

# Transactional Analysis

a model for understanding human  
personality, relationships and  
communication

originated by Eric Berne MD



# Aim and objectives

Understand the 'games' people play and how this can be experienced as manipulative:

- Frame of reference
- Overview of ego states
- Automatic reactions
- Parallel transactions – how we keep effective conversation going
- Crossed transactions – how to shift ego states to re-establish communication
- Ulterior transactions – overt 'social' messages and covert 'psychological' messages
- 'Rackets' – recurring patterns of behaviour, how these can be manipulative and how to recognise them

# Exercise

Imagine that tomorrow is going to mark the beginning of a holiday period, when all shops will be shut for several days. Imagine too that it's quite some time since you did any shopping. You are almost out of essential food and provisions. Looking at the time, you realise with relief that you've got time to get down to the supermarket and get around before it closes.

Mentally checking a list of things you need to buy, you set off for the supermarket. Arriving there, you see a crowd of other shoppers on the same mission as yourself, stocking up before the holiday closing period begins.

Keeping an eye on the time, you go round the shelves collecting the items you want. As you finish you note with satisfaction that there are still just a few minutes to go before the stores closes. You'll have plenty of time to get through the checkout.

You get to the checkout desk. The clerk enters your purchases on the cash till and tells you the total cost.

You reach for your money. And you can't find it. You search again, and still it isn't there. You realise why: you left it at home. In your haste you have come to the supermarket without any money. You don't have a credit card or cheques either.

As a line of shoppers builds up behind you, you tell the clerk what's happened. You ask: 'Would it be okay for me to leave my name and address, take the goods away and come back and pay after the holiday?' The clerk replies, 'No I am afraid that isn't possible'.

You don't have time now to go home and get your money before the supermarket closes. So you won't get your goods. You'll have to go without them. And it will be several days before the shops open again.

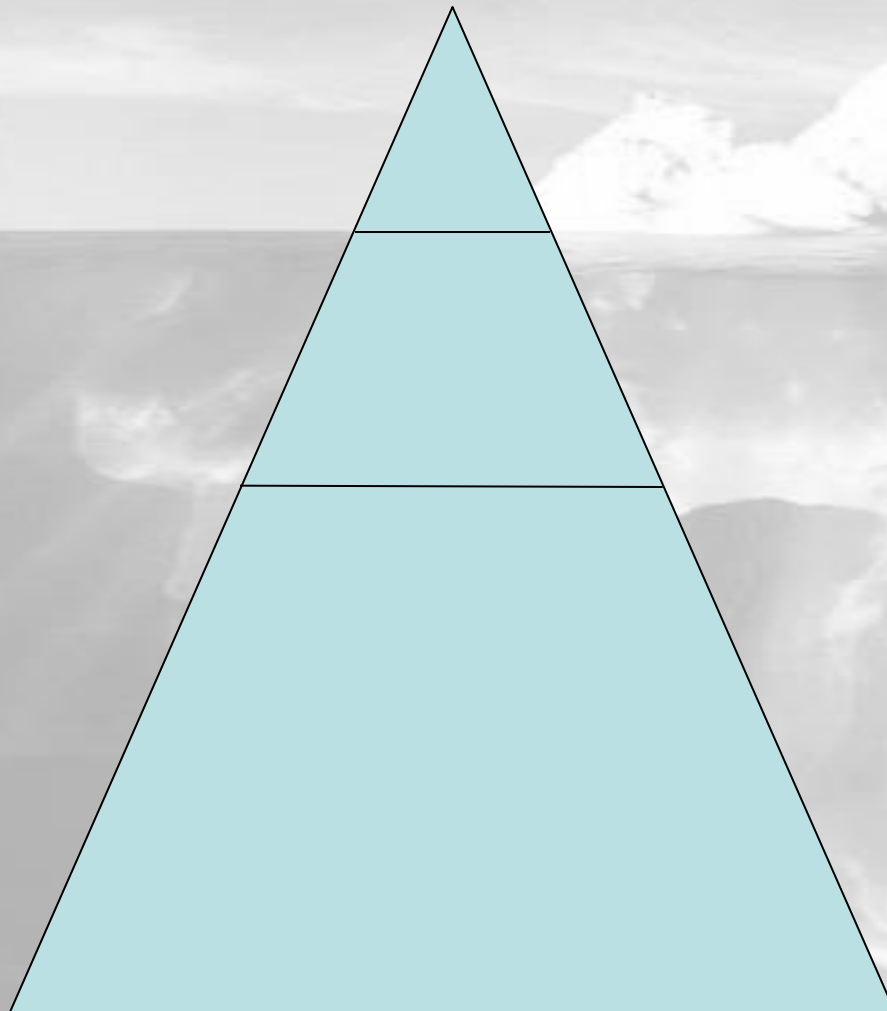
As you realise this...how do you feel?

# Frames of Reference (FoR)

‘An overall perceptual, conceptual, affective and action set which is used to define the self, other people, and the world’

All our early life experiences are assembled into a unique set of beliefs about ourselves, others and the world, a ‘Frame of Reference’. This frame is like a distorting lense through which we view life and which gives us a unique personal concept of ‘reality’. Our FoR guides us throughout life unless changed by developing awareness and making decisions to change what we believe.

