Transactional Analysis Counselling in Action

4th Edition

Ian Stewart

SAGE Counselling in Action
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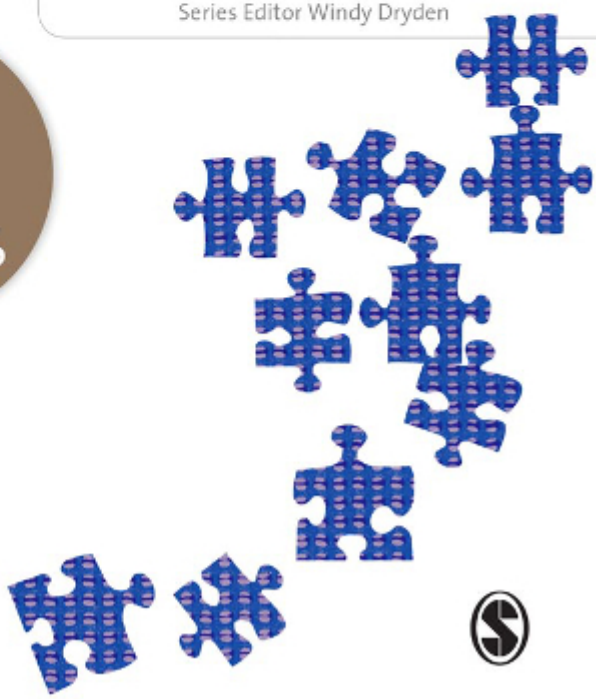

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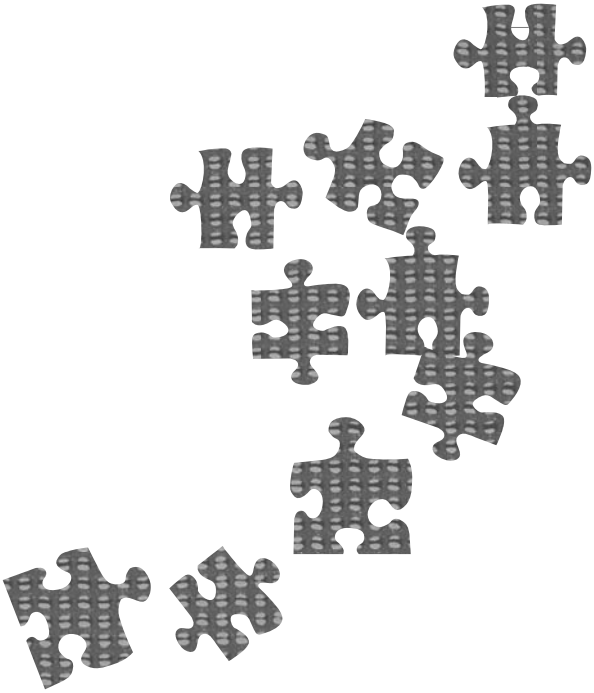

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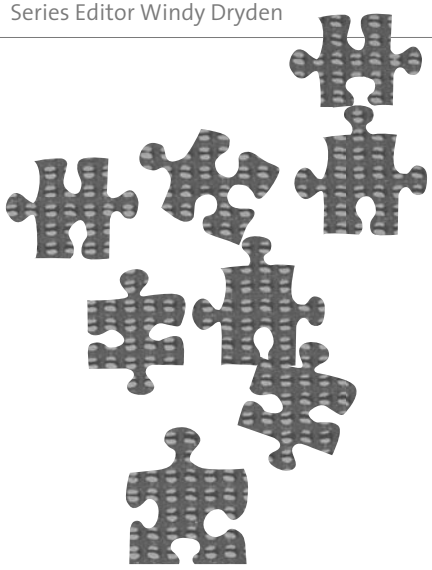

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First Edition published 1989. Reprinted 1991, 1992 (twice)
Second Edition published 2000. Reprinted 2002, 2004, 2006 (twice)
Third Edition published 2008. Reprinted 2010 and 2011

