities
- New experiences and psychotherapy may uncover this area



The Johari Window

Importance of Self-Awareness

Self-awareness helps individuals:

- improve communication
- understand emotions
- identify strengths and weaknesses
- improve interpersonal relationships
- increase emotional intelligence



TRANSACTION ANALYSIS FOUNDATION

- **Ego states**
- **Transactions**
- **Strokes**
- **Life positions**
- **Games**
- **Script analysis**



2. Analysis of Ego States

The ego plays an important role in human behavior.

People interact with each other through psychological positions or behavioral patterns called ego states.

Ego states represent a person's:

- thinking
- feeling
- behaving

at a particular moment.

There are three major ego states:

- Parent
- Adult
- Child

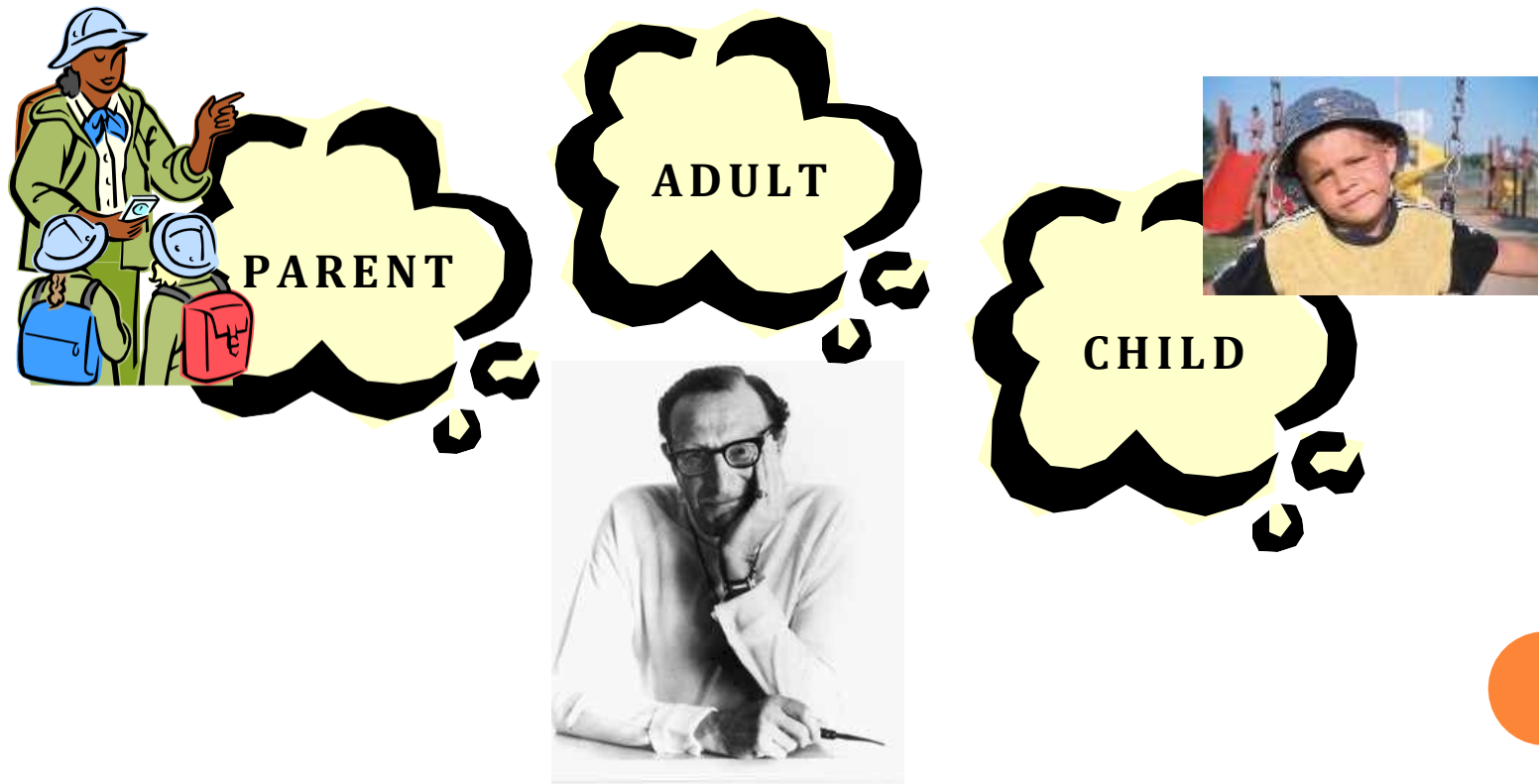
Every person, regardless of age, possesses these ego states in varying degrees.