# Communication



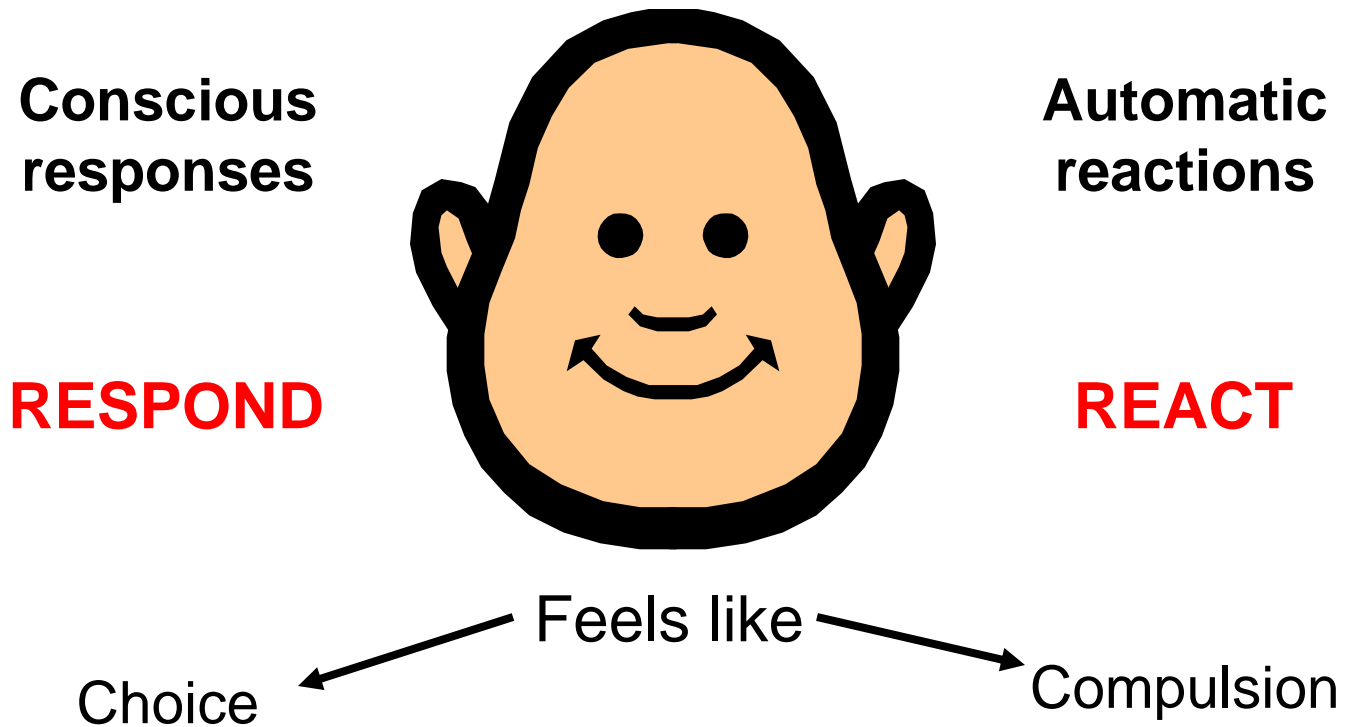
Words 7%

Tonality 38%

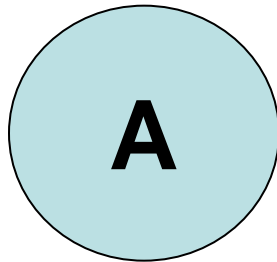
Physiology 55%

Mehrabian, A. (1972)

# Human Behaviour



# Conscious responses



**Adult**

*logical*

*cognitive*

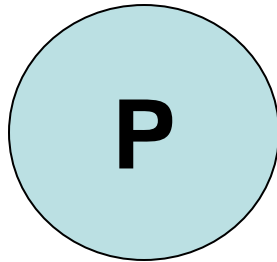
behaviours, thoughts, feelings  
which are direct responses to the  
here and now

*conscious*

*thoughtful*

*(appropriate)  
emotion*

# Automatic reactions



**Parent**

*loving*

*bossy*

*impatient*

behaviours, thoughts and feelings  
*copied* from parents or parent  
figures – that part of us which  
behaves in a parental way

*controlling*

*judging*

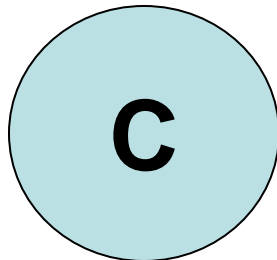
*caring*

*playful*

*impulsive*

*curious*

behaviours, thoughts and feelings  
*learned* in childhood and *replayed*  
by the grown-up – where we hold  
most powerful feelings



**Child**

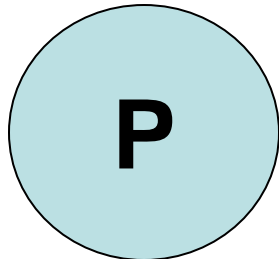
*compliant*

*rebellious*

*emotional*

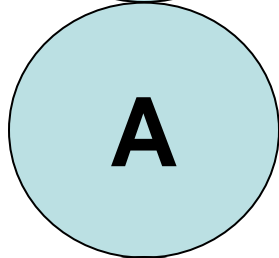


# Who's driving the bus?



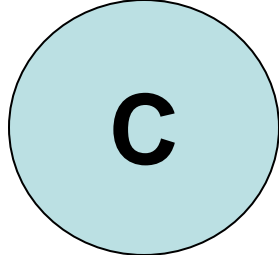
**Parent**

behaviours, thoughts and feelings  
*copied* from parents or parent  
figures



**Adult**

behaviours, thoughts, feelings  
which are direct responses to the  
here and now



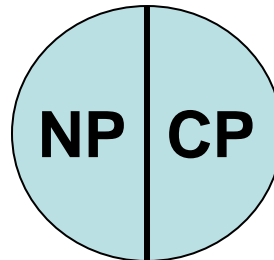
**Child**

behaviours, thoughts and feelings  
*learned* in childhood and *replayed*  
by the grown-up

# Ego states

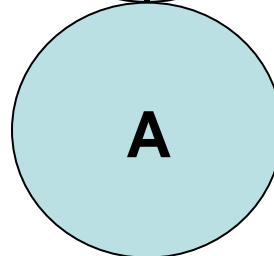
*+ive: Supporting*  
*- ive: Smothering*

**Nurturing Parent**



**Controlling (Critical) Parent**

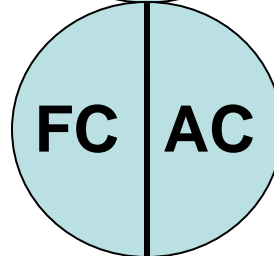
*+ive: Protective*  
*- ive: Restrictive*