Editor: Susannah Trefgarne
Editorial assistant: Laura Walmsley
Production editor: Rachel Burrows
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Proofreader: Fabienne Pedroletti Gray
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Marketing manager: Tamara Navaratnam
Cover design: Shaun Mercier
Typeset by: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012955186

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4462-5327-4
ISBN 978-1-4462-5328-1 (pbk)

Contents

About the Author

Ian Stewart was born in Glasgow in 1940. He received his secondary education at Glasgow Academy and went on to study at Pembroke College, Oxford. Graduating in 1961, he worked for five years in the scientific Civil Service in Edinburgh. In 1966 he emigrated to England to take up a Research Fellowship at Nottingham University. On conclusion of his research contract he stayed on at Nottingham as a lecturer, gaining his PhD degree in 1970.

Ian's first contact with psychotherapy was as a client. While continuing his own personal therapy, he developed a growing interest in the theory and method of psychotherapy generally and transactional analysis in particular. He entered formal TA training in 1979, and gained accreditation as a TA practitioner in 1984. For several years Ian followed two parallel careers, as lecturer and as psychotherapist. In the end, psychotherapy won the day: in 1989 Ian resigned his university lectureship to pursue a full-time career as a TA psychotherapist, writer and trainer.

Ian is the author, with co-author Vann Joines, of the basic text on transactional analysis, *TA Today*. First published in 1987, the book has been translated into 15 languages and is widely regarded as the world-standard introduction to its subject. Its second edition appeared in 2012. Ian is Co-Director of The Berne Institute, a TA training centre which celebrates its twentieth anniversary in 2013.

Ian lives in a small village in the backwoods of Leicestershire, together with his wife and two cats. His leisure interests include Morris dancing, cycling, fitness activities generally, and the appreciation of real ale.

Also by Ian Stewart

TA Today (2nd edn) (with V. Joines) (Lifespace, 2012)
Personality Adaptations (with V. Joines) (Lifespace, 2002)
Developing Transactional Analysis Counselling (Sage, 1996)
Eric Berne (Sage, 1992)

Preface to the Fourth Edition

Welcome to this fourth edition of *Transactional Analysis Counselling in Action*!

The aim of this book is to offer you a practical up-to-date guide to the use of transactional analysis (TA) in counselling and psychotherapy. I have written primarily for the counsellor or counsellor-in-training whose background has been in a counselling method other than TA, and who is now interested in adding TA resources to her or his counselling skills. I hope the book will also be useful to counsellors and psychotherapists who are already practising or training professionally in TA.

What the Book Covers

This book is similar in its coverage to the other volumes in the *Counselling in Action* series:

- It focuses on practical application. Theory is covered only in so far as is essential for the understanding of practice, and then only in basic outline.
- The sequence of chapters reflects successive stages in the typical process of counselling with TA.
- An extended case history runs through the book to illustrate practice and theory.
- The book deals with one-to-one counselling, not groupwork.
- It describes applications for use with people who are well-functioning in clinical terms, rather than those who might require psychiatric help.

This book is not intended to be a general introduction to TA. Present-day TA offers a multitude of explanatory models and several major schools of practice (Barnes, 1977; Stewart and Joines, 2012: 297–302; Widdowson, 2010: 7–62). Rather than trying to cram a mass of detail into this practical guidebook, I have selected a number of well-tried concepts and methods in current TA that I believe are most immediately useful to the practising counsellor. These I have covered in enough depth to do them justice.

TA began with Eric Berne, and his ideas still form the core of TA theory. Yet since Berne's death over forty years ago, transactional analysts have continued to innovate. Much – probably most – of what TA practitioners do today depends on theory and practice that were developed after Berne. You will find a great deal of this new material in the content of this book.

There are two other aims that I have kept in mind in choosing topics:

- I have concentrated on theory and techniques that will be useful to you even if TA is not your main counselling approach.
- I have emphasized practical areas of TA that have not been easily accessible until now outside the specialist TA literature.

Indeed, the whole book is constructed around two linked concepts that are central to current practice in TA: *treatment direction* and *treatment sequence*. I believe these ideas have much to offer any practising counsellor. Yet, to my knowledge, this book marks the first systematic description of them other than in specialized workshop presentations.

