

Transactional Analysis: learning how to feel equal!



INTRODUCTION

Explain that this session examines how we relate to each other – at home / school / with friends etc and how the tools of transactional analysis may provide some interesting insights.

A helpful resource:

<http://www.slideshare.net/jalasayanan/transactional-analysis-12757931>

You may like to use some of the slides in this presentation during the session.

ACTIVITY

Ask the students to respond to such questions as:

- Do you ever feel bullied, belittled, pushed around, given little opportunity to express your own views?
- Have you ever wondered why some people seem to behave as if they are “in charge”?
- Have you ever noticed how, when someone else is bossing you around, it makes you feel small?

And add a key question:

- What does it feel like to be bossed around?

Encourage the students to write down some of the emotions, words and phrases used when this happens.

Get some feedback and ask for responses to some further statements and questions, such as:

- Do you ever notice that it is quite difficult to speak sensibly and thoughtfully when someone orders you around?
- We have a tendency to either argue back, or to shrivel into a ball and retreat. Have you ever wondered why?

Explain that Transactional Analysis teaches that there are three ego states we can operate in:

- Parent

- Adult
- Child

and that these are partly linked to childhood experiences and role models and they have a large effect on the way we behave with others.

Show slides 6-8 from the resource (see above) or provide a handout of these key features/behaviours:

'Parent' ego state

Key features: controlling, criticising, ordering, fault-finding, moralising, scolding, telling

In parent we talk in imperatives and absolutes

Examples of parent statements:

"Never talk to strangers"

"Always look both ways when you cross the road"

'Adult' ego state

Key features: questioning, cooperating, valuing, thinking, non-threatening, problem-solving

In adult we talk in probabilities, explaining meaning

Examples of adult statements:

"We can't always trust other people, so it is better not to talk to strangers"

"Do you notice that traffic comes from both directions, so it's important to look both ways before you cross"

'Child' ego state

Key features: obeying, sulking, crying, dependent, being frightened, feeling helpless, rebellious

In child we feel a sense of powerlessness, like you did when you were a child

Examples of child statements:

"Sorry, I know it was my fault"

"I won't do it again"

"It's not fair!"

Encourage the students to take part in a role-play in groups of three. Allocate an ego state to each person and ask them to create some dialogue that exhibits these different reactions.

Example 1: A teacher ('parent') is angrily telling a pupil ('child') off for failing to complete homework adequately. Does the pupil accept mildly or respond by arguing and having a row?

Another pupil ('adult') intervenes, suggesting that the homework could be completed by the next lesson?

Example 2: A mother ('parent') is cross because her child ('child') has come home late. The father ('adult') intervenes to prevent a confrontation.

DISCUSSION

At the end of the role-play, prompt students to give their responses to the following statements and questions:

- 'The key to happy, equal relationships is to learn how to operate in the "adult" ego state as much as possible.' Do you agree?
- Can you think of examples of people you know who operate in: parent, adult or child? What are the characteristics of their behaviour that help you to identify this?