

CHAPTER 3

Scripts and Hardwiring That Affect Change

Understanding your own “hardwired” responses to new situations, through transactional analysis, can give you tools for effectively managing your own reactions to change. In this chapter, we’ll take a close look at where that hardwiring comes from and how it works.

EXERCISE: YOUR REACTIONS TO CHANGE

Rank the statements below from 1–6, 1 being “most often” and 6 being “least often.” You can’t have a tie. Don’t spend a lot of time thinking about your answer. This exercise is about reactions.

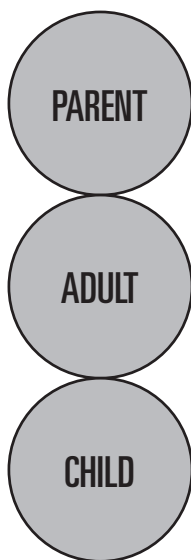
When someone in your life (peer, direct supervisor, spouse, partner, friend, etc.) says, “We’re going to make a change,” do you:

- _____ Defend the status quo?
- _____ Seek to understand how the change could support you and your colleagues/friends/family?
- _____ Take in the information and sort through it?
- _____ Go along with the change?
- _____ Become excited by the thought of changing?
- _____ Wonder how to undermine the change process?

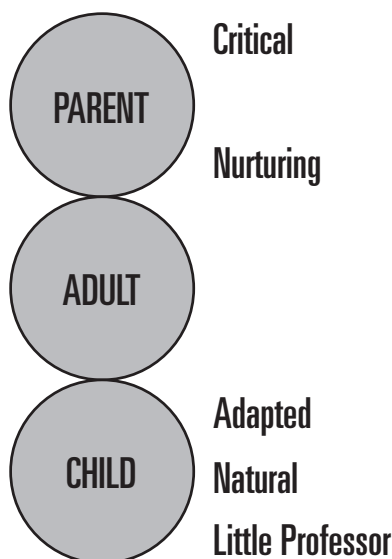
We'll revisit this exercise later in the chapter.

TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS: INTERNAL HARDWIRING

The theory of transactional analysis (TA), first put forward by Professor Eric Byrne through his research at the University of California at Berkley in the late 1950s and early 1960s, states that all humans have three recorders or “ego states”: the Parent, the Adult, and the Child. These ego states are represented in the figure below.



The Parent and Child ego states are split into two and three sub-ego states respectively. The Parent has a “Critical” side and a “Nurturing” side, and the Child has an “Adapted” side, a “Natural” side, and a “Little Professor side,” which are shown in the following figure.



PARENT EGO STATE

The Parent ego state turns on when a person is born and shuts off at about six years old. It contains all of the messages (aka “scripts”) received from parents and other authority figures (grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, coaches, teachers, etc.). Once the Parent ego state shuts off, those messages live within for the rest of the person’s lives and can’t be erased. Typically these messages are the “do’s and don’ts” and “shoulds and shouldn’ts” that were learned prior to the age of six. For example, “Never talk to strangers,” is

a Parent script that most sales managers have to coach through when they bring on a new salesperson.

Critical Parent

Imagine an adult standing over a child, pointing his finger at the child and using sentences that include “you.” For example, “Why are you so special?” “What makes you think that anyone wants to talk to you?” Critical Parent scripts, such as “You can’t,” may live inside the team members whom you need to implement and manage a change with you.

Keep in mind that while the Parent scripts can never be erased, they can be modified and controlled.

CASE IN POINT: MOM, I LOVE YOU, BUT . . .

A salesperson we worked with wasn’t making prospecting calls. He had been recruited by his current company based on his track record, which had been based on leveraging past relationships for introductions. In his new role, this salesperson was expected to make prospecting calls. But he wouldn’t, and he was about three weeks away from being let go.

During a coaching session, he shared with us that his mother had grown up in a rough area and had escaped a kidnapping attempt when she was young after she had stopped to give someone directions in her town. From that day forward, she was extremely uncomfortable around people she didn’t know. Unwittingly, she had passed a strong “never talk to strangers” script to her son.

We suggested that this salesperson have a “conversation” with his mother, who had passed several years before. We explained in a coaching session that if the salesperson really wanted to do away with this hindering script, he would need to tell his mother that while he loved her and appreciated the protection that she gave him when he was growing up, he now needed to talk to strangers to support and protect his own family.