This book is intended to be a resource for TA training, not a substitute for it. If you are interested in becoming professionally accredited in TA, you can obtain details of the necessary training and examination process from the various national and international TA organizations (Stewart and Joines, 2012: 335–42).

How the Book is Laid Out

In Part I, Chapter 1 presents some distinctive features of TA practice. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the counselling process in TA, from intake to termination. This also serves as a 'thumbnail sketch' of the structure of the remaining chapters, arranged as they are to reflect the sequence of steps in TA treatment. In Chapter 3 I outline the theory by which TA explains the origins and structure of personal problems. Chapter 4 explains the model of personality that is a foundation of TA theory and practice.

Part II moves on to a step-by-step description of the treatment process. Chapter 5 outlines typical TA procedure at intake. Chapter 6 describes how you can compile information about your client that you can use as the basis for a systematic treatment plan. In Chapter 7 I explain the

procedure which transactional analysts have developed for monitoring and forestalling suicide risk.

Chapter 8 shows how you and your client can negotiate a clear contract for change. In Chapters 9 and 10 I describe detailed interventions by which you can help your client achieve that change. Lastly, Chapter 11 discusses criteria for termination.

In describing each aspect of TA practice, I have followed a standard (though flexible) sequence. Its steps are as follows:

- A basic outline of the theory underlying this area of practice. I usually present theory in the form of a 'Key Ideas' panel. This lists the central points of the relevant theory. They are phrased as brief statements. I make no attempt to expand the reasoning of the theory or to examine the detailed evidence on which it is based. (If you do wish to go more deeply into these questions, you can pursue the TA literature via the end-of-chapter suggestions for Further Reading and the References list at the end of the book.)
- A discussion of the practical actions that follow from the theory. What is your rationale for making this assessment or this intervention? What are your purposes in doing so?
- A description of a specific technique or techniques.
- A case example to illustrate technique.
- A 'Practice Checklist' sequence. This is a suggested list of questions that you can use in appraising specific pieces of work that you have done with clients. Each Practice Checklist also provides a framework for supervision or for peer-group discussion. In whatever way you choose to use the Checklists, their intention is to help you sharpen your TA skills in the area of practice concerned.

You may wish to choose one client with whom you will follow through the successive steps in the process of counselling with TA. You can then apply the Practice Checklists in sequence to your work with that client. If you choose not to do this, simply read 'a client' wherever I have written 'your chosen client' in the Practice Checklist panels.

Learning Features in this Edition

In response to positive comments from readers and reviewers, I have retained three of the learning features that appeared in previous editions. They are: the topic headings at the beginning of each chapter; the Key Ideas panels;

and the Practice Checklist panels. (The last-named were called 'Self-Supervision Sequences' in earlier editions, but I realized that this name sold them short, since they can equally well be used as guidelines for work with a supervisor or for peer discussion.)

Also in response to reviewers' suggestions, I have added three new learning features to this edition, all of them placed at the end of chapters. They are:

- *Skills Practices:* these are structured exercises, designed to be carried out in training groups. For obvious reasons, Skills Practices are provided only for the chapters in the book that describe TA practice (in Part II), not for the earlier chapters that are solely concerned with theory.
- *Space for Reflection:* as its title implies, each Space for Reflection gives you a set of suggested topics, arising from the material in the chapter, on which you are invited to reflect. All of these reflection topics have one feature in common: they do not lead to a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. They are not 'revision points'. Rather, they are intended to invite evaluation, synthesis, personal opinion and on-going discussion.
- *Further Reading:* this feature complements the citation of sources in the text. In each Further Reading guide I have cited a number of key texts on the chapter topic. The sources included are all books, since you may not have ready access to TA journal literature. I have cited only books that are in print at the time this book goes to press.