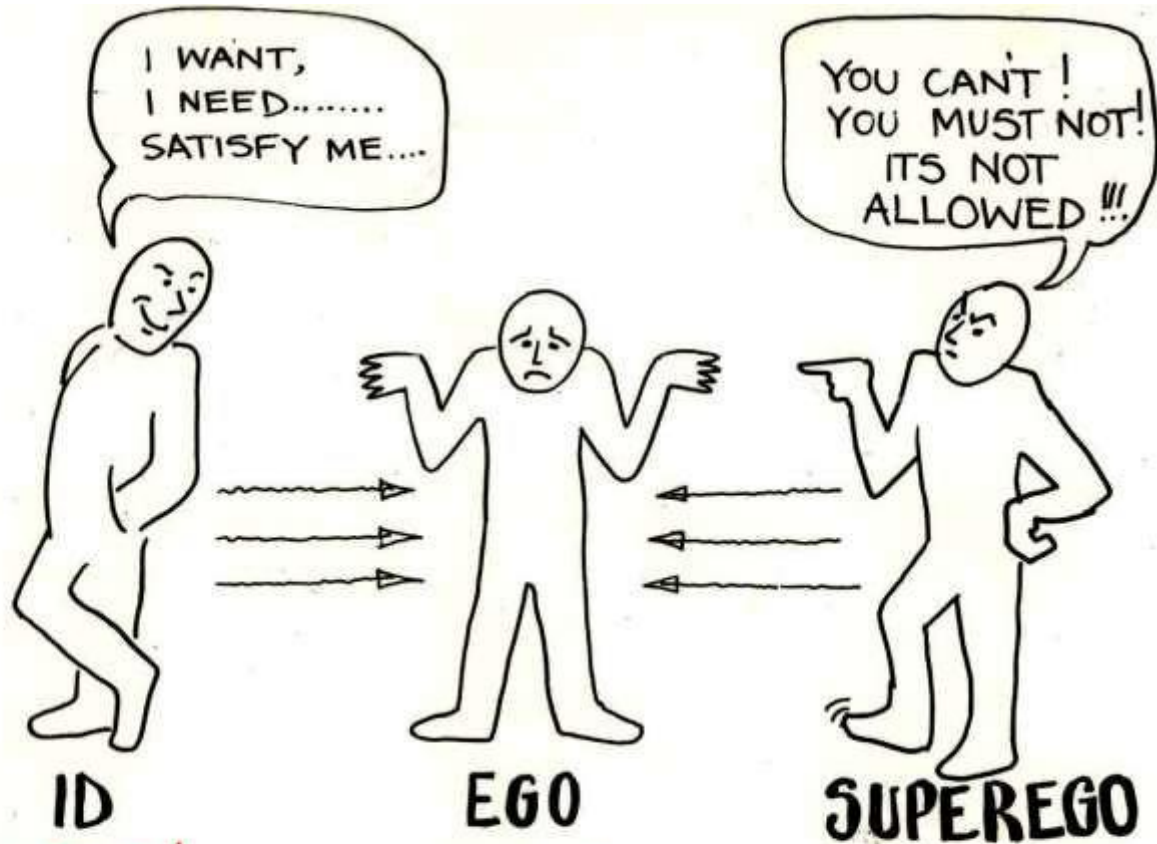
A psychologically healthy person can move flexibly from one ego state to another according to the situation.



EGO STATES

- Berne believed that when we interact with other people, our state of mind affects what happens during that situation.
- He believed that there were three states of mind in all humans, no matter how old they were, called **ego states**.





Child
1. natural child.
2. adapted child.

Adult

Parent
1. nurturing parent.
2. punishing parent.



EGO STATES

- An Ego state is a consistent pattern of feeling and experience related to a corresponding pattern of behavior.
- E. Berne states that each person has 3 Ego States:
The Parent
The Adult
The Child
- People generally exhibit all three Ego states.
- All three ego states are necessary to healthy personality.
- We shift from one ego state to another in transactions.



EGO STATES

- **CHILD EGO STATE**: impulses, desires, wants and spontaneous feelings of individual; personality preserved from childhood.
 - I. Adapted child: acts in compliance of others demand.
 - II. Free child: natural, spontaneous and playful.
- **PARENT EGO STATE**: copy parents or authority figures
 - I. Controlling parent: critical; disapproving of children
 - II. Nurturing parent: protecting the child
- **ADULT EGO STATE**: behaves in present without interference from unconscious; logic & rationality
Hallmark of healthy interpersonal relationship.



THE PARENT EGO STATE

- It is a collection of attitudes, thoughts and behaviors which we have accumulated from parent.
- Learned to act and feel much as those that raised us.



The diagram consists of two orange ovals with dark orange borders. The left oval contains the text 'NURTURING PARENT' and the right oval contains the text 'CONTROLLING PARENT'. Both are in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a solid orange circle.

NURTURING
PARENT

CONTROLLING
PARENT

- **A person in Nurturing Parent State may:**

- Use words such as well-done, good, gentle, caring, don't worry
- Use a loving, caring, comforting or concerned tone of voice
- Use encouraging gestures, smiling, leaning forward, nodding of head
- Have a caring, understanding attitude

- **A person in Controlling Parent State may:**

- Use words , such as bad, should, ought, must, always, ridiculous, unacceptable
- Use a patronizing, critical or disapproving tone of voice
- Use aggressive gestures, follows rules, accepts slogans, holds opinions without thinking first of facts
- Come across as judgmental, authoritarian
- Be intimidating or controlling



THE ADULT EGO STATE

- The Adult State are behaviors oriented to current reality and objective information gathering
- **A person in Adult State is likely to**
- Speak in an even voice
- Use straight forward facial expression
- Figure out things logically
- Have an erect posture and use open gestures
- Be alert and thoughtful about a problem they are facing
- Clarify the situation by careful questioning
- Use phrases like; “In my opinion,” “Based on my observation”
- Hypothesize and process information
- Use words like *correct, how, what, why, practical, quality*



ADULT EGO STATE

- □ The Adult ego state evokes behavior that could be described simply as logical, reasonable, rationale and unemotional.
- □ Characterized by problem-solving analysis and rationale decision making.
- □ Identified by verbal and physical signs which include thoughtful concentration and discussion.



THE CHILD EGO STATE

- **Child... what we were when we were young**
- **A person in free child state may**
 - Be smiling, laughing, having fun,
 - Use words as wow, great, ouch, want
 - Talk loudly, energetically, free of constraint
 - Use spontaneous gestures and expressions
 - Be curious, fun-loving, changeable
- **A person in adapted child may**
 - Cry, get into trouble
 - Use childlike facial expressions
 - Use words such as can't, hope, please, perhaps, wish
 - Look for approval and reassurance
 - Come across as helpless, sad, scared
 - Act in a defiant, ashamed or compliant way



3. Analysis of Transactions

A transaction is the basic unit of social interaction. Transactional Analysis studies the exchanges occurring between two people.

Whenever:

- verbal communication
- or
- non-verbal communication

receives a response, a transaction occurs.

Transactional Analysis helps identify:

- which ego state is influencing behavior
- how communication affects relationships



TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN EGO STATES

- When we are communicating with another person (verbally or nonverbally) we are carrying out a transactions with them.
- We are both sending messages and receiving.

❖ **Types of Transaction:**

- Complementary transactions
- Crossed transactions
- Ulterior transactions



TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN EGO STATES

- Lines of communication can be between any two ego states.