**Adult**

**Free Child**

*+ive: Spontaneous*  
*- ive: Immature*



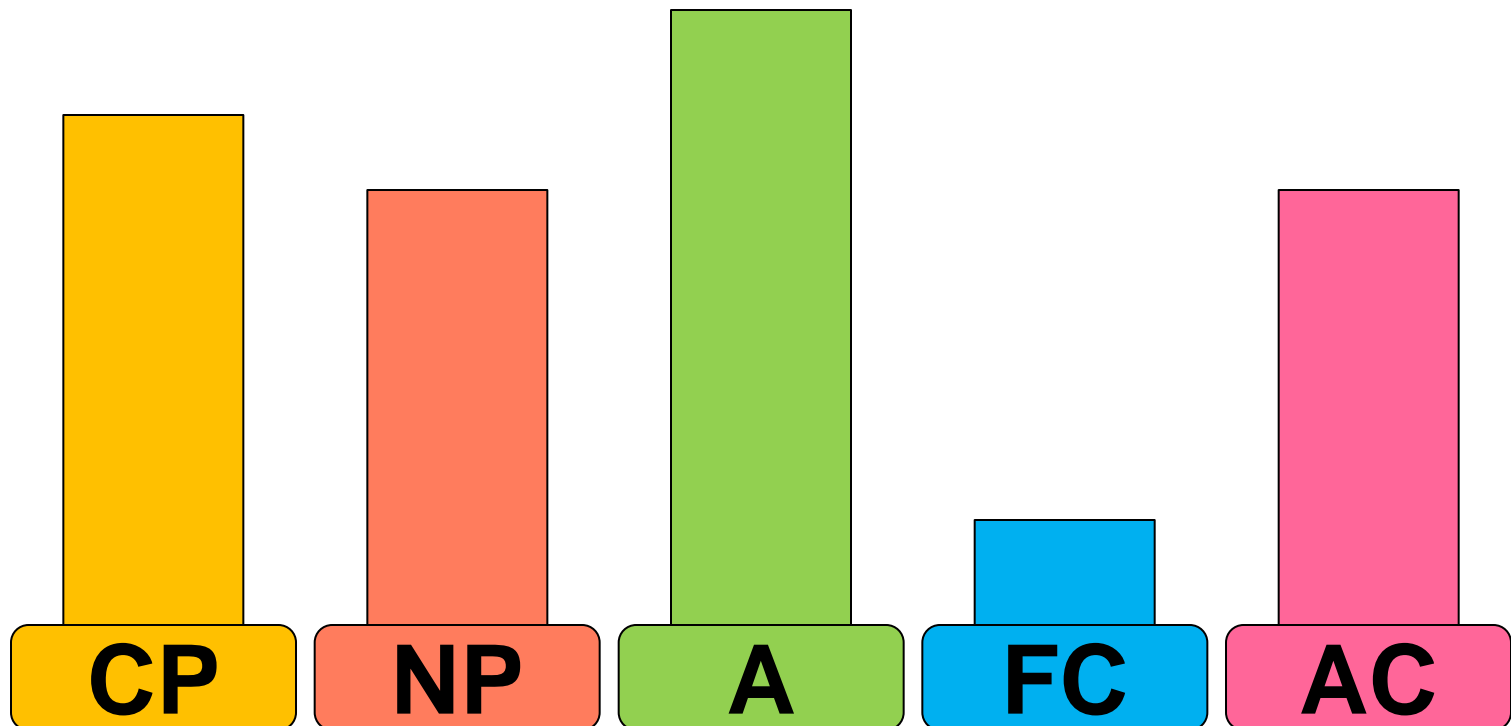
**Adapted Child**  
*(Rebellious Child)*

*+ive: Co-operative*  
*- ive: Compliant*

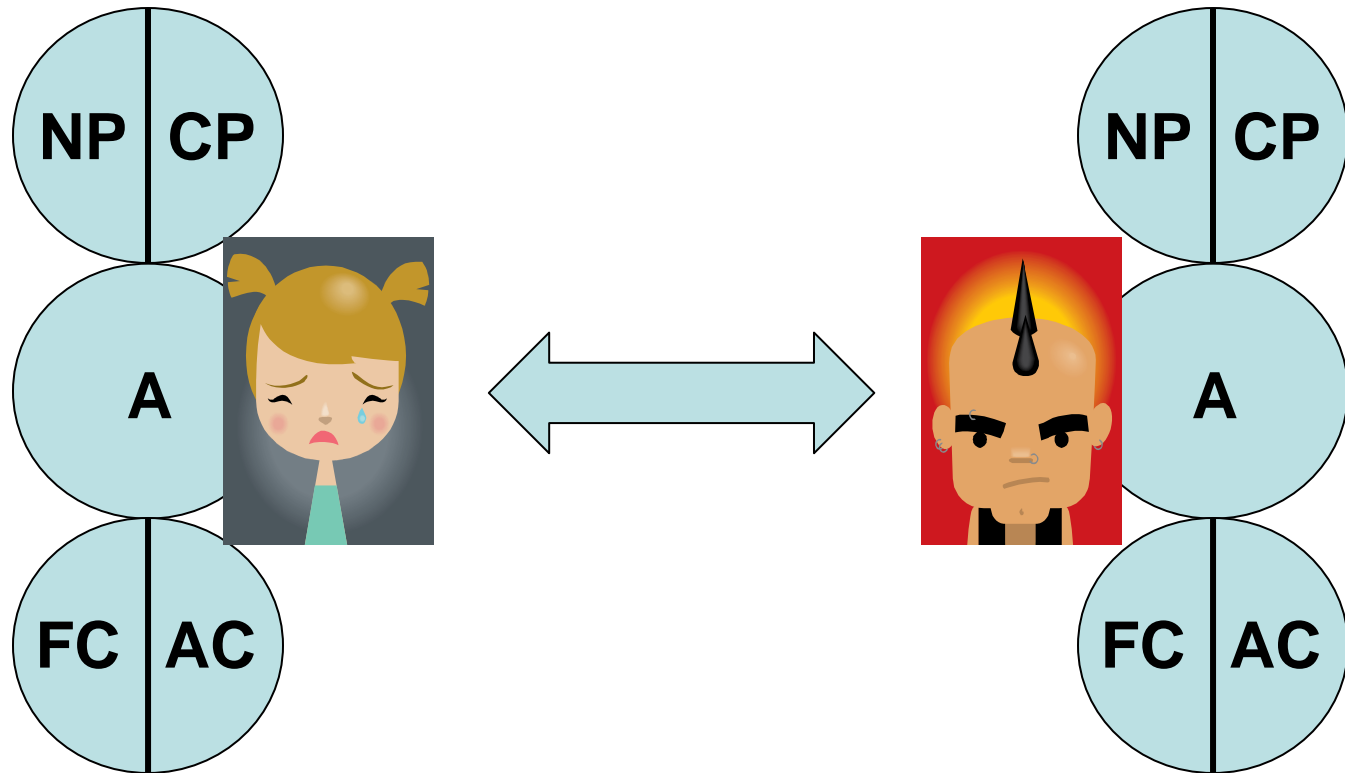
*+ive: Independent*  
*- ive: Resistant*

