

INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

I'm OK – You're OK

The "I'm OK – You're OK" framework (Harris's "OK Coral") suggests an operating model based on how we view ourselves in relation to others, from which we can choose a preference that will, in turn, determine our outlook on life.

| I'm | You're | Predominant Outlook |
|--------|--------|-----------------------|
| OK | OK | Optimistic, happy |
| OK | Not OK | Disdainful, superior |
| Not OK | OK | Unworthy, inferior |
| Not OK | Not OK | Pessimistic, hopeless |

We can, of course, move between these different states depending on our frame of mind. However, we will tend to favour one over the others as our normal operating mode and this will affect our predominant outlook.

Ego States

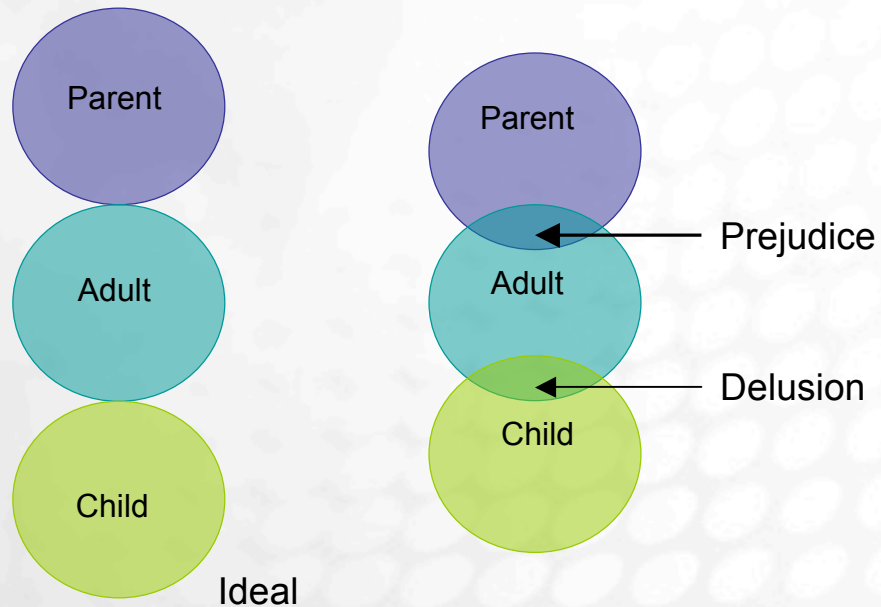
Transaction Analysis theory suggests that personality is broken down into three separate ego states: parent, adult and child. Our behaviour is determined by how we manage these different states – how we value each of them and use them to get the results we seek, intentionally or otherwise.

Each ego state has its own characteristics and motivations, all of which have a positive intent for us – we never do anything to intentionally harm ourselves.

Walt Disney believed that the creative process required three distinct parts: creator, critic and realist. These correspond to the child, adult and parent ego states each being used in their turn. The child imagines the creative possibilities, the parent critiques them (and this is an iterative process) and the adult/realist considers the practical implications. The three parts negotiate and use 'what ifs' to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

| Ego State | Disney's | Example Characteristics | Motivations |
|-----------|----------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Parent | Critic | Assertive / Dominant Critical Concerned / Caring Beliefs | Justification Greed Protection |
| Adult | Realist | Rational / Logical Practical Thinking / Reasoning | Satisfaction Learning Balance |
| Child | Creator | Playful / Carefree Imagination / Fantasy Rebellious | Joy Happiness Destructiveness |

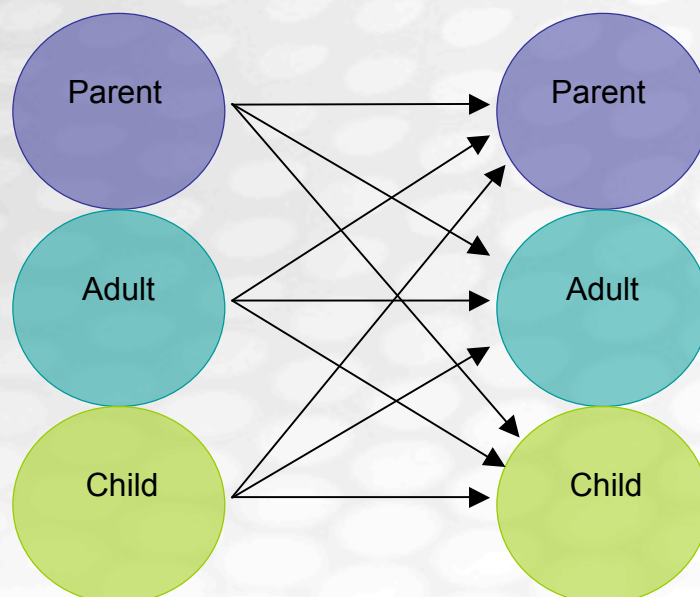
In theory our states should be discrete so that we can clearly operate in whichever mode is appropriate to a given situation, as in the Disney example. In practice they overlap and this can give rise to prejudice and delusion. The extent of the overlap will determine the extent of these behaviours.



In practice we each choose to favour different ego states as our 'default' preference and this has a significant impact on our predominant modes of behaviour.

Transaction Analysis

A communication between two people is regarded as a "transaction". One person gives a communication – either verbally or through their behaviour – and a second receives it to complete the transaction. There are nine basic possible type of transaction as shown below.



Once the first transaction is complete it will generally result in a response, for example, person A may talk to person B in a Parent-Child transaction (an example of this might be a domineering boss). We typically respond to a transaction in a reciprocal way, so B responds to A with a Child-Parent transaction and the boss elicits a child-like reaction.

However, the self aware person has a choice of how they respond, so in the example above, might choose an Adult-Adult or, more likely, an Adult-Parent response. The latter may then get A's next transaction to be a Parent-Adult one and then B can move to an Adult-Adult position. So B has taken the initiative by leading A from a domineering standpoint to the point of having a rational adult conversation.

Once we start delving into TA it becomes fascinatingly more complex. This is because transactions are not as straight-forward as the simplified model. Firstly, the Parent ego state may be either dominant or caring, and secondly, the Child may be playful or rebellious. This means that the simple Parent-Child transaction could actually take one of four forms:

| | | |
|-----------------|---|------------------|
| Dominant Parent | → | Playful Child |
| Dominant Parent | → | Rebellious Child |
| Caring Parent | → | Playful Child |
| Caring Parent | → | Rebellious Child |

Transaction analysis enables us to develop an awareness of others' behaviour and our responses to it. We can then use this information to start managing our behaviours and relationships to get better results.

Source: adapted from Thomas A Harris, *"I'm OK – You're OK"*