Examples:

- I. Child ego state & adult ego state; adult feeling frustrated at child's stubbornness.
- II. Both in parent ego state; likely to give each other advice with neither wanting to listen other.
- III. Child ego state & parent ego state; parent providing pampering and advice to child



TYPES OF TRANSACTIONS

○ COMPLIMENTARY TRANSACTIONS:

- Sender can predict response of receiver.
- Sender receives a response from an ego state that is not challenging the ego state of the sender.
- Teacher (Parent ego state): Finish your work first before you go out to play.
Student (Child ego state): yes. I will do as you say.
- No conflict in the conversation.
- Be careful when using such transaction in workplace; unequal relationship



COMPLIMENTARY TRANSACTIONS

- There can be nine complementary transactions:
 - Adult-Adult transactions
 - Adult-Parent transactions
 - Adult-Child transactions
 - Parent-Parent transactions
 - Parent-Adult transactions
 - Parent-Child transactions
 - Child-Parent transactions
 - Child-Adult transactions
 - Child-Child transactions



CROSSED TRANSACTIONS

- A crossed transaction is one in which the sender sends message a behavior on the basis of his ego state, but this message is reacted to by an unexpected ego state on the part of the receiver.
- Crossed communication should be avoided as far as possible.
- Whenever such transactions occur, communication tends to be blocked and a satisfactory transaction is not accomplished.



CROSSED TRANSACTIONS

- It occurs when ego states of two people who are engaging with each other do not match.
- Parent (parent ego state): why have you given low marks to my child?

Teacher (adult ego state): your child's work didn't meet the requirements of the assignment.

Parent: you have deliberately given low mark to my child. You do not understand children.

- To make communication healthier they need to change their ego states



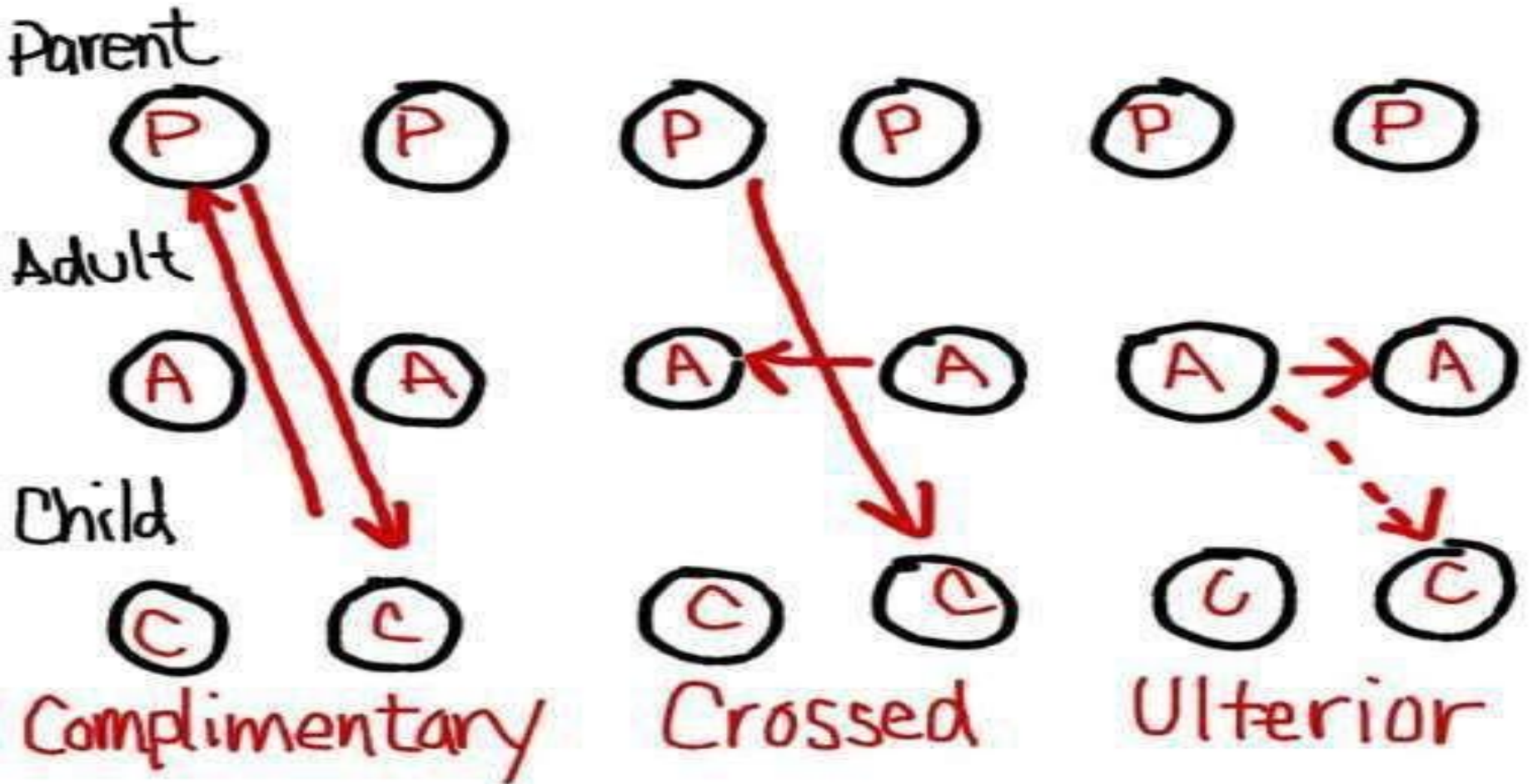
ULTERIOR TRANSACTION

- There is a discrepancy between the actual message and the intent behind it.
- The sender appears to be giving message from his adult ego state, but actual message is coming from child or parent ego state.
- Teacher (Parent ego state): don't lift the table. I will do it myself.

Student (child ego state): It is not a problem.
(teacher-as teacher I shouldn't lift table;
student-I am helping you even you are not asking me)



TYPES OF TRANSACTIONS



4. Script Analysis

In ordinary language, a script refers to:

- a play
- a movie script
- a television program

In Transactional Analysis, life is compared to a play.