Where the book is being used in a classroom or training-group setting, these various learning activities can readily be transformed one into another with minimal re-wording. For example, any of the points in 'Space for Reflection' can be set as topics for small-group discussion, with feedback in the large group. Any of the 'Practice Checklists' can be used as a basis for structured pairwork or small-group work, with group members either bringing personal issues or role-playing clients.

Throughout the book, I have assumed that all experiential learning will be carried out under a rule of confidentiality and with appropriate protection, for example that all group members will be required to have access to a therapist.

Cases and Names

The case history of 'John', which runs continuously through Part II of the book, is based on that of a real client. However, I have disguised his story at some points. To do this I have inserted case material from work with other

clients whose journeys were similar to John's. If I had given exact details of John's case, there would have been a risk that he might be identified, even under a fictitious name.

At some points I have used examples from the work of other clients, collated in the same way as I have described for John.

In all the case examples, the names I use are fictitious. If they have any likeness to the real name of any person, this is purely by coincidence.

Pronouns and Genders

I use a simple system of pronouns throughout the book. You, the counsellor, are 'you'. I, Ian Stewart, am 'I'. Your client is either 'she' or 'he'. I vary your client's gender at random.

'Counselling' or 'Psychotherapy'?

Like anyone writing in this area, I have had to consider the problem of distinguishing between 'counselling' and 'psychotherapy'. It seems to me that while there may be sensible arguments for making a distinction between the two, any dividing line between them must in the end be drawn arbitrarily. And of the various arbitrary divisions that have been suggested, how was I to judge which to use?

My response in this book has been to draw no dividing line. The only restriction I have imposed on the book's coverage is to exclude applications designed for use with the more seriously troubled or with specialized client-groups. With that proviso, everything I say in this book applies to *all* professional relationships that have personal change as their aim, whether that work be labelled 'counselling' or 'psychotherapy'.

How This Book Relates to *Developing TA Counselling*

My book *Developing Transactional Analysis Counselling* (Stewart, 1996a) offers 30 practical suggestions on how to enhance your effectiveness in TA counselling. In choosing the 30 suggestions, I followed the principle

that I would not duplicate any of the material in the present book. Instead, *Developing TA Counselling* is designed to complement this book; in a sense, it 'starts where this book leaves off'. The present book lays down a solid groundwork for TA counselling, while *Developing TA Counselling* is more to do with fine-tuning and expanding your TA skills. At the same time, either book can be read on its own without loss of usefulness.

Where particular suggestions (called 'Points') in *Developing TA Counselling* are immediately relevant to topics covered in this book, you will find references to these Points in the lists of suggestions for 'Further Reading' that I have added at the end of each chapter.

Developments in TA Since This Book's First Edition

In the Preface to the first edition of this book (1989), I said that 'in the two decades since Berne's death, transactional analysts have continued to innovate'. Now the 'two decades' have become four and more, and transactional analysts are still innovating. The TA literature continues to expand, mirroring the expansion in the use of TA as a method of counselling and psychotherapy.

From 1990 to 2000

In the final decade of the 20th century, innovation in TA saw a distinctive change in direction. The 'cutting edge' of new thought moved on to more advanced and specialized areas of TA theory and practice, leaving the core concepts and basic techniques of TA essentially untouched. Perhaps this shift in emphasis was fitting for a mature discipline that by 1990 already had a documented history going back more than thirty years (Stewart, 1996b). TA theorists in the decade from 1990 to 2000 concentrated largely on comparative and cross-disciplinary issues (particularly, the relationships between TA theory and that of psychodynamic and object-relations approaches). Innovations in TA practice over those ten years were largely focused on work with specific client-groups – notably on clients with borderline and narcissistic disorders, as well as on work with children and adult survivors of abuse.

Both theory and practice were further codified, and TA acquired its own *Dictionary* (Tilney, 1998).

From 2000 to the Present

While the area of innovation in TA in the 1990s was principally concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of specific client groups, the first decade of the 21st century saw a shift in emphasis toward new thinking on the philosophy and meta-theory of transactional analysis. Much of this literature centred around what has come to be called the 'relational approach' to TA. This school of thought is a broad church, subsuming elements of constructivism (Allen and Allen, 1997), co-creative TA (Summers and Tudor, 2000) and integrative psychotherapy (Moursund and Erskine, 2004). It emphasizes a rapprochement between TA and psychoanalysis (for example, Novellino, 2005).