The following week, the salesperson proudly announced that he had had that “conversation” with his mother. The following day he made two prospecting calls. While that didn’t yet meet his weekly target, it was better than the zero calls he had been making before. He continued to improve.

Nurturing Parent

Imagine an adult hugging a crying child softly saying, “It’ll be OK.” Someone who grew up with one or both parents who were nurturing will have scripts like, “You can do it,” “If at first you don’t succeed, try and try again,” and “Everything works out in the end.” That last one can be taken to an extreme, but the non-extreme meaning is: “Even if you feel like the world is against you, it isn’t. Keep doing the right things to grow, and you will be satisfied with the final result.” That script has kept me going when I’ve gone through massive changes in my life and felt like there would be no end to the darkness I was experiencing.

Keep in mind that while the Nurturing Parent ego state sounds positive, it can have a negative side that may manifest when nurturing turns to enabling.

CASE IN POINT: ENABLING MANAGER

Manager Sean delegated part of his change effort to Dave to implement with his peers. Dave's implementation hadn't started so Sean sought to find out why.

Sean: Dave, thanks for coming in. I wanted to chat with you about how your implementation is going.

Dave: Sure, Sean. I've got nothing to report.

Sean: Oh?

Dave: I can't get any traction with the others. They tell me to my face that they'll support me and implement the changes that I asked them to, but then they just go off and do the same things!

Sean: Interesting. What have you done to address that?

Dave: Nothing! I don't get why they won't listen. We've all worked together for years. We go to lunch together. We have a good time. Now I feel like they're all laughing behind my back.

Sean: Well, I won't stand for that. Dave, let me take this implementation off your plate. I'll roll it out myself and make sure they listen to me. OK?

Dave: That's great, Sean! Thanks so much for making me feel better.

Sean just taught Dave that whenever he runs into a problem (this situation is internal, but Dave's brain won't record it that way), he can run to Sean and Sean will handle it for him. Sean has to learn that he just cost himself his most valuable resource—his time—from this one incident.

ADULT EGO STATE

The Adult ego state turns on when people begin to be independent from their parents, usually when they start crawling. The Adult runs for the rest of one's life. It is best envisioned as a computer that takes in information, decides what ego state should handle that information, and activates the appropriate response.

For example, your colleague asks, "What time is it?" Your Adult takes in that information, decides that it is an information-only request, and activates an Adult response, "It's around 8:30."

The Adult also controls those Parent and Child ego states, which can never be erased. However, sometimes a person can be Parent- or Child-affected, which means a sub-ego state of the Parent or Child is dominant over that person's Adult.

Revisiting the above example, your colleague says, "What time is it?" The Critical-Parent-affected individual responds, "Time to get a watch." The Little-Professor-affected individual says, "Wouldn't you like to know?"

Typically being Parent- or Child-affected isn't positive. The individual will be either highly judgmental of change (Critical Parent), overly accommodating (Adapted Child), or likely to sabotage through passive-aggressive resistance (Little Professor).

The best way to bring someone out of their Parent or Child ego state is to stay in your Adult, ask questions, and restate what you hear. We'll cover this more later when we look at games people play while changing and how to end those games.

CASE IN POINT: MANAGING A PARENT- OR CHILD-AFFECTED INDIVIDUAL

Susan's peer Albert is venting to her about a recent change to vacation approvals, which used to be managed team-by-team on a spreadsheet. Now everyone must use the company intranet to request and approve vacation.

Albert: This is totally ludicrous, Susan!

Susan: What is, Albert?

Albert: This stupid new vacation approval system.

Susan: Because?

Albert: Because I've got enough to do without having to log into our terrible intranet to approve my team's vacation days. It used to be simple when I used a spreadsheet!

Susan: I understand. If you had a magic wand what would you do?

Albert: I'd go back to the spreadsheet. It was way easier for me.

Susan: That's fair. What happens when one of your team members is working with another group and that group doesn't know about their vacation?

Albert: Huh. I figured that person would tell them.

Susan: I'm sure they do, but people forget sometimes. Is that fair to say?

Albert: That's fair.