# Egogram

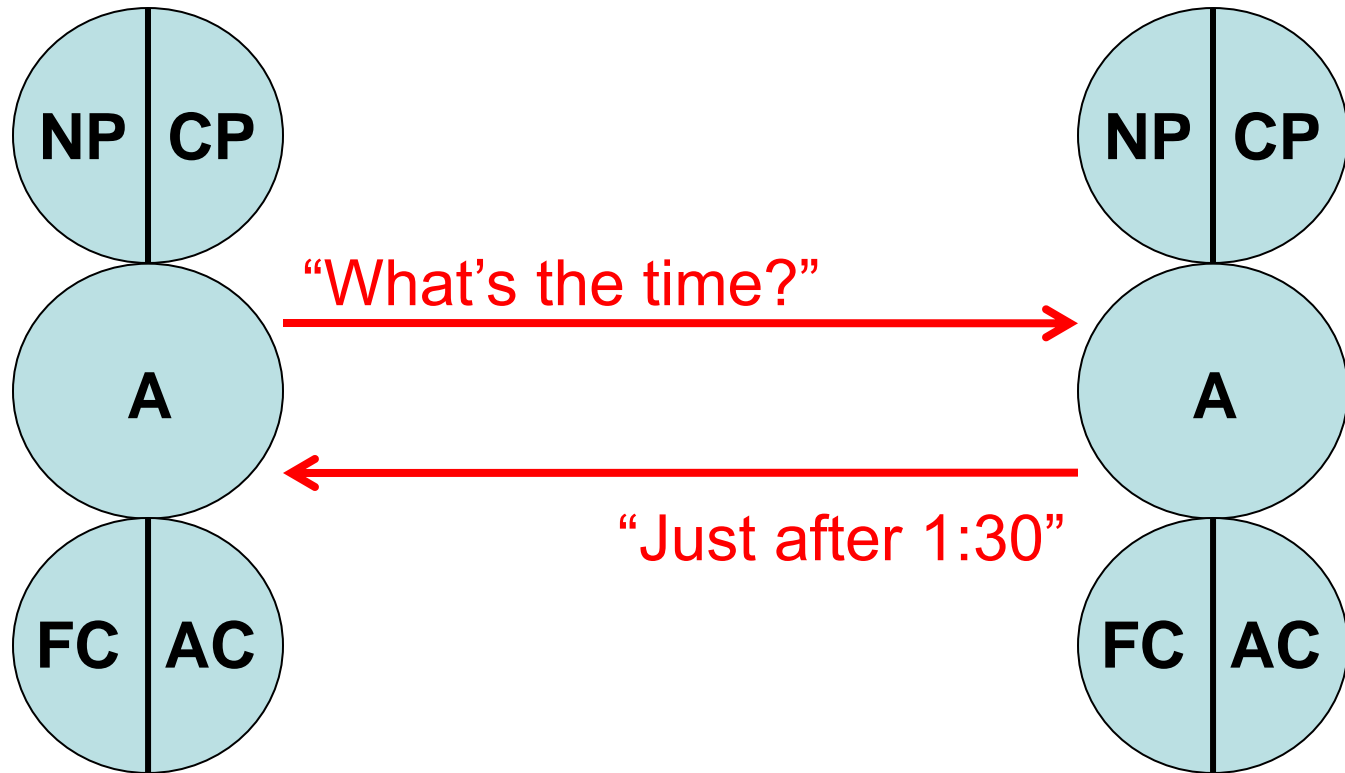
- Draw 5 boxes to represent the ego-states
- Draw a vertical bar to represent the one you use the most.
- Now do the same for the one you do the least
- Now add the remaining three relative to the first two