If I may attempt to summarize the relational approach in a few sentences: it calls for an increased focus on unconscious processes, and on the manifestation of these processes in the transference and countertransference exchanges between therapist and client. In terms of the practice of TA, the relational approach sees the process of change as materializing from moment to moment in the therapist–client relationship, rather than as being a planned movement toward an agreed contractual goal.

If you are interested in exploring the relational approach in detail, a key source-book is *Transactional Analysis: A Relational Perspective* (Hargaden and Sills, 2002). More recent sources, both symposium volumes, are *From Transactions to Relations* (Cornell and Hargaden, 2005) and *Relational Transactional Analysis: Principles in Practice* (Fowlie and Sills, 2011).

Cornell and Hargaden (2005: 5) suggest that the relational approach constitutes a 'paradigm shift' that will redefine the discipline of TA. In my view, this claim probably overstates the case. I think it is more likely that when the dust settles, the relational approach will take its place as one of many useful perspectives on TA theory and practice, its main contribution being to remind us that the client–therapist relationship – conscious and unconscious – must always be considered alongside treatment planning and technique. Time will tell. It seems to me in any case that this area of innovation in TA, like the new thinking of the 1990s, still lies on the outer frontiers of the discipline. The books and articles so far published by the members of the relational school are aimed at advanced practitioners

and theorists; I find it difficult to see them as practical 'how to' guides for immediate application by working counsellors, therapists or trainees. Nor do the ideas of the relational theorists detract from or contradict any of the well-established theory and practice described in the present book.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

I have drawn material for this book from the writing and teaching of hundreds of TA professionals. Whenever I knew whose work I was quoting, I have named her or him in the References list. There will be others whose ideas I have used without knowing their names. To all these contributors, named or anonymous, I am grateful.

There are a few people in particular whose work I have drawn upon time and time again throughout successive editions of this book. They are: Fanita English; Richard Erskine; Bob and Mary Goulding; Ken Mellor; Shea Schiff; George Thomson; Marilyn Zalcman. My thanks to them all. And thanks also, of course, to the late Eric Berne, with whom I never worked personally but whose genius laid the foundations of transactional analysis.

Petrūska Clarkson was 'expert reader' for the book's first edition. Dennis Bury commented on the manuscript of the first edition from the viewpoint of an experienced counsellor using an approach other than TA. Windy Dryden, series editor, helped me through successive revisions of the first-edition manuscript. At the transition from the second to the third edition, Mark Widdowson was the 'critical reviewer', and he presented me with a detailed and perceptive list of suggested revisions. I thank all these colleagues most heartily for their work. My thanks go also to the three anonymous referees whose comments I have incorporated into this fourth edition. And for all four editions, I am indebted to the readers who have contacted me with suggestions for revision, and to my trainees, supervisees and clients, from whom I continue to learn.

I am grateful to the International Transactional Analysis Association for their permission to use copyright material originally published in the *Transactional Analysis Journal*, issues as shown:

- Richard Erskine and Marilyn Zalcman for 'The Racket System: A Model for Racket Analysis', *Transactional Analysis Journal* (1979) 9(1): 51–9.
- Ken Mellor and Eric Sigmund, for 'Discounting', *Transactional Analysis Journal* (1975) 5(3): 295–302.

I believe that a book can be a two-way communication, not simply a one-way vehicle. In writing this book I have had the pleasure of conveying ideas to you. I hope that as you read, you will convey your ideas back to me. If you have criticisms, compliments or comments, please send them to me via Sage Publications.

I hope you will continue to find the book useful in this new, revised edition.

Ian Stewart
February 2013

PART 1

The TA Framework

1

Counselling with TA

- Practice and Philosophy in TA
- The Effective Counsellor
- Space for Reflection
- Further Reading

This chapter gives you an overview of TA work and TA skills. In this first section I outline some distinctive features of TA practice. The second section discusses some personal and professional qualities of the effective counsellor.

