

Section 9 : Managing Conflict

options for using time and getting strokes in healthy ways

This section will introduce you to:

- ✧ an understanding of how we **structure our time**
- ✧ the concept of **psychological games**.

You can use your learning from this section to:

- ✧ increase your capacity to find alternative options to conflict.

The last meeting you attended

What did you do? Recall it as if a video was recording you and identify how much time you spent:

- ✧ *doodling, thinking about other things, daydreaming*
- ✧ *chatting, gossiping, laughing*
- ✧ *engaged in clear work matters*
- ✧ *feeling good about yourself and the others present*
- ✧ *feeling positive about the task in hand*
- ✧ *feeling gleeful, bitchy, angry, frustrated*
- ✧ *feeling negative about others, yourself or the tasks.*



ARE YOU LONELY?

Do you work on your own?

THEN HOLD A MEETING!

You can get to see other people, sleep in peace, offload decisions, feel important and impress or bore your colleagues - and all in work-time!

MEETINGS – THE PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO WORK



How do we structure our lives?

We can observe distinct patterns in how we spend our time. Eric Berne suggests that these fall into just six categories.

- ✧ *Draw a circle, then as they are described below, review your mental video of the last meeting you attended.*
- ✧ *Using the circle as a pie chart, divide it up so that you can see at a glance the balance of how you structured your time:*

Withdrawal Not only being on your own, but also times when you day-dreamed or somehow 'removed yourself' when amongst other people.

Ritual Greetings and discussions about the weather are often rituals in Britain. Individuals, families and groups often evolve their own rituals. You may be involved in particular workplace rituals such as joking or moaning in a predictable way before the meeting begins. Rituals differ between cultural groups and at different levels in organisations.

Pastiming Chat which passes the time. This can be a very important lubricant to interaction. And it can also get in the way! Some people like to pastime and others do not. It is sometimes known as 'small talk'.

Activity Work and organised play are both forms of activity, defined as being goal orientated and productive

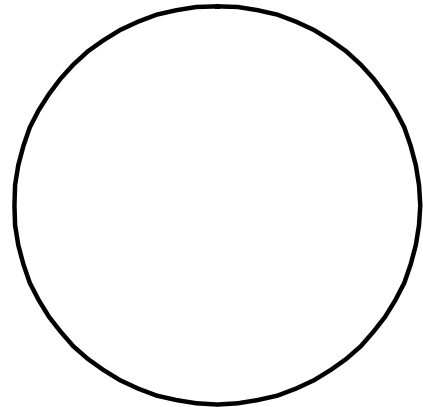
Games and Rackets Repetitive patterns of manipulative behaviour. They will be looked at in depth in this section. They often involve a sense of "I knew this would happen."

Closeness May involve kith and kin or total strangers – it is truly open communication involving all positive ego-states.



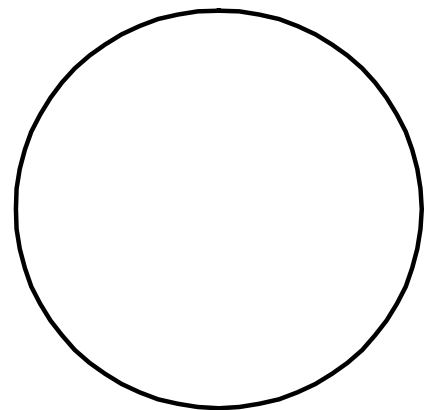
Review Your Time Structuring Chart

- ✧ *Was the meeting typical for you?*
- ✧ *Do you want to change how you pattern your time in meetings? If so, focus on doing more of what you wish to increase rather than putting your energy with doing less of something.*
- ✧ *Divide up this circle to picture how you would like to structure your time in meetings.*



So far, the focus has been on meetings. However, you could also look at your life in general, or at a teaching session. At the end of this section are two charts to help you think about how you structure time at work.