According to Eric Berne:

a script is an unconscious life plan developed during early childhood under parental influence.

This script directs:

- personality
- decisions
- relationships
- behaviors

throughout life.



4. Script Analysis

A script may determine whether a person becomes:

- successful
- unsuccessful
- confident
- dependent
- emotionally healthy
- or
- psychologically distressed
- Scripts provide:
- permissions
- prohibitions
- expectations
- patterns of behavior



4. Script Analysis

Types of Scripts

Winner Script

People achieve goals successfully and feel competent.

Loser Script

People repeatedly fail or sabotage themselves.

Non-Winner Script

People avoid major success and major failure.



SCRIPT ANALYSIS

- In a layman's view ,a script is the text of play, motion picture, or a radio or TV programme.
- In transactional analysis a person's life is compared to a play and the script is the text of the play.
- According to Eric Berne," a script is an ongoing programme, developed in early childhood under parental influence which directs the individual behaviour in the most important aspects of his life.
- A script is a complete plan of living, offering prescriptions, permissions and structure which makes one winner or loser in life.



SCRIPT ANALYSIS

- Life plan; how people wish to live.
- One's script is fundamental to understanding one's communication and relation.
- Life script is subjective.
- Messages we experience in childhood help to develop script.
- It is reinforced by strokes received from parents.
- It can be seen as an unconscious plan.
- It includes: life positions, games, body language, decisions, fantasy, etc.
- One continually plays the life script at unconscious level and influences interactions and relationships.



STROKES

- Stroking is an act of recognition from another person
- Everyone has to have strokes (affection, recognition, praise)
- *People need strokes for their sense of survival and well being on the job. Lack of stroking can have negative consequences both on physiological and psychological well being of a person.*

❖ ***Strokes may be***

- *Positive, negative and mixed*
- *Conditional and unconditional*



STROKES

- It is the fundamental unit of social action.
- Verbal and non-verbal communication that indicate nature of interpersonal communication between people.
- POSITIVE STROKE: it makes the other person feel good. eg: genuine smile, compliment, pat on back.
- NEGATIVE STROKE: makes other person feel bad or uncomfortable. Eg: aggressive tone of speaking, stern look, slap on back of the head.
- Strokes we give or receive are influenced by the ego states we are in.



Types of Strokes

	Positive strokes	Negative strokes
Verbal	Hello, how are you doing?	I'm in no mood to talk to you today.
Non-verbal	Smile	Frown
Written	This is a strong assignment showing your real insight and thought.	There are a number of errors in this assignment, suggesting you have not done your work properly

GIVING AND RECEIVING STROKES

- **Be sincere in giving and receiving strokes**
- **Accept strokes positively from other people**
- **Make a conscious effort to give strokes to other people**
- **Try to recognize other people's reaction to strokes**
- **Ask for strokes when you feel you need them**
- **Give yourself strokes when you feel you deserve/need them**



To sum up...

Transactional analysis (TA): a method of understanding behavior in interpersonal dynamics.

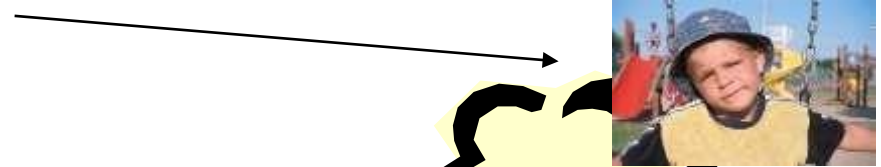
The three ego states:

- Parent
 - Controlling/ Critical parent
 - Nurturing parent
- Adult
- Child
 - Free/ Natural child
 - Adapted child
- The three types of transactions:
- Complementary
- Crossed
- Ulterior



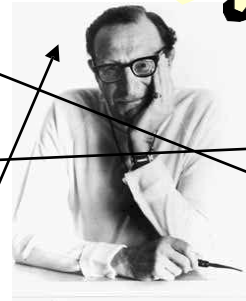
LOOK AT THE SENTENCES BELOW AND
MATCH THE **EGO STATE** TO THE
SENTENCE.

1. It's not my fault my drink got spilt on your new carpet
2. I wonder what might have caused that accident
3. For goodness sake, clean up that mess.
4. Shall we clean up the mess together with a wet cloth?
5. I refuse to get involved in this incident.



CHILD

ADULT



PARENT



LIFE POSITION ANALYSIS

- Life Positions: basic **beliefs about self and others.**
- They are attitudes which people adopt and act out concerning their self-worth and the value of others.
- ❖ **Four basic life positions:**
 - I'm OK, you're OK (I+ U+)
 - I'm OK, you're not OK (I+ U -)
 - I'm not OK, you're OK (I- U +)
 - I'm not OK, you're not OK (I- U -)



Life Positions

Attitude toward Oneself

Positive

I'm OK —
You're not OK

I'm OK —
You're OK

Negative

I'm not OK —
You're not OK

I'm not OK —
You're OK

Negative

Positive

Attitude toward Others



Can you identify your own
life position out of the four
life positions?



LIFE POSITIONS... ..

- I'm OK, you're OK

Cooperate, share

You believe in yourself and others, are trusting and tend to get on with life

- I'm not OK, you're OK

Submit to, concede

You have a poor opinion of your own value and poor self esteem; lack self confidence and expect things to go wrong. You often lose out in situations

- I'm OK, you're not OK

Compete, aggression

You tend to be competitive. May not cope well with failure, look down at others, blame other people and see them as cause of your failure

- I'm not OK, you're not OK

Avoid

Life may seem to be futile and that nothing can be done to improve things. A life of rejecting and feeling rejected



I'M OK—YOU'RE OK

- This position is considered the optimal, healthy position and is generally game-free.
- People occupying this position will hold the belief that all people are innately worthy and valuable.
- This position is characterized by an attitude of openness and of honesty and trust.
- People occupying this position will be collaborative and accepting of themselves and others.