Practice and Philosophy in TA

TA practice is founded on a set of philosophical views about people and the goals of change (Stewart and Joines, 2012: 6–8). The philosophical assumptions of TA can be summed up in three statements:

- People are OK.
- Everyone has the capacity to think.
- People decide their own destiny, and these decisions can be changed.

From these assumptions there follow two guiding principles of TA practice:

- Contractual method.
- Open communication.

People are OK

Everyone has worth, value and dignity. This is a statement of essence rather than behaviour. At times, I may not esteem or accept what a person does. But always, I esteem and accept what he or she is.

In the counsellor–client relationship, this implies that you and your client are on an equal footing. Neither is one-up nor one-down to the other.

This assumption will be familiar to you if you know person-centred counselling, since it implies Rogers' 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers, 1961: 62; Mearns and Thorne, 2007). The TA assumption also underlines the need for the counsellor to maintain unconditional positive regard for *himself* ('I'm OK') as well as for the client ('You're OK').

Everyone has the Capacity to Think

Everyone, except the severely brain-damaged, has the capacity to think. Therefore each person has the ability to decide what she wants from life. She carries ultimate responsibility for living with the consequences of her decisions.

Decisional Model

Each person decides her own behaviour, thoughts and feelings, and ultimately her own destiny. No one can be *made* to act, think or feel in particular ways by other people or by the environment, except by physical coercion.

From this *decisional model* of human action follows TA's emphasis on *personal responsibility* for feeling, thought and behaviour.

The decisional model is also at the root of the theory of psychopathology in TA. The young child is viewed as *deciding* his or her responses to environmental pressures. This has implications for the process of personal change in adult life. Because dysfunctional patterns were originally decided upon, rather than being forced upon the individual, they can be changed by making new decisions.

Thus TA holds that people can change. This change can be genuine and lasting. Change is not brought about merely by achieving insight into old patterns. Rather, the person can actively decide to replace these patterns by new ways of behaving, thinking or feeling that are appropriate to her grown-up abilities.

Contractual Method

From the assumptions that people relate as equals and that everyone is personally responsible, it follows that you and your client have joint responsibility for the process of change. To facilitate this, you enter into a *contract*. Your client states the goal he wants to achieve, and says what he is willing to do to help bring this about. You say whether you are willing to work with the client to achieve the chosen goal, and undertake to use the best of your professional skills when you do work together.

Open Communication

In TA practice, you keep your case notes open to the client's inspection. This open communication helps your client take an equal role with you in the process of change.

Treatment Direction

The phrase *treatment direction* implies an informed choice of treatment procedures, decided upon in the light of psychodiagnosis and systematically followed through in the service of the contract goal. Current TA practice lays great importance on the need to choose and maintain direction in treatment.

It is important to register that the word 'direction', here, does *not* imply that the practitioner somehow 'directs' the client rigidly through the process of counselling. The 'direction' we are speaking of in TA practice would fit in the sentence 'This signpost shows us the direction to London.' It would not fit in the sentence 'I gave my employee a direction to complete the job.' In TA counselling, every step in treatment direction is decided by *agreement* between counsellor and client.

Treatment planning – the informed choice of treatment procedures – is always a deliberate and explicit process for the TA practitioner. It includes decisions on *treatment sequence*, the order in which various stages of the treatment process will be carried out. There are certain steps which the transactional analyst will usually follow in sequence when carrying through his treatment plan. These stages of treatment will be described one by one in the successive chapters of Part II. Chapter 2 introduces this with a bird's-eye view of the typical treatment sequence.

Process Awareness: 'Thinking Martian'

TA stresses the need to stay aware of the *process* of communication as well as its content. That is, you need to pay attention to how people say things as well as to what they say.