- ✧ *This time divide the 'pie' to show how you would like to structure your time overall.*



About Time Structuring

Eric Berne suggested that people need **structure** – and that structuring time is the way we satisfy this hunger. With each stage of structuring time in the following list, there is usually an increase in the intensity of strokes:

There is also a parallel increase in the unpredictability of strokes – and the possibility of them being accepted or rejected by others. The richest strokes are received and given when we feel close to another person. This is when we are script-free, authentic, uncensored, and in an appropriate context. This state often involves Free Child – Free Child transactions. Table 9.1 describes the roles of the different



ego-states for a teacher in time structuring:

	Controlling Parent	Nurturing Parent	Adult	Free Child	Adapted Child
Withdrawal	– Silent self criticism + Planning a teaching session	+ Self-encouragement / meditation – Feeling guilty, buying a compensating gift	+ Thinking about what people are saying in the meeting	Singing to oneself + Creative ideas for sessions	– Fantasies of failure – Planning ‘excuses’ + Rehearsing meeting + Required planning
Ritual	Collecting for a colleague’s leaving gift	Greeting new students	Opting to go to a professional conference	Annual staff play	Obligatory annual awards presentations
Pastime	– “Isn’t it awful?” + “What do you think about the . . .?”	+ “Isn’t it wonderful?” – “Oh I do worry so!”	Exchanging non-essential information (“Have you read about . . .?”)	+ Telling and knowing jokes	“If it wasn’t for him” “It’s not fair . . .” + “Did I tell you?” – Gossipy chat
Activity	+ Supervising students’ work – Fault finding with a student	+ Giving encouragement or time – Doing the work for a student	+ Framing a budget	Playing sport with colleagues	+ Doing assignment marking – Unwillingly covering for a colleague
Rackets / Games (always negative)	“Now I’ve got you” ‘Blemish’	“I’m only trying to help you” ‘Happy to help’ “Why don’t you?”	No games or rackets	No games or rackets	‘Yes but’, ‘Poor me’, ‘Kick me’, ‘Up roar’ “Gee, you’re wonderful”
Closeness (always positive)	Clear open information about need for change	Caring for a distressed student / colleague	Thoughtful, constructive, honest feedback	Genuine sharing, anger, sadness, fear, joy	Co-operative teamworking

Figure 9.1

Based on an idea from Woollams & Brown, ‘Transactional Analysis’, page 87



What keeps happening?

Consider a situation in the classroom, or in any other part of your life, where you find you end up feeling that you somehow knew the situation would turn out the way it did – and it's not satisfactory. Somewhere during this scenario you experienced a moment of confusion accompanied by 'un-surprised surprise'.

Write up the situation as if it were a TV or film script. Put the words used, as you remember them. Add any other cues such as facial expression, gesture, movement or the tone of voice.

- ✧ What is the theme of what keeps happening?

- ✧ How does it start?

- ✧ What then?

- ✧ (Mystery Question – leave space)

- ✧ And then?

- ✧ (Mystery Question – leave space)

- ✧ How does it end?

- ✧ What do you end up feeling?

- ✧ What do you imagine 'they' end up feeling?



The Drama Triangle

The mystery questions are:

- ✧ What was your secret message to the other person?
- ✧ What was their secret message to you?

Now add your answers to these questions.

You will recognise that these two questions are putting words to the ulterior transactions – and you will recall from Section 4 that when there is an ulterior message, this is the one that determines the outcome. You may notice other ulterior messages in your scenario. Berne originally described games as repetitive patterns of social behaviour, characterised by ulterior transactions and ending with those involved experiencing a familiar bad feeling.

In any *psychological game*, at least two and possibly three roles are taken up and exchanged. This switching of roles causes dramatic excitement and, as you become familiar with the idea, you will notice that all novels, plays, films and TV dramas depend on this device to keep their audience's attention and involvement. Any plot involves swapping the roles, accompanied by a half-expectation that something like this was bound to happen – just like real life!

The three roles are:

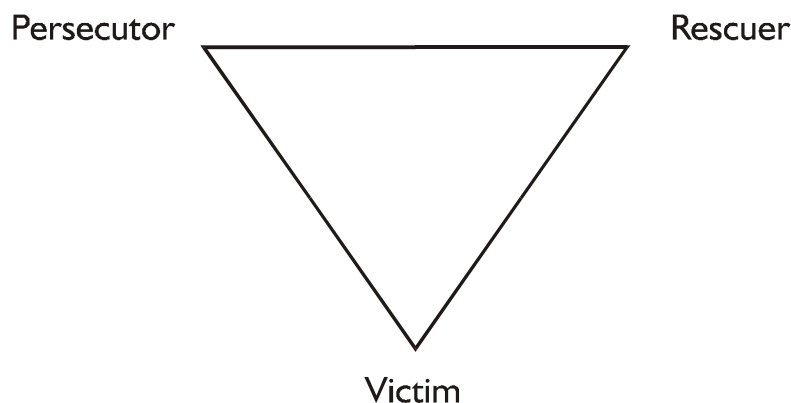


Figure 9.2

Both **Persecutor** and **Rescuer** need a **Victim** – both come from (+–), “I’m OK and You’re Not”. The **Victim** comes from a one-down position, either (–+) “I’m Not OK and You Are”, or (– –) “I’m Not OK and Neither are You”, and may focus their energy on switching roles with the **Persecutor** or **Rescuer**.

- ✧ Review your scenario on the previous page. Identify which roles were being adopted, and where the switch or switches occur.
- ✧ Map in the life positions and identify ego-states.



Psychological Games

We mostly become involved in games without awareness or intention, and often the particular games we play feel familiar to us. The Drama Triangle (Karpman 1968) is an elegant model to analyse all and any conflict situations. The switches between **Persecutor**, **Rescuer** and **Victim** are always identifiable and can happen over a long period of time or rapidly in a space of a few seconds. These roles are always dysfunctional. You can use TA to analyse conflict in other ways too – and check how they link with the Drama Triangle:

- ✧ driver behaviour
- ✧ unhealthy functional ego-states.
- ✧ unclear contracts
- ✧ identify the level of discounts
- ✧ unhealthy life positions
- ✧ negative strokes.

Games will result in feelings. Both your own feelings and those you imagine the others involved to have are known as **Racket** feelings. This means that they are feelings we have learnt to feel instead of our authentic feelings of joy, fear, sadness or anger. Sometimes we feel these feelings without being involved in a game. We may have favourite roles we tend to adopt and particular themes to the games we become involved in.

Rescuer	Either a <i>Hard-worker</i> whose theme is “Look how hard I’m Trying” or a <i>Care-taker</i> whose theme is “I’m only trying to help”.
Persecutor	<i>Angry</i> and either <i>Righteous</i> with the theme ‘Gotcha’ and who blames others, or <i>Woeful</i> who declares “If it weren’t for you/him/them . . .”.
Victim	either <i>Angry Wrongdoer</i> whose theme is “Kick me (if you dare) and then I’ll create an uproar”, or <i>Woeful and Righteous</i> whose theme is “Ain’t it Awful?” and “Look what they made me do”, or a <i>Woeful Wrongdoer</i> who has persecuted in the recent past and whose theme now is “If it weren’t for . . .” and “What can you expect from someone like me who has . . .?”.

We get involved in games for a variety of reasons, which helps explain why we repeat these patterns of behaviour.



These are the payoffs:

- ✧ Games generate many intense strokes – these may be negative, but feel better than being ignored.
- ✧ The outcomes of games reinforce our beliefs about ourselves, others and the world i.e. our life position.
- ✧ There will be something in the current situation that we avoid by playing the game.
- ✧ A game provides an opportunity for us to repeat a sequence from the past that we developed to protect us from something. Thus we do not have to deal with this psychological pain in the present, and can carry on thinking and feeling in our customary ways.
- ✧ We spend time telling friends and acquaintances about what happened – often in great detail, and with lots of repetition, and sounding very exciting. What else would we talk about?
- ✧ We replay the game in our minds eye and ear, re-experience the feelings and perhaps keep ourselves awake at nights! What else would we do with time that we have to ourselves?

Declining Game Playing

Several TA authors have developed ‘positive’ versions of the Drama Triangle. Gail Nordeman (1984) suggests that we can shift our energy to move from Rescuer to positive Nurturing, from Persecutor to positive Structuring, and from Victim to Problem-solver. Adrienne Lee, in workshops, creates a three dimensional model for autonomy in contrast to the ‘flat’ drama triangle. Acey Choy (1990) wrote about the Winners Triangle. All these acknowledge that games can be ‘failed attempts at intimacy (or closeness)’, which start from a need for strokes but, since something is being discounted, are played out in ways that only deliver negatives. Steve Karpman believes that 10% of each role is ‘OK’, i.e. well intentioned, and then things go wrong. Choy, in particular, has identified this ‘validity’ of each role and suggested necessary skills to enable everyone involved to stay OK. These are shown in the chart on page 9.10.