Susan: So how can I support you in getting comfortable with the new vacation system?

Albert: Got 10 minutes to walk me through it?

Susan: Not right now, but how about Thursday or Friday? Which is better for you?

Albert: Friday morning. We usually arrive at the same time. How about then?

Susan: I can make that work. Would you send me a meeting invite?

Albert: Absolutely. Thanks for letting me vent.

By staying in her Adult ego state, Susan allowed Albert to shift out of his Critical Parent and come to an Adult conclusion that using the new system was better for the company even if he had to suffer through a brief period of discomfort to change his behavior.

CHILD EGO STATE

Like the Parent ego state, the Child ego state turns on when a person is born and shuts off at about six years old. The emotional reactions to the messages stored in the Parent ego state are locked in the Child ego state.

The Child state is where one's sense of compliance, need for approval, sense of humor, and sense of fear live. It is the seat of both mischief and anger.

Adapted Child

The Adapted Child could also be called the “compliant child.” When someone makes a request and your first reaction is, “Yes, right away!” you are operating from your Adapted Child ego state.

The Adapted Child also contains your need for approval, which can lead you to go along with change that doesn't benefit you or potentially even hurts you. The Adapted Child just wants to be liked.

CASE IN POINT: WHO ARE YOU, REALLY?

As a child, Brian was told, "Be a nice boy. You want people to like you." As Brian grew up, the Adapted Child script that had been planted in him prompted him to try recreational drugs because his friends pressured him, adopt a vegan diet to please his girlfriend, join a gym because he wanted to fit in at work, and take classes in subjects he really didn't care for because his parents implied he should. Brian's identity was tied up in changing into what he thought others said he should be instead of being what he believed he could be.

Natural Child

Your parents didn't have to teach you how to laugh or play. You were born with those scripts inside your Natural Child. Your parents or your environment did teach you how to be afraid. Your sense of joy and sense of fear both live in your Natural Child ego state.

When you feel yourself getting really excited about creating change, that's your Natural Child. When you feel yourself fearing the unknown as you contemplate implementing it, that's your Natural Child, too.

Leading change will require you to effectively manage your Natural Child ego state. If you are too exuberant, you will reduce

buy-in from your team members who feel you are being unrealistic about the time or effort required. If you are too afraid, you will start your company down the path to failure.

Little Professor/Rebellious Child

The Little Professor is the Child's version of the Adult ego state. It typically manifests itself as mischief or passive-aggressive behavior.

Little-Professor-affected leaders implement change because they get their needs met watching their employees try and fail to meet their ever-changing expectations.

Employees who are Little-Professor-affected will play games with their leaders during implementation and management because they get their needs met by upsetting others. Escaping a Little Professor's game requires staying in your Adult ego state, as the following Case in Point describes.

CASE IN POINT: MANAGING A LITTLE-PROFESSOR-AFFECTED EMPLOYEE

Shen's direct report Carl won't enter data into the customer relationship management (CRM) program her company rolled out three months before despite completing training and receiving extra coaching when requested. Shen needs data from each direct report to complete quarterly reporting to the executive team. This is the third conversation she and Carl have had about missing data since he completed training on the database.

Shen: Carl, I need your help. My quarterly reporting is due at the end of next week. I need your data to be in the CRM by next Wednesday so I can pull my reports. When I checked yesterday, you hadn't entered anything for this quarter.

Carl: Oh yeah. Slipped my mind. Don't worry about it, Shen.

Shen: Thanks for letting me know, Carl. My sense is there's a disconnect between you and the CRM. Is that fair to say?

Carl: Not really.

Shen: Well, what would be fair?

Carl: What's with all the pressure, Shen? The CRM's pretty easy to use. I can probably bang in my data for the quarter in 45 minutes.

Shen: Just 45 minutes? That's great, Carl. Let's look at your calendar and find a 45-minute block between now and next Wednesday when you can get your data entered. I'll make sure you aren't interrupted.

Carl: Uh, OK. How about Monday between 9:00 and 10:00?

Shen: Works for me, Carl. May I ask you one more thing?

Carl: Sure...

Shen (gently): Let's say that your data isn't entered by 10:00 on Monday. What would you like me to do?

Carl: You won't have to do anything. I'll make sure to get it done.