Eric Berne urged TA practitioners to 'think Martian' (Berne, 1972: 100–4). He pictured a little green man from Mars arriving on this planet to study Earthlings. The Martian has never been conditioned to accept what human communications *should* mean. He simply observes them and considers the results which follow. From this he deduces what these communications *do* mean. The practitioner, said Berne, needs to redevelop this skill of 'thinking Martian': observing human interaction without preconception. It is a skill every infant possesses naturally. As part of the process of growing up, most of us are systematically discouraged from using that skill ('It's rude to stare, dear!'), and we lose it through disuse.

In TA work you therefore re-learn to pay close attention to your client's non-verbal clues: breathing signals, bodily tensions, changes of posture. You observe these signals over short time-spans, since they change from one split second to the next.

You pay attention also to the person's choice of words. This is part of judging *how* things are said. For example, you would interpret the statement 'That makes me feel bad' as having a different meaning from 'I feel bad about that'. (I explain the difference in Chapter 9.) You will choose your own words with equally close attention.

Social Level and Psychological Level

As part of 'thinking Martian', TA distinguishes two levels of communication: the *social level* and the *psychological level* (Stewart and Joines, 2012: 70–4). The idea behind this is that when people communicate, they often convey more than one message at the same time.

As an illustration of this, consider the following exchange between counsellor and client:

Counsellor: So will you complete the assignment we've just agreed?
Client: [*Breaks eye contact, shakes head slightly*] Yes, I will.

Intuitively, you feel the client is communicating something more to the counsellor than the literal meaning of his words would indicate. The 'Key Ideas' box below sets out the ideas that TA uses to explain this kind of exchange. I shall illustrate each of them by this same example.

Key Ideas 1.1

Social-Level and Psychological-Level Messages

1 All communication proceeds at two levels: the *social level* and the *psychological level*.
2 The *social-level message* is the meaning of the communication as it is conventionally understood in the social circle of the people concerned. In our example, the client's social-level message is that he will complete the assignment.
3 The *psychological-level message* is the communication's real meaning, the 'Martian'. You will pick this up initially by intuitive judgement. Usually you will follow up by asking the other person whether this judgement is accurate. The counsellor in the example might judge that his client's 'Martian' is conveying 'No, I won't do it' or 'I'm very doubtful if I'll do it'.
4 Often, but not always, the social-level message is conveyed in the literal meaning of the words and the psychological-level message is conveyed by non-verbal signals. In our example, the client's headshake and breaking of eye contact signal the psychological-level message.
5 If the social level and psychological level convey the same message, the two levels are said to be *congruent*. This is not so in our example. To make his messages congruent, the client might have maintained eye contact with the counsellor and made a slight nod of the head instead of shaking it.
6 If the message conveyed on the psychological level is different from that conveyed on the social level, there is said to be *incongruity* between the two levels, and the psychological-level message is said to be *ulterior*. In the example, the client's headshake belied his agreement to doing the assignment, and thus was a signal of incongruity. The possible ulterior messages conveyed by the incongruity have been suggested in (3) above.
7 The behavioural outcome of any communication is determined at the psychological and not at the social level.

Eric Berne (1966: 227) put forward statement 7 above as a 'rule of communication'. You will note that he wrote 'is determined', not 'may be determined'. Berne is asserting that the psychological-level message is *always* the

'real message' in this sense. In our example, this is to say: if the counsellor wants to know what the client really means by his communication, he should pay attention to the client's ulterior message and not his social-level message.

At first sight it may seem too sweeping to claim that the outcome of communication is *always* decided at the psychological level. Yet researchers into body language in fields other than TA are familiar with the notion of 'non-verbal leakage' (for example, Scheflen, 1972). Implicit in this idea is that the non-verbal signals do indeed always convey what is 'really going on'.

'Overt' vs. 'Covert' Messages

It may seem at first sight that the social-level message is 'overt' while the psychological-level message is 'covert'. In fact, both levels are overt. The psychological-level message only appears 'covert' if you view it from within the conventional social framework of what a communication is 'supposed to' mean. This in turn demands that you blank out your awareness of non-verbal signalling, as most of us are taught to do during childhood.

There are occasions when the psychological-level message is overt even in the literal meaning of the words. Example:

Counsellor: So will you complete the assignment we've just agreed?
Client: Yes, I'll try to.