Staying out of games involves staying in “I’m OK, You’re OK”. Then we can get on with others and the task in hand, and be responsive and responsible, potent and empowering, and willing to be open and vulnerable. The triangle below shows the names we like to use for the positive roles (initial letters the same), in place of the drama roles. Instead of discounts and negative payoffs, this triangle generates strokes and openness in each role .

<i>Voicing feelings</i>	owning feelings, thoughts, reactions and <i>vulnerability</i>
<i>Proactive</i>	<i>potently</i> giving strokes and defining boundaries
<i>Responsible</i>	<i>responsive</i> to others in contracting for what you can do, and doing no more or less than asked



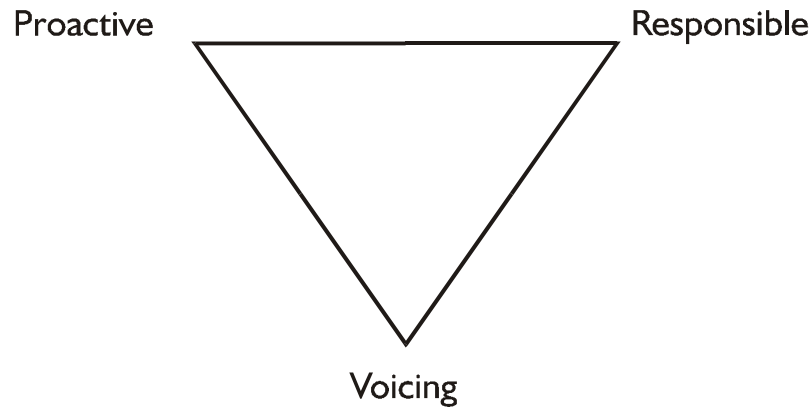


Figure 9.3

Thus, to avoid games:

- ✧ think, and use other options
- ✧ consider what strokes you really want – and ask for them
- ✧ give straight strokes to the other person
- ✧ stroke yourself for avoiding a game.

If the game has started outside of your awareness you can step out of it at any stage.

At the end:

- ✧ don't take the negative payoffs
- ✧ at the switch of roles opt for autonomy
- ✧ move to the winners triangle – be close
- ✧ use Free Child
- ✧ give positive straight strokes.

At the beginning:

- ✧ respond positively to the opening discount
- ✧ use your positive working style rather than negative driver behaviour.

At the start and throughout:

- ✧ cross the transaction positively
- ✧ address the covert agenda – voice your intuition.



Roles in the Karpman Drama Triangle

ROLE	VALIDITY	BELIEFS	DISCOUNT	EGO-STATE
VICTIM	Know they are suffering.	Can't think and feel at same time.	Have no resources.	AC –
	e.g.'s: missing deadlines, 'too scared' to confront, depend on others changing.			
RESCUER	Concern for others.	Responsible. Needs to be doing more than asked.	Take on other's thinking. Own needs.	NP –
	e.g.'s: buying equipment for staff without consulting, giving extensions to students who miss deadlines, doing things for 'victims'.			
PERSECUTOR	Act in own interests.	Can make others do things.	Other's feelings.	CP –
	e.g.'s: borrowing without asking, informing authorities without consulting, 'forgetting' to do things promised.			

Roles in the Winners' Triangle

ROLE	REALITY	BELIEFS	STROKES	EGO-STATE (SKILL)
VOICE	Have problem.	Can solve it with help. Can ask for help.	You can think, test your own ideas; OK to ask for help, not to be perfect, to fail sometimes, to refuse help you don't want.	FC (problem-solving)
RESPONSIBLE	Genuine concern. Know the boundaries.	Respect others. Willing to help, and to say when can't.	Your needs are important, you are valuable; OK to offer help, to say No, to evaluate.	NP+ (listening)
PROACTIVE	Own needs important.	Can change things. Using initiative is OK.	You can be powerful, invite others to be powerful; OK to say what you want, to make changes, to negotiate.	A (assertiveness) CP+ (structuring)

(based on Choy, 1990)



Applying your learning

On the next pages are five case studies involving psychological games for you to practice doing the following:

- ✧ Identify the ego-state you imagine each transaction to be coming from: Parent or Adult or Child; positive or negative.
- ✧ Write in any ulterior messages you suspect are being communicated, underneath the transaction.
- ✧ Mark in the drama triangle roles: Persecutor, Rescuer, Victim. Identify where the switch (or switches) take place.
- ✧ Games begin with a discounting either of the self, others, or the situation. Where do you see what sort of discounting taking place?
- ✧ What options do you perceive might have been possible, and where, in the interaction? Write them down as lines of script complete with directions as to tone, gestures, facial expressions, body postures. Improvise what might have then occurred and note alternative scenarios.
- ✧ With your options and improvisations, identify the crossed and complimentary transactions. Are there any 'blocking' transactions (where an issue is avoided by disagreeing on its definition) or 'tangential' transactions (where each person addresses a different issue, or the same issue from a different perspective).
- ✧ What are the 'racket' feelings you identify each person as having? What do you imagine each did next; how did these feeling affect them? What do you imagine the next scene between these people may be like?
- ✧ Remember: 8% of a message is communicated through the words, 38% through tone, and 54% through non-verbal communication, i.e. facial expression, gesture and body posture. You may find it helpful therefore to read these case studies with specific intonation and movements in mind – and to experiment with altering intonation and movements to change the social and psychological messages.
- ✧ If you were one of the protagonists involved, what would you do to stay out of the game altogether?

I. Why Don't You . . . ?

- M: What sort of re-training are you looking for?
- N: Well I've been looking after my kids for 8 years now – I was a secretary. I know it's changed; computers and all that.
- M: So, are you looking for word processing skills?
- N: Yes, I'd like that.



(They look at publicity for a number of courses).

- N: But I don't think I can because of the kids – I need to be there to pick them up from school.
- M: What about evening class? There's this one here.
- N: But who'd put them to bed?
- M: There is the option of doing a Saturday course.
- N: Oh no – Saturday is an important family day.
- M: Are you really wanting to go back to work?
- N: Well, I don't think much of how you help women with small children get back to work. Why not put on courses when we can get there?

2. Uproar . . .

- T: So, I'll collect in your assignments next week.
- S: But that's impossible.
- R: That's right – it'll mean extra work on top of my job. *(General mutter of agreement)*
- T: They need to be ready for next week. The assignment is part of the course requirements. This is not news to you.
- S: Why didn't you point this out last week?
- T: It is part of the course requirements. You have known about this since the beginning of the course. I reminded you a month ago.
- S: Well I want you to know we're really angry about this. There's enough to do for this course each week without having an assignment sprung on us.
- R: That's right – what if we don't hand it in for next week?
- T: As I pointed out before it's a requirement to complete this assignment and I look forward to receiving them next week. Now let's move on.
- S: It's not fair. *(begins to cry)*

3. Look How Hard I Try . . .

- M: *(Rushes in putting the kettle on, collecting cups and coffee mugs)* I was up at half six this morning, and I was working late last night – I wish I didn't have to work both ends of the day and the middle. *(smiling)*
- C: I know – it's always happening to me.
- R: *(Open-mouthed expression. Looks as if she's about to say something, but then decides against it.)*
- M: *(in a laughing voice to R)* You just think I'm hopeless, don't you?



R: *(laughs)* Yes, yes – absolutely hopeless!

M: *(moves off and the meeting begins)*

4. You're So Wonderful . . .

Natalie develops assertiveness skills with a variety of groups – community education and college staff; women returners; girl groups. Tanya, a social acquaintance who has been a participant in one of her staff events in assertiveness, rings her one evening:

T: Would you have ten minutes or so to chat? I need some help.

N: Of course – What's up?

T: I've been asked to do a day on assertiveness for the part-timer and volunteer staff at the local community education centre and I'd like your guidance.

N: Oh right – well, what have you got in mind?

T: Well, I hadn't really sorted it . . . I know how excellent you are on assertiveness training, so I thought I'd give you a call.

N: Well . . . Why don't you take a look at the book I recommended on the course?

T: Er, yes – the trouble is I'm hopeless at reading things through and then sorting them out to teach.

N: Oh – right, I understand. Some people don't find turning reading into reality straightforward. Well, how about you do something along the lines of the Saturday you attended with me?

T: Oh, I couldn't repeat what you did – I'm not you. You're so skilled.