I'M OK—YOU'RE NOT OK

- It is occupied by those who project their difficulties onto others, they may be blaming and critical.
- This position involve a self-styled superior (the “I’m OK”) who projects anger, disgust onto a designated inferior, or scapegoat (the “You’re not OK”).
- This position requires that there be someone to be ‘worse than’ in order to maintain the sense of self as ok.



THE I'M NOT OK—YOU'RE OK

- This position is depressive, it is characterized by feeling powerless and lacking in comparison with others.
- People occupying this position may discount their own needs in favour of others and may experience themselves as victims.
- They support the power of others and deny one's own.



I'M NOT OK—YOU'RE NOT OK

- It is a position of hopelessness, futility and frustration.
- From this position life seems uninteresting and hopeless.
- This may result in self destructive or violent behaviour.



- Life positions are temporary or relative permanent.
- It is viewed as reaction to environment.
- It can be controlled by conscious decisions.



GAMES

- Games are a set of transactions that have surface logic but hidden meaning and attempt to draw in an unsuspecting participant.
- An outcome of games is always a win lose propositions.
- ❖ **Typical Games**
 - ▪Between a shop keeper and a house wife:
“This one is better, but you cannot afford it”
 - ▪Between an Expert and a Candidate:
“What you just said is totally wrong”

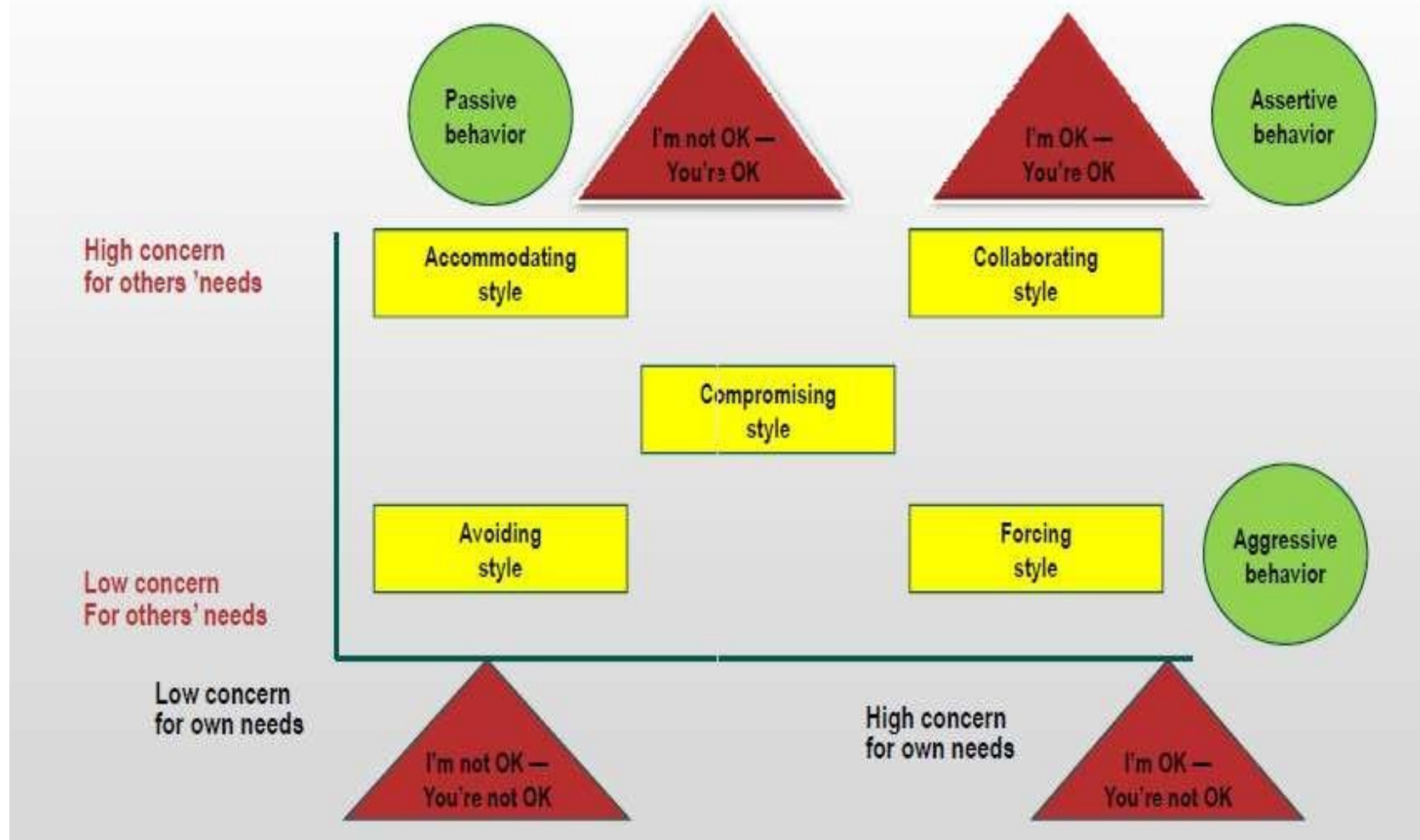


GAMES ANALYSIS

- Game: ulterior transactions (discrepancy between actual message and intent) progressing to a well-defined predictable outcome.
- It a series of transactions between people in which the message is disguised; accomplish an end that is contrary to what is being overtly expressed.
- Eg: “poor me game”: gaining sympathy & excuse to avoid work
- “uproar”: loud arguments to get attention or displacing anger
- “why don’t you.... Yes...but”



RESPONSES TO INTERPERSONAL TRANSACTIONS



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Time structuring is one of Eric Berne's important concepts in Transactional Analysis.

It explains how people organize and spend their time in social interactions.

According to Berne, human beings have a strong need for:

- recognition
- interaction
- strokes
- social contact

Therefore, people structure time in specific ways to satisfy these psychological needs.



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Definition

Time structuring refers to:

“The ways individuals organize their time to obtain strokes and avoid anxiety.”

People use different forms of interaction depending on:

- intimacy level
- emotional needs
- social safety
- psychological comfort



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Forms of Time Structuring

Eric Berne identified six major forms of time structuring:

- Withdrawal
- Rituals
- Pastimes
- Activities
- Games
- Intimacy



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

1. Withdrawal

Definition

Withdrawal means:

physical or psychological isolation from others.