# Who's talking to who?

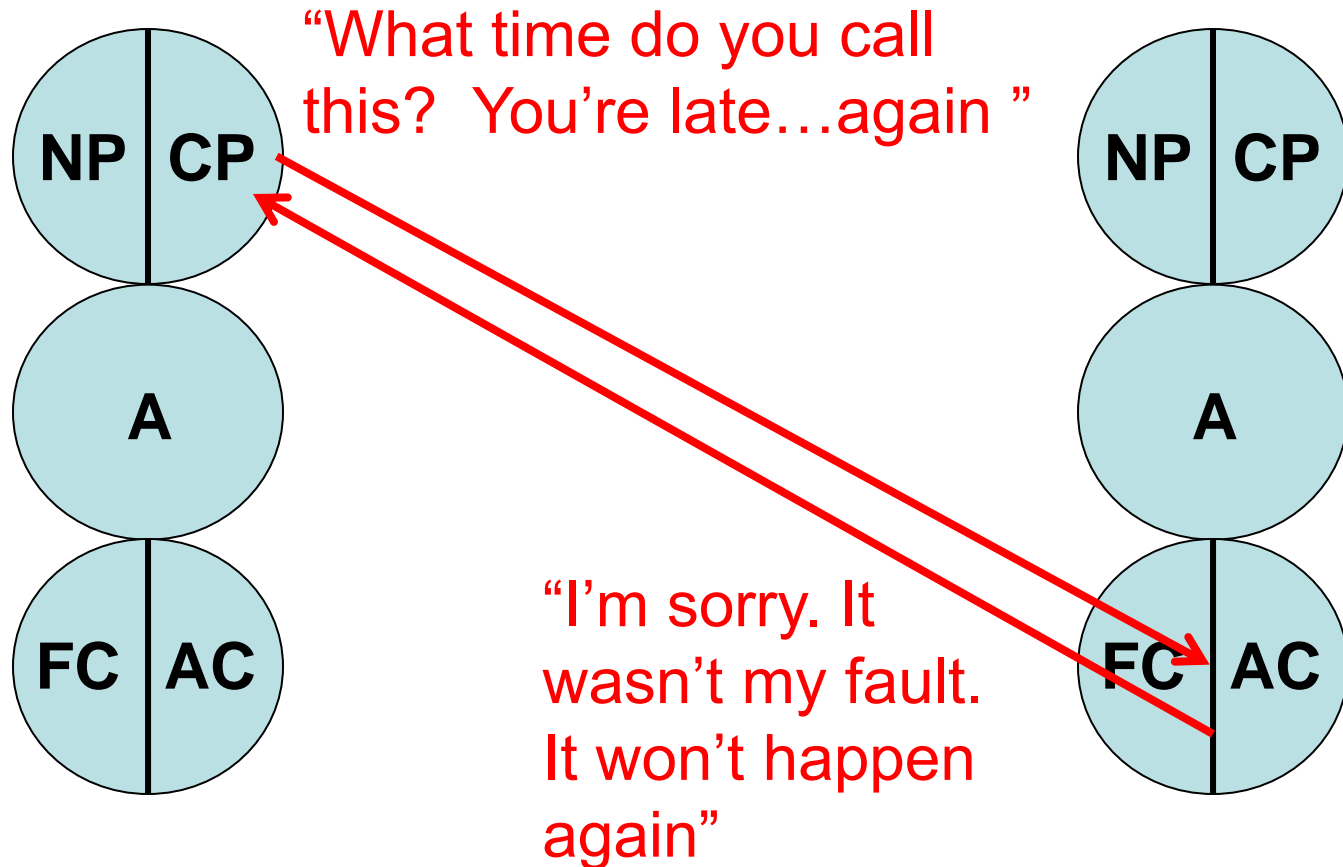


# Transactions



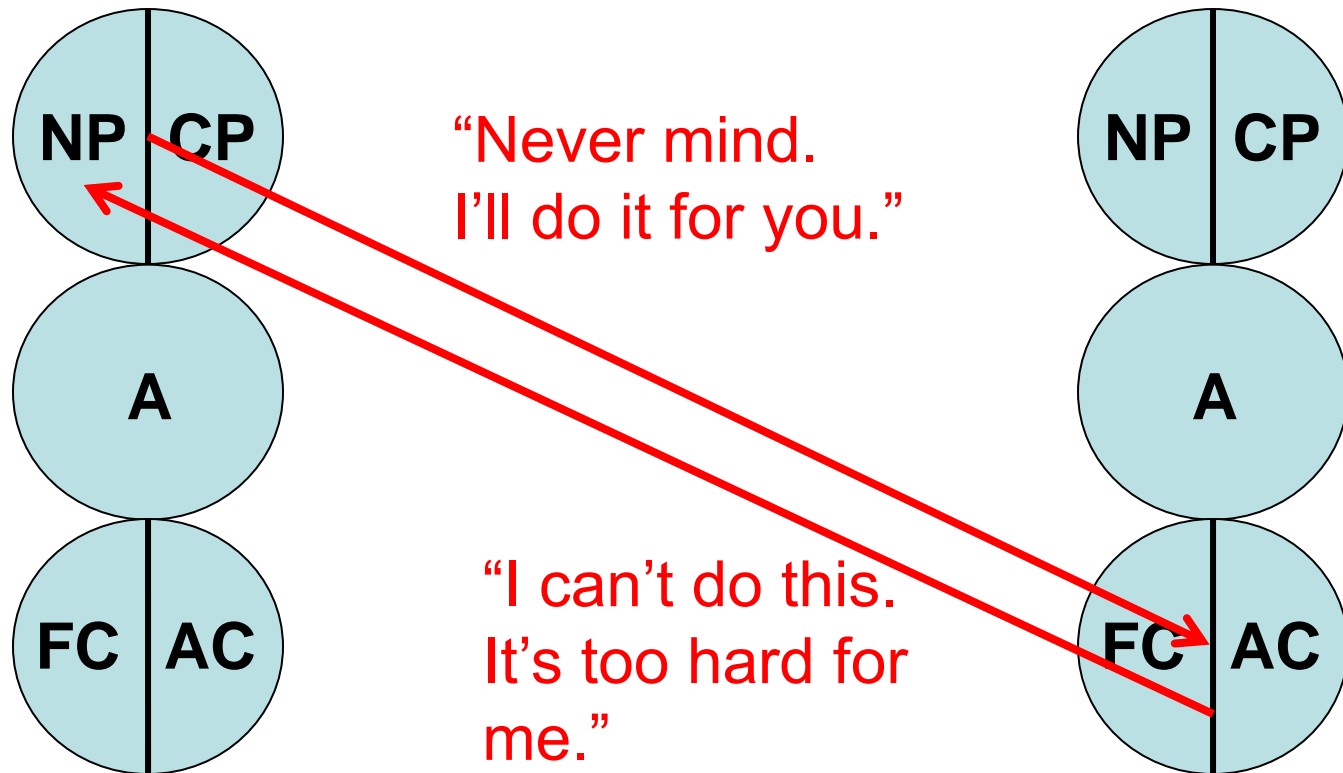
Adult to Adult complementary (or parallel) transaction

# Transactions



Parent to Child complementary transaction

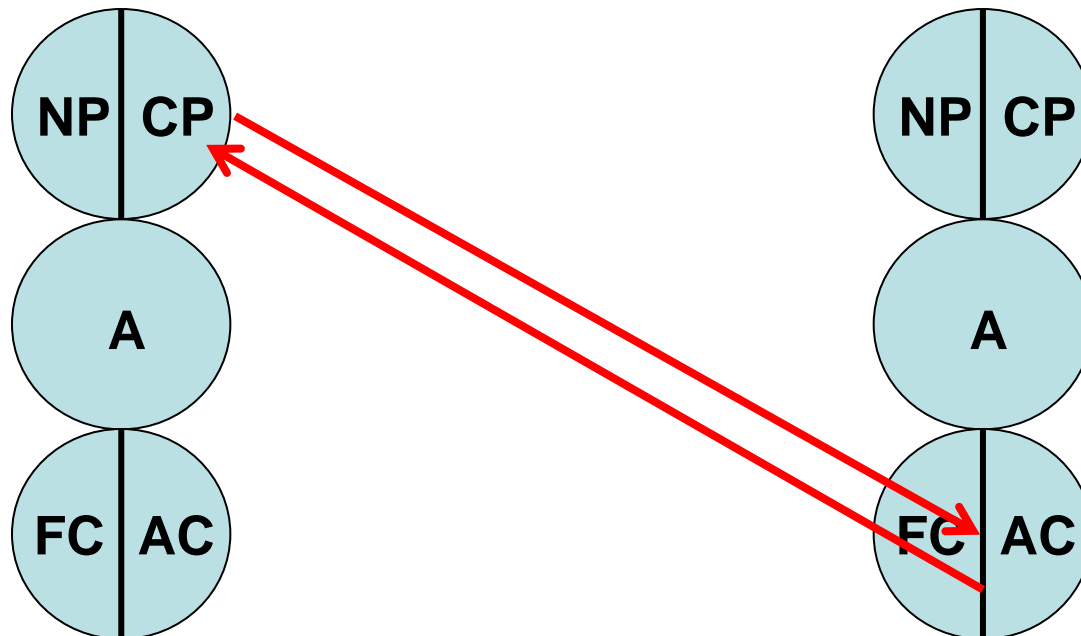
# Transactions



Child to Parent complementary transaction

# Transactions

If someone starts a transaction from a particular ego state we can get 'hooked in', out of our awareness, prompted by learned patterns, old memories and early programming. This can be prompted by situations, tone of voice, environments, forgotten (or distorted) memories, etc etc. This is where rackets (or manipulative behaviour can emerge)

