Treatment of Anxiety within a Transactional Analysis Framework

Wonita Woolhouse
Transactional Analysis & Anxiety

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

• Transactional Analyst specialising in Psychotherapy (CTA-Psychotherapy), Psychotherapy Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (PBANZ) Registered Psychotherapist
  ACC Accredited (Sensitive Claims)

• Bachelor of Health Science (Occupational Therapy) (BHSc(Occ.Ther))
  New Zealand Registered Occupational Therapist
  Over 13 years working predominantly in Dyspraxia, developmental disorders and associated mental health issues.

• Post Grad Diploma with Distinction endorsed in Mental Health (PGDipMNH)(Dist.)

• 2009 – 2013 Gestalt Psychotherapy
Transactional Analysis (TA)
Eric Berne (1961)

- Theory of personality + systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and change.
- As a theory of personality is describes how people are structured psychologically – PAC model
- Theory of communication and development
- Aim of TA is Autonomy
- Autonomy is defined as awareness, spontaneity, and the capacity for intimacy
**EGO STATE THEORY**

**Parent ego state**
Attitudes, behaviours, thoughts and feelings taken in from parents or parental figures.

**Adult ego state**
Behaviours, thoughts and feelings which are direct responses to the current reality.

**Child ego state**
Behaviours, thoughts and feelings replayed from childhood and childhood decisions.

Ref: Eric Berne (1961)
Contamination & Integration

Functional Ego States

- Critical Parent: moralistic, judgemental, authoritarian
- Nurturing Parent: reassuring, caring, encouraging, supportive, understanding
- Adult: non-judgemental, open-minded, interested, confident, reality based
- Rebellious Child: defiant, complaining
- Adapted Child: compliant, passive
- Free Child: curious, energetic, fun-loving, spontaneous

Ref: Wooliams and Brown (1978)
**Example**

**NP:** Go ahead, play and have fun!

**CP:** Now, don't you DARE get yourself all messy!

**A:** I think I quite like sand. I reckon I can make a castle

**FC:** WOW! Check out the size of my castle!!!!!

**AC:** I better not get my clothes all dirty

**RC:** I actually don't CARE if I do get dirty!
With Anxiety Example:

- **NP:** You just need to do your best
- **CP:** You should try harder – you’re not trying hard enough
- **A:** I’m going to give this a go and see how I go
- **FC:** (often not available with the anxious child) I don’t really care – when is play time?
- **AC:** I have to get this right.
Script Theory

- Life Script is an unconscious life plan
- Hear and interpret messages, making ‘decisions’ about ourselves and our lives based on our experience.

- Without our ability to bond with our caretakers and their desire to bond with us as infants, we would not survive. Therefore we adapt.

- Drivers and Injunctions that shape how we are in the world in relationship to others
  
### Existential Life Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am Not Okay with me</th>
<th>You are Okay with me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I am not OK</strong></td>
<td><strong>I am OK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You are OK</strong></td>
<td><strong>You are OK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one down position</td>
<td>healthy position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get away from Helpless</td>
<td>Get on with Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I am not OK</strong></td>
<td><strong>I am OK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You are not OK</strong></td>
<td><strong>You are not OK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hopeless position</td>
<td>one-up position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get nowhere with Hopeless</td>
<td>Get rid of Angry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our Internal Dialogue – Between Ego States
WHAT ASSURANCE DO I HAVE THAT YOUR PARENTING ISN'T SCREWING ME UP?
A2A Group Process Diagram

Engagement

Potency + Autonomy

Permission + Protection

Structure + Resources

Acknowledgement + Recognition
Purpose of Anxiety

- Fight
- Flight
- Fright
A2A Attending To Anxiety

**Engagement**
- Analogy + Purpose of Anxiety
- Belly Breathing *(Adult Ego)*

**Permission and Protection**
- Validating Anxiety
- Drawing Anxiety – externalising anxiety + conversing with it.

You have choices *(Adult Ego)*
Worksheet examples:

**Challenging the inner voices – Taking Charge**
Which inner voices would you change if it was your inner voice...

- I'm so proud of you!
- You're no good at this – why bother trying?
- People are going to laugh at me if I get the answer wrong.
- Everyone thinks I'm stupid!
- I have to get it right!
- What if we have another earthquake?
- I don't think anyone likes me – no one seems to talk to me.
- I'm going to fail this maths test.
- All I have to do is try my best!
- Hey, I did OK!
- I'm going to fail this maths test.

**THERE ARE 3 PARTS TO BEING ‘YOU’...**

**CRITICAL + NICE SELF,**
heard or been told by significant others, how to do things (by doing or saying the things they did) – Mum, Dad, Uncle, babysitter, teacher etc.

**THINKING SELF,**
decisions get made, compare and consider the best option, learning self, own ideas, problem solving, opinions, how you see yourself, use manners + friendly, ready to learn or for fun, sensible, etc.

**FEELING SELF,**
playful self, risk taker or cautious/anxious, extrovert, impulsive self, child-like, over or under-reactive responses to situations, fighting, wanting things NOW or NOT wanting to do things, sulking, being a bully, etc.
Acknowledgement and Recognition

- ‘3 Parts to Being You’ Worksheet – basis for internal dialogue.
  - What you have heard; What you feel; What you think

Structure and Resources

- Increasing awareness
- Noticing internal ‘messages’ (agree or disagree?)
  Practice – notice, verbalise, challenge + change.
- Acting out conflicting dialogue/messages
- Sensory Strategies
Potency + Autonomy

- Worksheets: Recognising I'm OK; You're OK statements
- Overall Experiential – contributing to the group and sharing.
- Noticing in the moment, what is your worry? what is your thinking? Is that what you think? Is there someone behind that voice? What are you feeling?
- Promoting Adult Integration (sense of self)
In Summary…

- TA is a Theory of Personality, Communication + Development
- Key Concepts: Ego States, Analysis of Transactions, Script, Life Positions and Internal Dialogue
- Underpins Approach to working with Anxiety in Children
- I’m OK; You’re OK
“We’re so busy watching out for what’s just ahead of us that we don’t take time to enjoy where we are.”
- Calvin & Hobbes

THANK YOU.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Wonita Woolhouse, CTA; BHSc(OT); PGDip(MNH)(Dist); PBANZ; ITAA; ANZTAA
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