The person avoids communication and social interaction.

Characteristics

- minimal communication
- emotional distance
- isolation
- avoidance of involvement

Examples

- sitting silently alone
- avoiding eye contact
- excessive phone use to avoid interaction
- mentally “switching off”



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Psychological Purpose

Withdrawal protects the individual from:

- rejection
- anxiety
- emotional pain

However, excessive withdrawal may lead to:

- loneliness
- depression
- poor relationships



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

2. Rituals

Definition

Rituals are socially programmed and predictable interactions. They are formal patterns of communication accepted by society.

Characteristics

- safe
- polite
- predictable
- superficial

Examples

- greeting people
- saying “Good morning”
- handshakes
- birthday wishes
- religious rituals.



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Purpose

Rituals provide:

- social recognition
- safety
- structured communication

They require little emotional involvement.



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

3. Pastimes

Definition

Pastimes are casual conversations used to pass time pleasantly. They are more personal than rituals but still relatively safe.

Characteristics

- light conversation
- socially acceptable
- low emotional risk

Examples

Topics such as:

- weather
- sports
- movies
- fashion
- social media
- politics

Purpose

Pastimes help people:

- gain strokes
- test relationships
- avoid loneliness
- evaluate others socially



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

4. Activities

Definition

Activities involve working together to achieve goals.

People interact while performing tasks or responsibilities.

Characteristics

- productive
- goal-oriented
- cooperative

Examples

- studying
- working in teams
- nursing care
- classroom projects
- business meetings

Purpose

Activities provide:

achievement

productivity

recognition

social cooperation



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

5. Games

Definition

Games are repetitive patterns of hidden transactions with negative emotional outcomes.

They involve:

- ulterior motives
- hidden messages
- manipulation

Characteristics

- repetitive
- psychologically dishonest
- emotionally unhealthy

Examples

- “Why Don’t You — Yes But”
- blaming games
- victim games
- guilt-inducing interactions



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Purpose

Games provide:

- emotional payoff
- familiar feelings
- psychological reinforcement

Even though the outcome is negative, people continue games because they satisfy unconscious emotional needs.



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

6. Intimacy

Definition

Intimacy is the most honest and psychologically healthy form of time structuring.

It involves:

- genuine communication
- openness
- emotional honesty
- authentic relationships

Characteristics

- trust
- emotional closeness
- sincerity
- vulnerability
- absence of games



Time Structuring in Transactional Analysis (TA)

Examples

- deep friendship
- honest emotional sharing
- healthy therapeutic relationship
- genuine love and support

Importance

Intimacy provides:

- meaningful relationships
- emotional satisfaction
- psychological growth

However, many people avoid intimacy because it requires vulnerability and emotional risk.



IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

- Becoming aware of your and someone else's needs.
- Adopting a more positive view of yourself and others.
- Understanding how you behave and why.
- Recognizing that you can alter the way you behave.
- Respond to a person and situation more appropriately.
- Building rapport with others.
- Dealing more effectively with difficult people.



What is existential therapy?

- more a **way of thinking**, or an **attitude** about psychotherapy, than a particular style of practicing psychotherapy
- “an **attitude** toward **human suffering** [that] has **no manual**. It asks deep questions about the nature of the human being and the nature of **anxiety, despair, grief, loneliness, isolation, and anomie** . It also deals centrally with the questions of **meaning, creativity, and love**”
- **rejects** the **deterministic** view of human nature
- Existential therapy is grounded on the assumption that we are free and therefore responsible for our choices and actions.



What is existential therapy?

- Existential Therapy is a modality of counselling and psychotherapy with strong roots in existential phenomenological philosophy, and in the heritage of psychology and psychiatry. Existential Therapy focuses on the clarification of human existence to enable a person to engage with problems in living in a creative, active and reflective manner in order to find new meaning and purpose.



What is existential therapy?

Existential therapy is a philosophically informed form of psychotherapy that focuses on the human condition and the person's experience of existence.

It emphasizes:

- freedom
- responsibility
- choice
- meaning
- anxiety
- death
- isolation
- authenticity

Existential therapy rejects the deterministic view of human nature.

It assumes that human beings are free and therefore responsible for their choices and actions.



History of existential therapy

- In the **1950s**, **Rollo May** introduced **existential psychology** with an overview in his book *Existential Psychology* (1969).
- Existential thought dates back to ancient philosophers such as **Aristotle**, **Socrates**, and **Asian thinkers** who discussed personal meaning.
- Existential philosophy arose in two waves: first in the late 19th century with **Kierkegaard**, **Nietzsche**, and **Husserl**, and second in the 1940s–1950s in Europe.
- **World War I and II**, along with industrialization and urbanization, contributed to feelings of alienation, leading to the rise of existentialism.



History of existential therapy

- Existential psychology gained momentum in the U.S. through figures like **Carl Rogers**, integrating humanistic values such as self-actualization and freedom into therapy.
- Existential psychology, though less popular post-1960s due to the rise of structured therapies, saw renewed interest with the works of **Yalom, Bugental, and others**.
- Recently, existential perspectives have integrated Eastern spiritual traditions, influencing **contemporary existential counseling and psychotherapy**.

Goals of Existential Therapy

The goals include:

- helping clients find meaning and purpose
- increasing self-awareness
- helping clients become authentic
- encouraging responsibility
- helping clients confront anxiety
- helping clients live fully in the present
- encouraging meaningful choices

Basic Dimensions of Human Existence

Existential therapy focuses on several major dimensions:

Self-Awareness

Human beings can reflect on themselves and examine their existence.

Awareness allows people to recognize:

- life limitations
- personal choices
- responsibility
- mortality

However, awareness also creates anxiety.

The more awareness we have, the more freedom and responsibility we experience.

Basic Dimensions of Human Existence

Freedom and Responsibility

Existential therapy emphasizes that people are free to choose.

Even when circumstances are difficult, people still have some degree of freedom in how they respond.