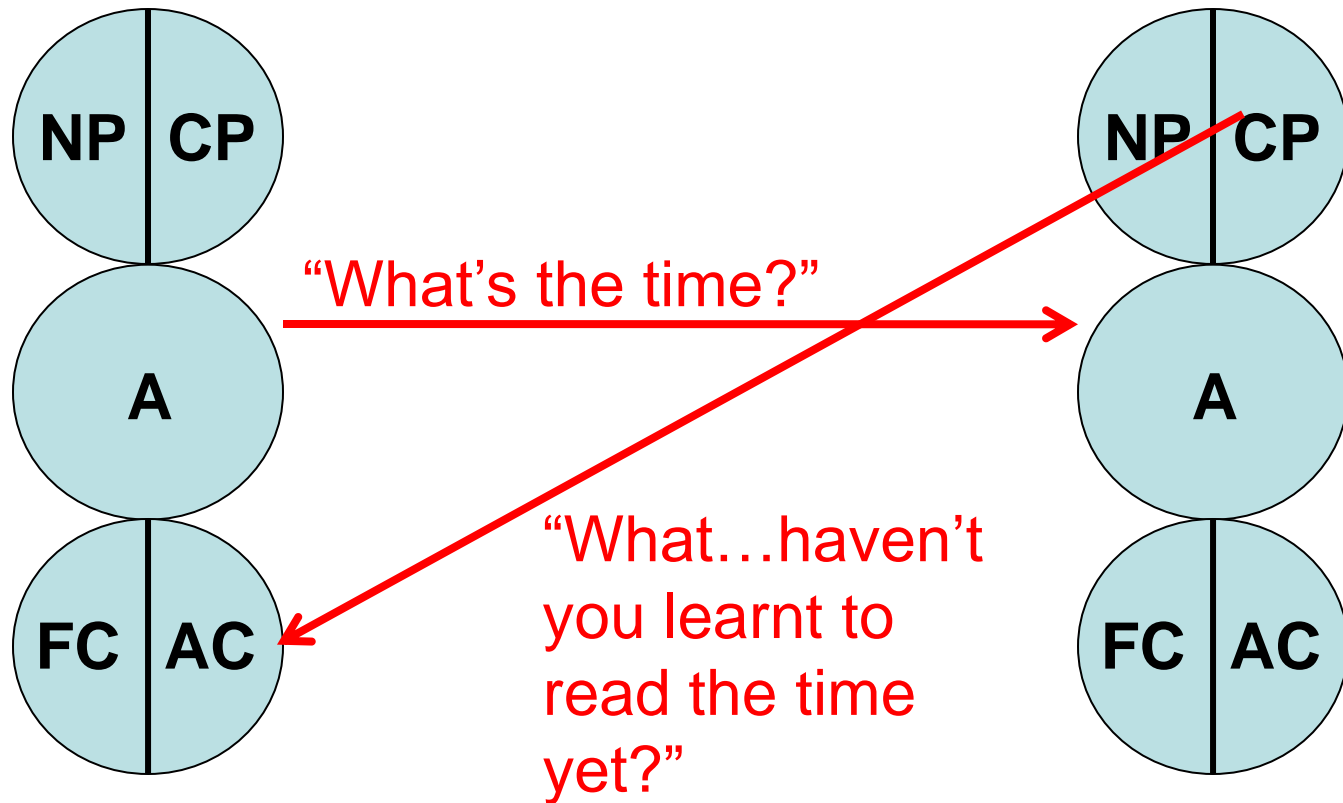




# The Rules of Communication

- **First Rule:**  
*So long as transactions are complementary, communication can continue indefinitely. Even if that communication is not 'healthy' or helpful or manipulative.*

# Crossed Transactions



# The Rules of Communication

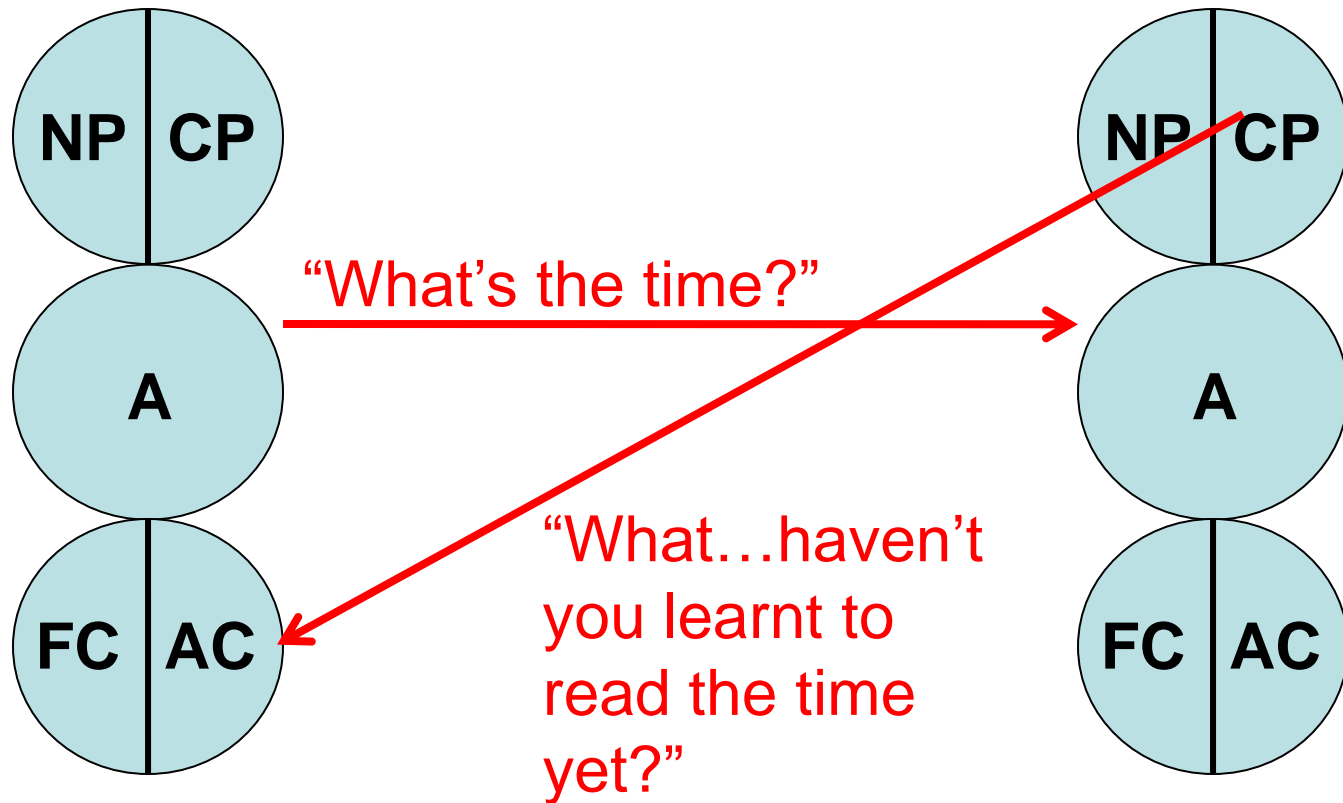
- **First Rule:**

*So long as transactions are complementary, communication can continue indefinitely. Even if that communication is not 'healthy' or helpful or manipulative*