Shen: Glad to hear it. How about we set aside some time

next week to figure out a system that works for you for entering data so we don't have to have this conversation again?

Carl: I'd like that.

Shen: Great. Since you've got your calendar out already...

Games start when someone “discounts,” which usually sounds like, “Don't worry,” or something similar. Carl discounted Shen's question about data then became angry when she called his game by using “my sense is...fair to say?” By staying in her Adult ego state and asking questions instead of reacting to Carl's emotions, Shen pulled information out of Carl (45 minutes to enter data) that he might not have revealed otherwise, then used that information to help Carl come up with his own solution.

What that scene is brief, in a real-world interaction, Shen may have had to ask four or more Adult questions to pull Carl out of his Little Professor ego state.

EXERCISE: REVISITING YOUR REACTIONS TO CHANGE

Revisiting the exercise from the beginning of the chapter, label the statements with their corresponding ego state.

- _____ Defend the status quo
- _____ Seek to understand how the change could support you and your colleagues/friends/family
- _____ Take in the information and sort through it
- _____ Go along with the change

- _____ Become excited by the thought of changing
- _____ Wonder how to undermine the change process

The first statement relates to the Critical Parent, the second to the Nurturing Parent, the third to the Adult, the fourth to the Adapted Child, the fifth to the Natural Child, and the sixth to the Little Professor.

REACTING OR RESPONDING TO CHANGE

When you face a change in your life, you can either react or respond. When you react, typically it's by accessing the Critical Parent or Child ego states. When you respond, you are accessing the Adult state to choose the best ego state to communicate, which could be the Critical Parent or one of the Child sub-ego states.

The concept of “react or respond” is critical to keep in mind when communicating change to another person or a group. Humans are hardwired to be risk averse. That's how cities and societies came to be. Enough shared ancestors decided to be safe rather than investigating that strange rustling noise in the bushes.

Expect that most people with whom you share your proposed change will react instead of respond. To prevent things from being derailed, you must be emotionally unattached from the outcome of your communication. If you're emotionally invested in your audience vociferously accepting the proposed change, you'll likely end up disappointed and what you proposed will probably end there.

You may be inclined to focus on the Critical Parent ego state when thinking about your audience's reaction. However, the Child reac-

tions can be just as damaging to implementation and management, especially Little Professor and Natural Child. Don't concern yourself with the Adapted Child because this ego state seeks to please. A reaction from the Adapted Child will appear as compliance.

Little Professor reactions will, on the surface, appear supportive. However, the actions of individuals reacting from their Little Professor will demonstrate that they are actually sabotaging. You may also hear verbal eye-rolling, such as, "Yeah, I'm sure that's going to work."

If your audience reacts from the fear side of their Natural Child, that will likely manifest from their Critical Parent. When children are afraid, they typically seek comfort from their parent. If the parent feels the child is in danger, they will lash out to protect.

If your audience reacts from the play side of their Natural Child, they will initially be excited and willing. The danger with this reaction is when your audience feels the process has become boring. Keeping your process engaging and interesting to your audience will be key for a successful implementation.

COMBINING DISC AND TA TO IDENTIFY CHANGE CHALLENGES

C	Adult / Critical Parent	Critical Parent / Adult	D
S	Nurturing Parent / Adapted Child	Natural Child / Little Professor	I

Understanding how each DISC style likes to give and receive information will help you communicate change more effectively.

By laying the filter of TA over DISC, you can identify potential challenges implementing and managing your change.

Because of their preference for achievement and difficulty understanding those that can't or won't achieve like they do, the D-dominant ego state tends to be Critical Parent. D-dominant individuals also prefer high-level facts, which makes their secondary ego state their Adult.

With I-dominants preference for fun, their dominant ego state tends to be Natural Child. When I-dominants feel like they aren't getting their needs met, they will switch into Little Professor.

As they tend to be the most nurturing communicators of the four DISC styles, S-dominants' default ego state is the Nurturing Parent. Because S-dominants fear disharmony in their group, they will fall into the Adapted Child ego state if they sense that going along with the crowd will keep their group together.

The C-dominant primary ego state is the Adult, but C-dominants will switch into Critical Parent when they want to prove how smart they are or when they get frustrated with an individual who "doesn't get it."