Freedom and responsibility are inseparable.

People are responsible for:

- their choices
- their actions

their failures to act

Avoiding responsibility often leads to psychological problems.

Basic Dimensions of Human Existence

Identity and Authenticity

Existentialists believe individuals must create their own identity.

Authenticity means:

- living according to one's true values
- being honest with oneself
- accepting responsibility
- avoiding self-deception

Inauthentic individuals often:

- conform blindly
- depend excessively on others
- deny their true feelings
- avoid difficult truths

Authentic living requires courage.

View of human nature

- The current focus of the existential approach is on the individual's experience of being in the world **alone** and facing the **anxiety** of this **isolation**.
- The **significance** of our existence is never fixed once and for all; rather, we **continually** recreate ourselves through our **projects**
- Being a person implies that we are discovering and making sense of our existence
- We pose the same questions philosophers have pondered throughout Western history: "Who am I?" "What can I know?" "What ought I to do?" "What can I hope for?" "Where am I going?"

Ultimate concerns of the human condition

- Life has **no inherent meaning** and is replete with challenges. Unless people meet these challenges with **awareness, openness, and courage**, their emotional development can become blocked or delayed
 - 4 ultimate concerns:
 1. **Inevitability of death** - The fear of our ultimate nonbeing can cast a pall over people's lives and make them seem pointless
 2. **Isolation** – we are ultimately alone. loneliness can be most acute when we are with others and are aware of our lack of a true connection with them.
 3. **Meaninglessness** - Life seems inherently meaningless and a random process. Lack of meaning can lead to hopelessness, discouragement, and a sense of emptiness
 4. **Freedom and responsibility** - We have both the freedom and the responsibility to make choices that create a worthwhile existence for ourselves in the limited time we have on earth
- 

The Four Ultimate Concerns (Yalom)

Irvin Yalom identified four ultimate existential concerns.

1. Death

- Death is inevitable.
- Awareness of death creates existential anxiety.
- However, existential therapists believe awareness of death can also increase appreciation for life.
- Death gives significance to living.
- People who deny death may live superficially, while people who accept mortality often live more fully and authentically.



The Four Ultimate Concerns (Yalom)

2. Freedom

Human beings are free to choose.

But freedom creates anxiety because every choice carries responsibility.

People often try to escape freedom by:

- blaming others
- following society blindly
- avoiding decisions

Existential therapy encourages individuals to embrace freedom and responsibility.



The Four Ultimate Concerns (Yalom)

3. Isolation

Existential isolation means that every human being is ultimately alone.

Even in close relationships, no one can fully experience another person's inner world.

Loneliness becomes especially painful when people lack authentic connection with others.

Love and authentic relationships help reduce existential isolation.



The Four Ultimate Concerns (Yalom)

4. Meaninglessness

Life does not automatically provide meaning.

People must create meaning through:

- values
- work
- relationships
- creativity
- responsibility
- love

When people fail to find meaning, they may experience:

- emptiness
- boredom
- hopelessness
- depression
- existential vacuum

Frankl described this condition as the **existential vacuum**



Phases of Existential Therapy

Beginning Phase

Clients explore:

- values
- beliefs
- assumptions
- life history
- important choices



Phases of Existential Therapy

- Almost **never time limited/rushed**. **No clear stages** or transitions
- **Beginning phase:**
 - developing **clinicians' understanding** of their **clients** and **clients' awareness** of **themselves** and their **world**.
 - Encouraged to describe their **values, beliefs, and assumptions**; their **histories and backgrounds**; and the choices they have made, as well as the choices they believe they cannot make.
- **Middle phase:**
 - enables people to **use the information** they have shared to find **purpose, meaning,** and **value**. Therapist interventions encourage **client authenticity** during this process

Phases of Existential Therapy

Middle Phase

Clients:

- confront existential realities
- explore meaning
- examine authenticity
- challenge self-deception



Phases of Existential Therapy

- **Closing phase:**

- when people can **implement their awareness** of themselves and move forward to establish more meaningful lives.
- Have found ways to live full lives **despite anxiety** about the inevitabilities of the human condition.
- They are progressing along a path that seems **natural and right** for them and is helping them become **actualized**.
- An important and challenging aspect of concluding treatment is the **client's separation** from the clinician. This can be a reminder of the inescapable endings in life.

Phases of Existential Therapy

Final Phase

Clients:

- implement changes
- live more authentically
- create meaningful goals
- accept responsibility

Termination itself may become an opportunity to discuss separation and endings



Existential and Neurotic anxiety

- Every one experiences the four ultimate concerns of the human condition and, according to existentialist theory, that creates feelings of anxiety in everyone
- Existential anxiety – **inevitable part** of the human condition. a **positive sign** rather than a pathological state; it indicates that people recognize the need to **accept responsibility** for their lives and are **engaged in efforts** to create a worthwhile and meaningful existence. Living **authentic** lives
- Existential guilt and neurotic anxiety – **lack awareness** of our physical world, our relationships, and our psychological world; **fail** to take **responsibility** for making our lives meaningful and worthwhile; and realize that **we have not** become what we **might have**
- Depression – often a result of efforts to defend against existential guilt and anxiety.

Human development

- They do not dispute the importance of early development and the child-parent relationship
- Frankl believed that **so-called neurotic difficulties** often stem from an upbringing in which parents were **punitive** and **deprived children of freedom**
- Existential therapists concentrate on the **unconscious conflict** between people's wish to **escape the givens** of the human condition and lose themselves in **lethargy and denial** and their wish to **achieve fulfillment** despite the **challenges and responsibilities** that achievement entails.
- **Emotional difficulties** stem from **failure to deal successfully** with the **inevitable of the human condition** and to **transcend** them by creating a **meaningful and authentic** life for oneself.
- They pay attention to **development throughout life span**.