- **Second Rule:**

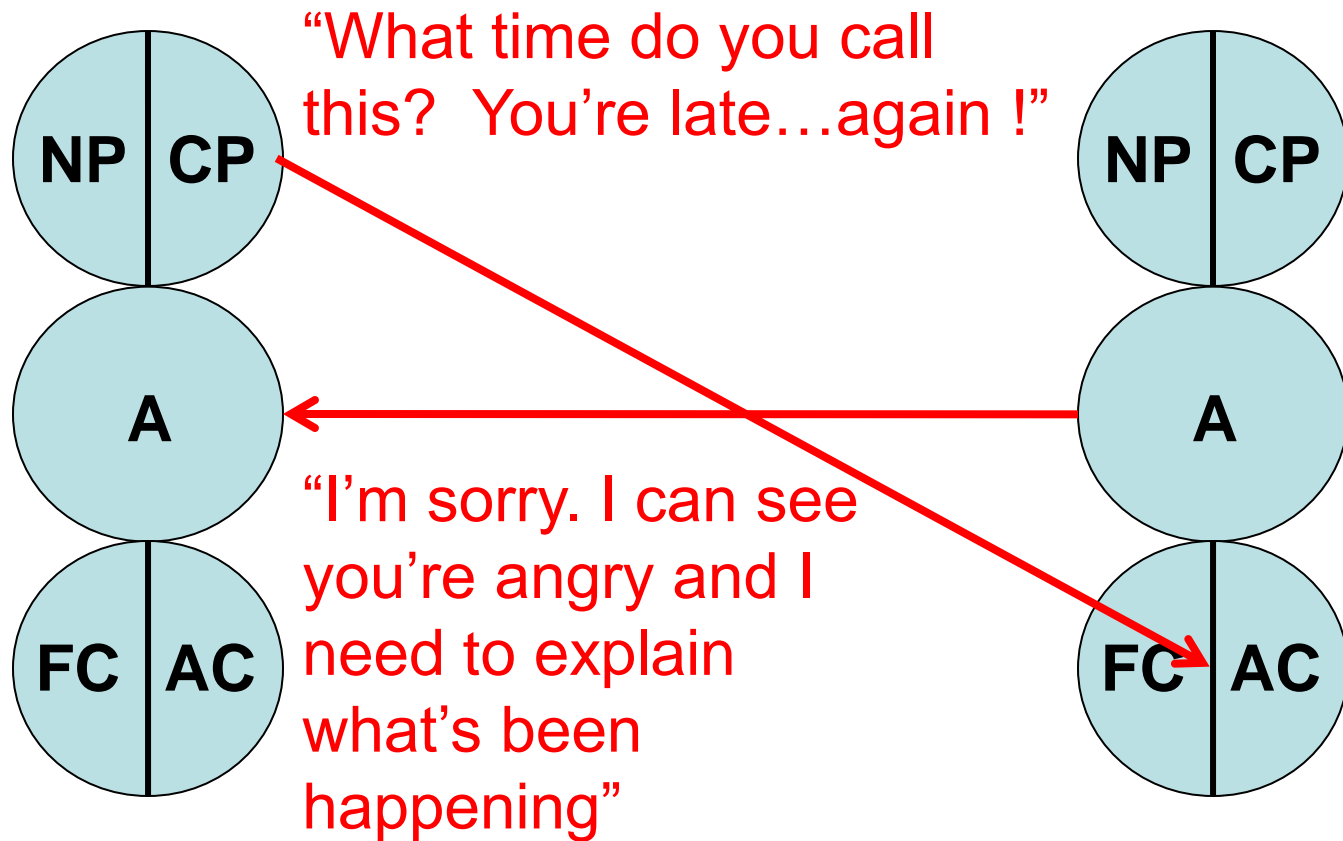
*When a transaction is crossed, a break in the communication results and one or both individuals will need to shift ego-states in order for communication to be re-established*

# Crossed Transactions



*What happens next?*

# Crossed Transactions



**What happens next?**

# Ulterior Transactions

Arise where two messages are conveyed at the same time. The **overt 'social-level' message** and the **covert 'psychological level' message**.

**Husband:** *"Where's my shirt?"*

**Wife:** *"I put it away in the drawer."*

*(Adult to Adult)*

However, change the tone of voice and expressions  
...

**Husband:** *"Where's my shirt?"*

= *"You still haven't done the ironing"*

**Wife:** *"I put it away in the drawer."*

**What happens next?** = *"You're a slob and I hate you!"*

# The Rules of Communication

- **First Rule:**

*So long as transactions are complementary, communication can continue indefinitely. Even if that communication is not 'healthy' or helpful or manipulative*

- **Second Rule:**

*When a transaction is crossed, a break in the communication results and one or both individuals will need to shift ego-states in order for communication to be re-established*

- **Third Rule:**

*The behavioural outcome of an ulterior transaction is determined at the psychological and not the social level.*