Don't take the DISC/TA tie-in as an absolute. An individual's preferred ego state has a lot to do with their first six years of life when their Parent and Child scripts are running. For example, someone can be D-dominant with a preferred ego state of Nurturing Parent if he had an incredibly nurturing mother or father.

Taking DISC and TA into account, let's look at how your scripting may impede successful implementation of your new ini-

tiative and how to minimize the effects of your team members' scripting as you plan, implement, and manage change.

1. **D-dominant leader (Critical Parent/Adult):** Your Critical Parent will make you want your change to have been done yesterday so look for small positive indications that your team is implementing it. Leverage your Adult to define clear outcomes and milestones, but remember that most of your team responds better to emotions than hard numbers.

What to do when you have D-dominant direct reports: Enlist them in creating personal milestones for your change and potentially being a devil's advocate for you prior to rolling it out to the entire team. If you choose the devil's advocate option, ensure that you clearly define the box in which your reports can perform this role. Be clear to them that change is going to happen to reduce the potential for your report to undermine it when you roll it out.

2. **I-dominant leader (Natural Child/Little Professor):** Your Natural Child can promote excitement in your team, but it could also cause you to become fearful of what you and your team need to do to complete your change. If you feel like offering incentives (tangible or intangible) after implementation to motivate your employees, that is your Little Professor seeking to play games with your team.

What to do when you have I-dominant direct reports: Only share as much as necessary for your reports to understand what they are supposed to do next, then

celebrate that small victory. If you sense game playing, have a private meeting with your report and use the questioning strategy outlined under the “Little Professor” section of this chapter.

3. S-dominant leader (Nurturing Parent/Adapted Child):

Be completely clear with your team members about their accountabilities when implementing and managing your change, or your negative Nurturing Parent will cause you to take on your team’s work as your own. At some point in the middle, your Adapted Child may cause you to think about stopping it. Developing a clear idea of where you want to be personally and professionally, which is in the DISCUSSING Change chapter, will mostly eliminate your Adapted Child from appearing.

What to do when you have S-dominant direct reports: Bring your S-dominant team members on board when you are planning your change, and ask them to help you determine how to nurture it from implementation through management and completion. If you are clear that it will happen, you can leverage their Adapted Child to create compliance.

4. C-dominant leader (Adult/Critical Parent): You’ll likely have a step-by-step plan created for implementing and managing change with clear outcomes and milestones that will overwhelm the I- and S-dominants on your team. This may frustrate you and prompt you to take on all of the work yourself. Before taking over a task from one of your team members, be curious about the gap between what

you think you said and what they heard. You'll find that that approach ends up being less work for you.

What to do when you have C-dominant direct reports: Be prepared to answer a ton of questions from your *why* to the *why now* to your implementation plan to your outcomes and milestones. Remind your C-dominant team members to stay focused on the end result and avoid majoring in the minor details.

THIS CHAPTER IN 45 SECONDS

- Transactional analysis (TA) is the theory of how humans interact.
- The Parent ego state turns on when a person is born and shuts off at about six years old. It contains all of the “shoulds” and “should nots” from parents and other authority figures during these early years.
- The Child ego state turns on when a person is born and shuts off at about six years old. It contains emotional reactions to the messages stored in our Parent ego state.
- Parent and Child messages stay with people for the rest of their lives and can never be erased.
- The Adult ego state turns on when people start to become independent from their parents, usually when they begin crawling, and runs for the rest of their lives.
- The Adult ego state is a computer that takes information in and decides what to do with it, including accessing the Parent or Child ego states.
- When you face a change, you have a choice to react or respond.

- Reacting typically means lashing out through the Parent (Critical) or Child ego states.
- Responding typically means using the Adult ego state to determine the best response, which may mean accessing the Critical Parent or Child.
- Laying TA on top of DISC helps you understand how each DISC style reacts or responds.
- A D-dominant's ego state tends to be Critical Parent followed by Adult.
- An I-dominant's ego state tends to be Natural Child followed by Little Professor.
- A S-dominant's ego state tends to be Nurturing Parent followed by Adapted Child.
- A C-dominant's ego state tends to be Adult followed by Critical Parent.
- Individuals' DISC style and preferred ego states can be affected by their upbringing.