

Various Strokes for Development of Ego in the Transactional Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Transactional Analysis (TA) is the theory of personality, communication and treatment system, which was founded by Berne in the 1950s [1]. In the background, there is a group psychotherapy developed from psychoanalysis, based on a behavioral science and a philosophy that respects the existential encounter between humans.

One of the purposes of TA is to control emotions, thoughts, and actions by noticing the ego state at any time. Illustrating the amount of mental energy releasing from each ego, Dusey drafted the egogram graphically so that everyone can understand easily [2]. By investigating the communication in interpersonal relationship and analyzing transaction in detail, we can make it possible to improve ourselves with the interchange patterns with some problems.

We have continued practice and research using Tokyo University Egogram (TEG) based on TA [3,4]. After lecture of TA, the daily lives of the subjects have improved and the long-term life has changed to better direction [5,6]. These phenomena suggest actual clinical usefulness of the egogram [7]. In this article, the topic of psychological stroke from the egogram will be described.

People always have certain relationship with others. In the transactional analysis, its behavior has been called a 'stroke' [8]. People are growing up with various process and situation since they were born. In other words, relationship with parents in infancy, and interaction with people during child could make the foundation of communication ability. After that,

important relationship would be formed during adolescence for school classmates and various people in extra-curriculum social activities.

People can grow up through various experience and acquire strokes in any opportunity. Among them, there are positive strokes, such as love, praise, evaluation, reward and so on [9]. Through these experiences children grow up with much affection and care from their parents. Furthermore, many adults can live everyday associated with evaluation and remuneration from the people around them.

On the other hand, there are negative strokes, such as anger, rebuke, accusation and so on. Some people live on negative strokes as if food nourishments [9]. For example, there are cases as follows: a child is scolded because of mischief, a young person is accused of doing bad affairs, an adult is despised by intentional tampering. Such a person has continued such a negative stroke with accumulation of various strokes since childhood [10].

Furthermore, people are continuing daily social life, while maintaining adequate relationship with others. No one can live alone in a remote island or jungle. There is no way to live by alone, living everyday with positive or negative strokes.

Berne thought about recognition as a basic, biological need with deep motivational implications [8]. He calls a unit of interpersonal recognition a 'stroke'. Recognition and contact with others has been an indispensable part of human rela-

tionships. Young children need actual physical strokes to survive, because early development of the human brain is greatly affected by various contact that the child receives [11]. On the other hand, adult people also need adequate various contacts. Mutual exchange of stroke has been involved in the crucial activity where adult can live and engage in the daily life [12].

In the transactional analysis, the word ‘stroke’ means and includes several key words, such as attachment, intimacy, warmth, tender loving care, need to belong, contact, closeness, relationships, social support, and love [9]. Berne proposed that not only positive stimulation but also negative painful stimulation might be instrumental in maintaining health [8].

People are performing various strokes with many people in their lives. What kind of communication do they use during the day? This is called “time structuring” in TA [9]. This content varies from person to person. Several factors are involved in time structuring, such as environment, education, character, and how to acquire strokes so far. Berne divided it into six categories, which are i) withdrawal, ii) Ceremony, iii) Activity, iv) Chat, v) game, vi) friendship. Among them, vi) is an ideal one for communication for mutual relationship [10].

The details of six categories were described and structured in the following [13].

i) **Withdrawal:** Fancying alone, drinking alone, not having any relationship with others. In other words, it intercepts strokes with other people. Although it is not psychologically hurt by strokes from others, there may be behavior problems and/or physical symptoms.

ii) **Ceremony:** Simple form of engagement, such as regular greetings with others. It is an easy and safe way to get a stroke from outside without deep relationship from other people. However, the degrees of the stroke are low.

iii) **Activity:** Involvement with superiors and subordinates for those who work outside. Housekeeping charge includes information exchange with local people. Each activity has a specific purpose associated with exchanges stroke.

iv) **Chat:** Light conversation without purpose or productivity for workplace and community. It has a distraction and stress relief effect, low risk, superficial and light stroke exchange.

v) **Psychological Game:** Exchange of words repeated under certain conditions. In addition to superficial language interactions, negative emotions always exist in “backward exchanges”. With repeated psychological conflicts, unpleasant feelings and endings are characteristic.

vi) **Friendship:** Ideal exchange pattern in TA. It is mutual affirmation with trust and respect each other. There are various patterns of love, such as love emotions with young couple, affection between married couple, compassion of parents to children [13].

As mentioned above, various strokes are found [14]. Our daily lives include positive and negative strokes, which are classified into eight groups in Table 1. Considering the strokes of TA would bring us better human relations and contribute to feeling happiness in each person.

Table 1: some kinds of strokes and its example.

	physical direct	mental indirect	conditional behavior/ attitude	unconditional presence/ character
Positive stroke	pat the head, hold hands, hold shoulders	listen to the talk, praise prize	good job, brave behavior, thank for work	nice guy, I love you, happy with you
Negative stroke	Clap, pinch, thrust away	Scold de-pise frown	You must study, you broke again, bad attitude	let’s divorce, leave the company, let him disappear

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