



Which role do you adopt?

Have you ever cringed when noticing yourself repeat a phrase your parents used to say? Or found yourself spontaneously acting like a child?

Transactional Analysis theory explains that we all have three potential states when we communicate: the childlike state which can be spontaneous or rebellious; the parent state which can be critical and judgemental or caring & nurturing, and the adult state which is logical and reasoned.

All of us can use any of these states consciously or unconsciously, according to who we are communicating with; being able to consciously choose our communication style will determine the type of response we invite.

When using a parent mode e.g. “you aren’t allowed to do that” will potentially invite an unhelpful childlike response, such as “that’s not fair, you’re being unreasonable”

Tackling a conversation from a proactive adult perspective, as opposed to the reactive child or parent one, will make you better prepared for the other person’s response and more able to turn the conversation into a positive experience.

Being flexible about what is ‘right’ – being curious and holding your opinions lightly is a way of encouraging a productive adult conversation.

- Which modes do you notice yourself using?
- What motivated you to be in that mode?

Parent

- sets limits
- disciplines
- judges
- criticises
- guide
- keeps traditions
- makes rules
- reassures

- cares for

Child

loves
hates
has fun
is trusting
asks for help
sulks
withdraws
manipulates others
explores/curious

Adult

- gathers information
- sets out alternatives
- organises and plans
- interested and confident
- estimates probabilities
- anticipates consequences
- thinks before acting
- makes evaluated decisions