N: I'm not suggesting you do exactly what I did, but take some of the ideas from that day and make them your aim.

T: I don't think I could do that – I was a participant that day and I can't get my head in gear to make the switch to trainer.

N: Ah – well – how about you coming in as an observer at the next training day I run? Let me see. On Saturday week I'm doing a day for the local counselling service.

T: No, I can't do Saturdays because of my kids.

N: *(laughs briefly)* Well, I'm stumped. Have you any ideas?

T: Well – er – I wondered, could you spend a couple of hours with me one evening next week to help me plan it? I could come to your house.

N: Oh. *(pause)* Actually, I'm trying not to work any more evenings. No, I couldn't do that.

T: Oh well – I didn't really think you'd be able to help me.

5. Beware Of Flattery . . .

G: I'm really enjoying this course. I think you're great trainers.

H: Thank you, I'm glad you're enjoying the course.

A few weeks later in a course session:

F: I don't like the way you course tutors come and look over our shoulders when we're doing practical work.

G: I agree – you make us feel completely de-skilled.

Your Teaching Style

Consider the two continuums below.

How topic-centred or learner-centred are you on each course you teach?

How do you include, and how do you exclude, learners in your teaching?

Different activities reflect different training styles. Which do you use most?

- ✧ Jot down learning and teaching activities which are appropriate for each quadrant.
- ✧ One quadrant will almost always result in psychological games – which is it?

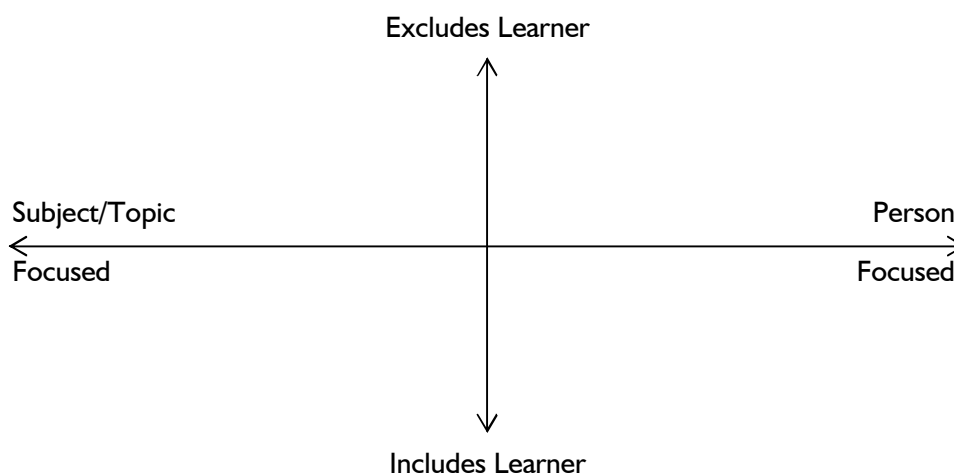
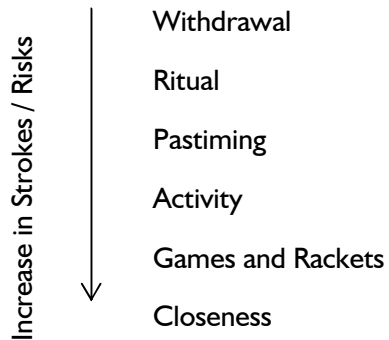


Figure 9.4



Your Work Setting – Knowing Yourself

Different ways of structuring our time provide different levels of intensity and frequency of strokes.



This may provide you with some insight into yourself, and how you give and receive strokes:

- ✧ *Are you obsessive about rituals? At work?*
- ✧ *Do you spend a lot of time pastiming? At work?*
- ✧ *Have you ever been a workaholic?*
- ✧ *Do you find you are often involved in 'Oh no, not again' games?*
- ✧ *How do you feel you compensate for a lack of closeness? In the workplace?*



Your Work Setting . . . Games

Consider your workplace:

- ✧ *Who gives you positive strokes?*

- ✧ *Who do you ask for strokes?*

- ✧ *Who else could you ask for strokes?*

- ✧ *How do you reward yourself?*

- ✧ *Are there particular individuals you get involved in games with?*

- ✧ *What are the themes of the games?*

- ✧ *Where can you get strokes other than from these games?*

- ✧ *What are the pay-offs for you?*

- ✧ *What strategies can you identify to keep out or get out of these games?*

- ✧ *What helpful reminders about these strategies can you provide for yourself? e.g.; What can you write on the back of your hand or on the wall?*



Time Management

Consider how each working style (Section 7) may have a favourite way of structuring time.