Potentials of the human condition

- Existential therapy is an **optimistic** and **hopeful** approach that seeks to integrate the **somatic** (physical), **psychic** (psychological), and **noetic** (spiritual) dimensions of man
- The human spirit has a **healthy core** and what has been called "**existential courage**"
- People's many strengths:
 1. **Awareness** –have a capacity for awareness of both themselves and the world.
Although awareness will **not always** bring us **pleasure or peace**, it allows us to recognize the **limitations and challenges** of our lives and make **wise choices** that can make our lives worthwhile

2. Authenticity –Taking responsibility for **making choices** based on **awareness** reflects **authenticity** and allows people to **live more fully** in the present and be themselves in their relationships. People whose decisions are based on **denial**, the **wishes of others**, or dependence are **not** truly living in the **present**. In addition, they are wearing a "mask of **inauthenticity**". Bugental described **3 essential features** of authenticity:

1. People are aware of themselves and their relationships with the world.
2. They make choices, knowing that decisions are the inevitable consequences of responsibility.
3. They take responsibility for their choices, recognizing that awareness is imperfect, and sometimes leads to unanticipated results.



3. Freedom and responsibility –Freedom can be viewed as consisting of 4 aspects: **awareness, choice, action, and change**. Once people accept that they have freedom, no matter what their circumstances are, they have the responsibility:

- To be aware of their past history, their current options, and their future potential
- To make choices that give meaning to their lives
- To exercise courage and thought in taking action toward life-enhancing change.

Once we see that **we have choice**, we can **no longer view** our decisions and behaviors as purposeless and accidental, make excuses for ourselves, and shift blame for our unhappiness to others.



4. Actualization – each person has an **essential nature**, part of which is **universal** and part of which is **unique to that individual** (Maslow). The **will toward actualization** is an **innate and natural** process that leads people toward **realization of their potential** and toward **growth and fulfillment**.

5. Making meaning – Life has the **potential to be meaningful** if people use their capacities to **bring purpose and worth into their lives**. According to May, our **will to love** and **to live** gives us meaning. Meaning is the **purpose and logic** of our lives and often is **reflected in choices** people make. **Dreams, visions, and fantasies** also provide clues to meaning. **Subjective** to each person



therapist: What do you want to say
to your inner child?

client: Trauma made us funny

therapist: ... No.

Specific intervention strategies

- Therapists do not use techniques but they do focus on important aspects related to being-in-the-world
- **Symbolic growth experience** - Both Frankl (1963) and Maslow (1968) described the **learning and growth** that came from **intense experiences**. Willard Frick, building on the ideas of Frankl and Maslow, described a model, the **Symbolic Growth Experience (SGE)**, to explain the relationship between experience and the discovery of meaning. 4 steps:

1. People are educated about the concept of the SGE.
2. They select a salient past experience and explore its importance and symbolism in their lives.
3. They are helped to understand the meaning embedded in the experience.
4. They have a clearer sense of that meaning and are able to repeat their use of these strategies to grasp the significance of other experiences.

Specific intervention strategies

- **Logotherapy and paradoxical intention**
 - Helped people recognize the depth of their **need for meaning**, reassured them that **all people can create meaning in their lives**, and supported them in their efforts to find purpose and meaning
 - **"The fear of fear increases fear"**
 - **Paradoxical intention** - clinicians encourage clients to do or wish for the very thing they fear most
 - For example, a woman was afraid to leave her house lest she faint. Frankl instructed her to go outside and try her best to faint.

Specific intervention strategies

- **Dereflection**
 - a type of **paradoxical intervention** that is based on "two essential qualities of human existence, namely man's capacities of **self-transcendence and self-detachment**"
 - Dereflection takes the focus **away** from the **person** and helps them concentrate less on themselves and **more** on **other people or goals** they find **meaningful**
 - **reduce compulsive self-observation** and **redirect clients' attention** in a more **positive** manner, helping them **discover meaning** in situations in the **present moment**, rather than becoming trapped in obsessive worry.
 - Originally formulated to treat couples with **sexual dysfunction**. Can also be useful in **group therapy**

Specific intervention strategies

- **Addressing the four dimensions of the human condition**
 - Suggested responses to concerns about these 4 conditions:
 - Faith in our own existence in the present can ameliorate fears of death.
 - Love is the authentic response to isolation.
 - Drawing on our inner creativity, to find ways to realize our potential, can counteract the inherent meaninglessness of life.
 - Responsibility and commitment, making choices and staying with them, help us cope with our overabundance of freedom.

Application

- **Diagnostic groups:** Appropriate for people with long-standing, pervasive anxiety or depression and those who are coping with life and death matters such as grief and loss, diagnosis of a terminal illness, or transitioning between phases of life. Other anxiety disorders such as **post-traumatic stress disorder, agoraphobia, and panic disorder** also may respond well to the existential clinician's efforts to help them **explore and understand** the **meaning of their fears** so that they can develop an **acceptance** of what is happening in their lives
- **Multicultural groups:** Vontress has been integrating existential therapy with cross-cultural counselling. Western traditional healing models tend to segment people into physical, psychological, social, and spiritual parts in order to treat each separately. Non-Western healing models are holistic and treat the "whole" person.

Application

- **Other groups:** Though there is insufficient evidence to firmly establish the approach's effectiveness in other groups, research does suggest a broad application for existential therapy
 - People coping with life-threatening and chronic illnesses
 - Those whose lives have challenging limitations, such as people who are incarcerated, people with disabilities, and people living in poverty
 - Those who have suffered important losses, such as bereavement, disappointments in relationships, and failure to achieve their goals
 - People who have had traumatic experiences
 - People with long-standing mild-to-moderate anxiety or depression
 - People at a crossroads in their lives who are looking for direction, such as those who are recently divorced, approaching midlife, retired, or graduated from college.

Application

- Van Deurzen (2002b) suggests that this form of therapy is most appropriate for clients who:
 - are **committed** to dealing with their **problems about living**,
 - feel **alienated** from the current expectations of society,
 - are **searching for meaning** in their lives.
 - are at a **crossroads**
 - question the state of affairs in the world and are willing to challenge the status quo.
 - are on the **edge of existence**, such as those who are **dying** or **contemplating suicide**,
 - are working through a **developmental or situational crisis**, who feel that they **no longer belong** in their surroundings, or who are starting a **new phase of life**.

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Thank You!