

The Trusted Executive

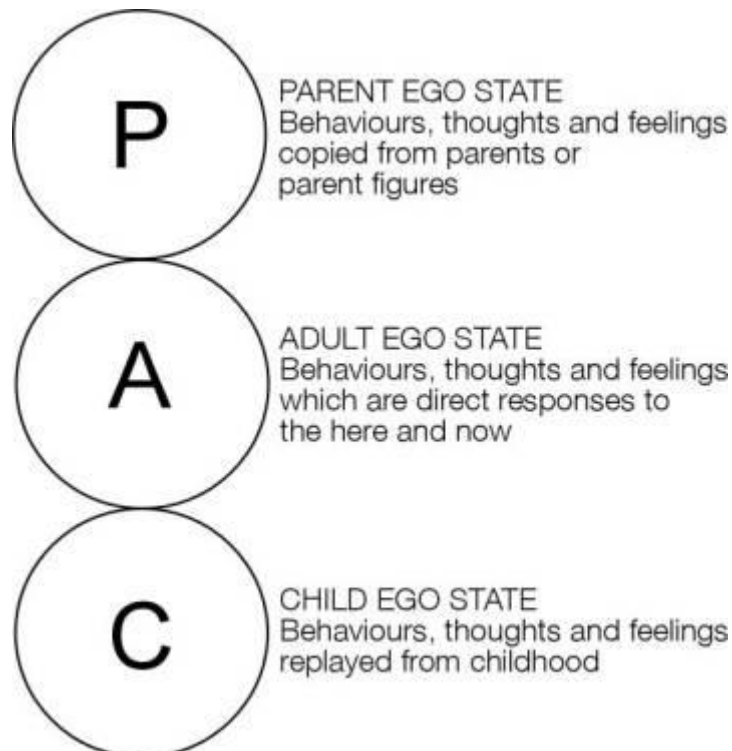
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Trackdown Exercise

The techniques of TA (transactional analysis) can help us take that first step towards recovering from a breach in integrity. In particular, TA has an exercise known as 'trackdown', which was first documented by Tom and Amy Harris in their book 'Staying OK' [11]. Over the years, I have used this exercise hundreds of times at a personal level to help me recover quickly from personal set-backs and disappointments. I have also seen it have a profound impact on my clients. It is, by far, the one coaching exercise that has had the most impact on my own personal development. To use the exercise, let us first remind ourselves of the TA model with its parent, adult and child ego-states:-



In a situation where there has been a lapse in integrity, the child ego-state experiences acute shame, the parent ego-state goes into a frenzy of judgement and the adult ego-state becomes paralysed by the resulting parent-child battle. The likelihood is that no action will be taken and hope becomes our strategy. The trackdown exercise re-empowers the adult ego-state so that a proactive step can be taken. To complete the trackdown exercise we write down the answers to the following questions:-

1. What part of me hurts?

The answer to this question is always 'my child ego-state' but it helps to write this down because it allows you to realise that the truth is that you are hurting, but it is only part of you that is hurting

2. What feelings best describe my hurt?

Simply express the feeling or feelings as honestly and as openly as you can e.g. I feel ashamed and embarrassed, I feel gutted, I feel confused. This question is intended to validate your



feelings so they are not denied or brushed over as not important or inappropriate.

3. What happened in the recent past to trigger this feeling?

Be as specific as possible in tracking down the exact event that triggered the feeling e.g. 'it was when I realised that I had told a lie in the sales pitch about our pricing model'. The purpose of this question is to raise your awareness around the specific situations that 'push your buttons'. The more aware you can be of these then the more you can make conscious choices in the moment when they happen. We shall now use the example of lying in a sales pitch for the remainder of the exercise.

4. What is my parent ego-state saying to me and how is my child ego-state responding?

Write this out as a script. For example:-

Parent: 'you should have been honest'

Parent: 'you should have prepared better for the sales pitch'

Parent: 'you're totally out of your depth'

Child: 'I want to run away'

Child: 'I don't know what to do'

Child: 'I want to give it all up'

This script helps reveal the internal dialogue that has been triggered by the event. This dialogue is likely to be a repeating pattern built in childhood and reinforced through adult life. The script recognises the reality of the internal battle but disempowers it through the act of writing it down and hence gaining a third party perspective on the internal conversation. The more familiar you become with the dialogue the more quickly you can intervene to disrupt its pattern.

5. What situations in my past does this remind me of?

These could be recent situations or situations back in childhood. Again, the question helps you step back and gain perspective, because all these past events are now not as important as you thought they were at the time. In my example, it could be that the situation reminded me of stealing Simon Brotherton's Jonty West hat in primary school as per the example in chapter 5! My first defining lapse in integrity.

6. What is another way of looking at this?

This question invites creativity and encourages a shift of perspective. Having allowed the child and parent ego-states to vent some of their emotion and judgement, we are now inviting the adult ego-state to make its first contribution. In my example, another way of looking at the situation might be that this was an opportunity to practise bouncing back from disappointments and set-backs

7. What is the adult ego state analysis of the facts, risks and likely outcomes?

Now that the overwhelming feelings have been disempowered, we continue to let the adult ego-state take centre stage:-

Fact: Our pricing policy was not on the agenda for this client meeting



Fact: I am not perfect

Fact: We are due to meet the client again next week

Risk: I could rely upon hope as my strategy

Risk: I could over-react and withdraw from the sale

Risk: My integrity could be damaged significantly unless I take some action

Likely Outcome: I will take action to recover this situation

Likely Outcome: I will have to swallow my pride

Likely Outcome: It will not be the end of the world

8. What now is my best reaction to this situation?

We now ask the adult ego-state to plan the next steps. Note that sometimes the answer to this question may be to do nothing! In this example, the answer would be 'I need to swallow my pride, pick up the phone, apologise to the client and re-present our pricing policy at the meeting next week'

9. What might I do differently if this situation happens again?

Again, we are engaging the adult ego-state to learn from what has happened and to seek closure on the experience. In my example, the answer could be 'Next time I am asked a question by a client that I didn't expect I need to say that I don't have an immediate answer, but I will get back to them within 24 hours with the answer'.

By using the trackdown exercise we can take action quickly to make the first steps to recover from an issue with our honesty, our openness or our humility. It is like emergency first aid applied at the scene of a traffic accident. It stabilises the situation and removes the immediate sense of panic. Through its application, we do not rely upon hope and we stem the impact on our trustworthiness.

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