Please People Do you spend too much time *pastiming* and therefore less actively working? Would being on your own be helpful?

Learn to say no skilfully – set own limits and priorities. Assertiveness training may be useful. Choose a time management system that's colourful, with drawings, sticky dots etc.

Be Perfect Do you spend too much time on work *activity* – and would clear boundaries and deadlines help? Could you spend more time passing the time? Can you allow yourself to delegate?

Good enough is good enough. Relax – know perfection is impossible. Enjoy mistakes! Know deadlines affect others. Plan to finish on time. Use a computerised time management system.

Be Strong Would time off for *rituals* or *play activity* be a reward for your coping and actively working? And a clear description of duties giving you clear direction for working alone? More opportunity to pass the time, something you can imagine with positive benefits?

Review requirements – check resources are available. Ask for help sometimes. Take time off as a reward. Use a practical straightforward time management system with clear instructions.

Try Hard Do you find you need to *pastime* and react negatively around deadlines? Would some rituals you develop provide you with boundaries? How about some ritualised time alone briefly but regularly.

Diary all aspects of the task. Enjoy feeling of success once finished. Do (despite boredom) use a computerised system for flow charts of tasks; or a palm top or mobile phone system could be fun.

Hurry Up Can you have two sets of deadlines – the first for corrections? Keep a balance between *pastiming* and *activity*? Spend time alone occasionally, doing nothing?

Consciously prepare. Listen to others carefully without interruption. Ask about needs – don't assume. Socialise before/after meetings. Use a simple post-it time management system



Resources for Session Planning

You will notice how, in any of the categories, you may be coming from a healthy life position (except games) or from one of the unhealthy life positions (except closeness). The first chart shows how as a teacher you can positively structure time; the second shows how learners can engage positively, 'getting on with things'.

Teaching / Tutoring and Time Structuring

Consider ways in which you positively structure time when teaching – and how you may sometimes do so in a way that results in ineffectiveness.

	Effective positive	Ineffective negative
Withdrawal		
Ritual		
Pastime		
Activity (work and play)		
Games & Rackets	Games and Rackets are never positive – they are manipulative and repetitive.	
Closeness		Genuine closeness is never negative or unhelpful. If it seems as if it is, then a game or racket is probably occurring.



Learners and Time Structuring

Notice how people behave when they are positively structuring their time in learning sessions and getting on with learning; and how they behave when they are operating from any of the other unhealthy life positions.

	Positive (+ +)	Negative (+ -) (- -) (- +)
Withdrawal		
Ritual		
Pastime		
Activity (work and play)		
Games & Rackets		
Closeness		



Application in session planning

Time Structuring may also provide you with a different view of lesson planning. Consider the following 'ingredients' of a session: what time structuring and stroke needs might they supply? Use the space to add other teaching / learning activity

Lesson ingredient	Time structure category + -	Types of strokes engendered + -
Warm up		
Lecture / lecturette		
Question and answer		
Pairs		
Guided visualisation		
Demonstration		
Role play		
Simulation		
Small group work		
Homework		
Round		
Ending activity		



Notes and Sources

- ✧ Berne's first popular book, *Games People Play*, brought a new meaning for 'Games' into the language. The Drama Triangle provides the most accessible way to analyse games – Stephen Karpman developed this idea in 1968. Acey Choy recognised the validity of the three roles and proposed the Winners' Triangle as a positive strategy for staying out of games. Gail Nordeman's ideas on how group leaders can move to a positive place are in *Who, Me Lead a Group?* pp. 83-85.
- ✧ The Game Plan on page 9.5 was first developed by John James. Here we use a modified version suggested in *TA Today* (p. 241), derived from Lawrence Collinson.
- ✧ Petruska Clarkson has proposed a fourth role associated with the Drama Triangle, that of Bystander. Workshop participants have suggested various positive equivalents; our favourite is Be Involved.
- ✧ The 'themes' on page 9.7 are taken from the Redefining Hexagon in *The Cathexis Reader* pp. 66-68.

References

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