In TA practice you would assume here that your client's real message is accurately conveyed by what he says. He will try to complete the assignment. But he will not actually complete it, because if he did, he would not be 'trying to' any more. This message only appears 'covert' if you interpret the words in terms of what they are conventionally 'supposed to' mean in everyday conversation.

In cases like this, the presence of the double message is signalled by the fact that your client has not actually answered the question you asked. (You enquired if he was going to do the assignment, not if he was going to try to do it.) I expand this topic in Chapter 9.

The Effective Counsellor

The TA practitioner, said Eric Berne, needs to be a 'real doctor'. Berne was not suggesting that only medical doctors should become transactional

analysts. He meant that the TA professional must be prepared to take on certain responsibilities expected of a medical doctor (Berne, 1966: xvii). The 'real doctor', said Berne, must:

- be oriented first and foremost towards curing his patients
- be able to plan his treatment so that at each phase he knows what he is doing and why he is doing it
- take sole responsibility for his patients' welfare within the area of his professional competence.

Permission, Protection and Potency

Pat Crossman (1966) and Claude Steiner (1974: 258–67) have suggested 'three Ps' which the effective practitioner must bring to her counselling work. They are *permission, protection and potency*.

Permission

To offer someone *permission*, you provide her with new messages about herself, others and the world. These messages realistically describe the person's grown-up resources and options. She can use them to replace old restrictive or destructive messages that she may have perceived her parents as giving her in childhood. Examples:

'You do have the power to think and make decisions.'

'You are valuable and lovable.'

'You *can* survive and get your needs met even if you don't work hard all the time.'

'As a grown-up person, you will survive even without your parents' support.'

If you choose, you may convey permissions to your client in words. But more important is that you yourself must *model the permissions congruently*. That is, what you do must match what you say. Or to put this in the language we used in the 'Key Ideas' panel on page 7: to be congruent, you must convey the same message at both the social level and the psychological level.

For example, suppose you want to convey the permission 'You have the power to think clearly'. If you like, you may say this in words to your client. With or without the words, she is most likely to take the permission if you show in your behaviour that you fully believe she can think clearly. One way to model this would be to invite her consistently to

think for herself. You would avoid any temptation you might feel to try to 'think for her'. For instance, if you asked her a question and she acted confused, you would not fill in the answer for her. Instead you would wait for her to find her own answer. Another element of modelling would be for you to show her that you can think clearly yourself.

To be congruent in modelling permissions for your client, *you yourself must already have taken the permissions you are modelling.*

Protection and potency

If the client does take new permissions, he will be going against directives that he perceived his parents laying down for him during his childhood. Outside of awareness the client may experience this change as risky, even life-threatening (Chapter 6). He may fear that he will lose the support of his internalized parent, bringing about some catastrophe such as extinction or abandonment. Thus, without being fully aware of it, he may look to you for *protection* against this fantasized disaster. This requires also that he perceives you as having enough *potency* – enough power – to provide the needed support and protection.

For example, suppose you are working with a client who wants to be more free in showing his feelings. You thus offer him the permission 'It's OK to show your feelings in ways that are safe for you as a grown-up person.' But suppose also that this client decided in infancy 'If I show my feelings, my mother will leave me and never come back, so I'll die.' Without awareness, he may still be clinging to this infant motivation for concealing his feelings. If he is to make use of the new message you are offering, the young child part of him must first be convinced you can protect him against being abandoned and dying. And he can only achieve this conviction if that same child part of him sees you as having the power to offer the needed protection.

Protection and potency, like permission, are conveyed first and foremost by congruent modelling. You must be confident that you do possess more power than the client's fantasized parent. You must feel secure in your ability to protect and support the client during the process of change.

As well as this internal confidence, potency and protection are exhibited in the way you work. The potent counsellor is one who knows what she is doing and why she is doing it. This quality will be shown by the economy and appositeness of her interventions.

As one element of protection, TA lays much emphasis on forestalling three tragic outcomes. They are: killing or harming self, killing or harming