# Game Analysis (Rackets)

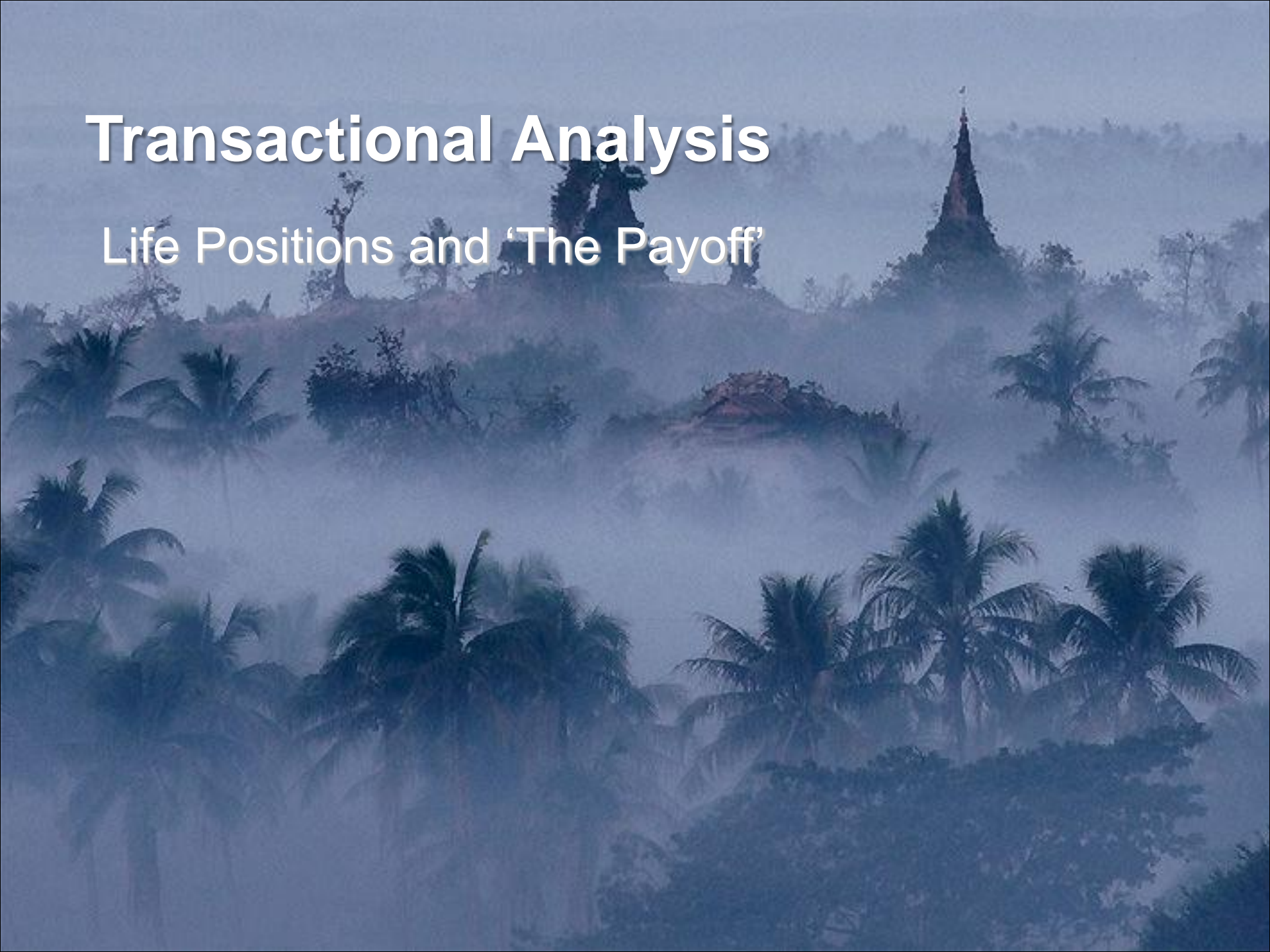
Whenever ulterior transactions give us bad feelings with which we are familiar...or when we use transactions to create bad feeling in others....we are probably involved in psychological games.

A game is a series of transactions leading to a well concealed but well defined payoff.



# Transactional Analysis

Life Positions and 'The Payoff'



# Life Positions

**I'm not OK  
You're OK**

*You're one-up*

**I'm OK  
You're OK**

*We're equal (healthy)*

**I'm not OK  
You're not OK**

*We're equal (futile)*

**I'm OK  
You're not OK**

*I'm one-up*

# The Drama (Game) Triangle

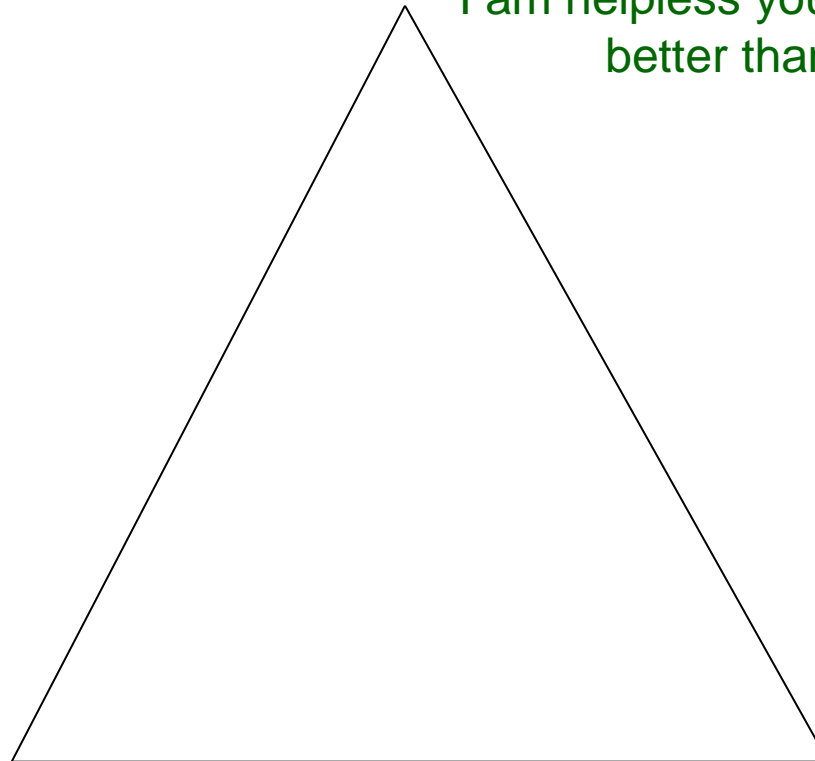
Karpman 1966

**Victim**

I am helpless you are  
better than me

**Persecutor**

I am better than  
you, you are inferior



**Rescuer**

I know more  
than you, you  
are less  
adequate

# Why play games?

- To maintain life position – to satisfy stroke needs
- To satisfy need for, and to maintain predictable patterns of behaviour
- To avoid responsibility (and intimacy)
- To keep others around you for strokes/attention

# Classic game....

- “If it were not for you then I could”.....
- Who will get kicked, and who will kick...  
(so who is one up and kicking the other, and who is one down and being kicked)

Both players will play from their favourite life position, and each game reinforces the script and life positions of the players.

# Now back to the shopping....your racket feelings

- Describe/name the emotion you felt (no need to disclose)
- The emotion you describe/name will be one that you experience in a wide variety of stress situations
- The emotion registered is one that was learned during your childhood
- The emotion you feel will often do nothing towards solving your problem

# In organisations

Individuals often resort to games when they feel bored, not recognised or not sufficiently challenged with an organisation.

Increasing the opportunities for, and encouraging positive challenge (through awareness) can help to eliminate game playing and increase productivity

# Recognise your own and others games....and choose something different

- Challenge your frame of reference
- Try a different 'ego state'
- Is your message overt or covert?
- Are you playing games/ racketeering?
- Is your life position healthy - or are you Persecutor, Rescuer, Victim?



