

# SECTION I: EDITORIAL

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## THE ABC'S OF HOOKING THE READER'S CHILD

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ABC's are elementary and for beginners. However, after having reviewed articles with the Editorial Board for the past year, I realized a need for collecting some of the basic principles of TA that authors and new members could use as a reference.

**A IS FOR ACTIVE VERBS.** Active verbs hook our Child because children like action. The passive voice is wishy-washy and sets up the con that things "happen" to people from out of the blue. An excellent reference which contrasts the active and passive viewpoint is Paul McCormick's "Translating 'Delinquency' Language into TA" (TAB 4:16, 1965).

**B IS FOR BREVITY.** Berne recommended that the first page of every article be discarded. An article shouldn't be longer than the idea needs to be said. An idea can even be stated in one line, such as " $E=mc^2$ ", proving that as the energy of the idea increases, the mass of the article decreases.

**C IS FOR COWBOY.** "Cowboy" is an old TA term for the therapist that gets right in there and gets the job done, and thereby doesn't have to sit around later and think up excuses why he didn't get the job done. The Child likes to read about the cowboy

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therapists who cure all their patients on Monday so they can have the rest of the week off for fun. Cowboy writers take the ABC's and "put it all together" right away and not "save it for a rainy day."

**D IS FOR DISCOVERY.** D is for the discovery of an uncharted field, not for another detail in last year's yield.

**E IS FOR EASY.** E is for easy reading. An article is easy reading if an eight-year-old can understand it. It is easy reading if it has the plain, logical sequence of a child's reader. A child's reader has simple words, simple sentences, and simple paragraphs. When an "Electron Microscope" player gets off his stool once a year and offers up a compact (or loose) article full of obsessive dissections, non-illustrated abstractions, and second order symbols such as  $P_2$ , PC,  $C_1$ , etc., it is anything but easy. An article is easy reading if it's gone through the seven drafts that Berne recommended. It is easy reading when it simplifies TA instead of complicating it.

**F IS FOR FUN.** Children like fun and can tell when the author had fun writing his thing. "Late Paper" players writing from the Adapted Child (homework assignments) haven't discovered that writing with the Free Child can be a fun hobby. Fun can be any number of things, a colorful word, a surprise image, a witty insight, a new

angle, uncanny accuracy, a breakthrough triumph over mystification, or descriptions of the fun in the games people play. TA therapists traditionally include fun time for the Child.

**C IS FOR GOODIES.** Children look for candies and goodies, and don't like reading through an entire article and coming up with an empty stomach. Spinach, liver, and castor oil is for the Parent; meat and potatoes is for the Adult. A writer like Berne puts in a goody for the Child in every sentence. Articles that taste like recycled psychoanalysis cause a gut-level reaction in the subscriber who digs TA.

**H IS FOR HANDLES.** Berne talked of putting a handle on transactional ideas, something tangible to help people get a grip on reality. If you insert an idea into a scaffolding like the transactional diagram or the time structuring chart, then you have "hardware." This solidifies external social reality. When a TA idea is thought through, it is an object to hold onto; a catchy vocabulary word where previously there was only vagueness in a relationship.

**I IS FOR IMAGERY.** Children like pictures. A TA stimulus creates pictures of people for the Child living in his skull. These conflict with and replace the Adapted Child fantasies. Parent and Adult writing is mostly made up of words without imagery. The Child sees more pictures of people when reading that a game player "abruptly left the room" than when someone "left the room."

**J IS FOR JUMPIN' UP AND DOWN.** When the Child really gets turned on, he's giggling with joy, and after that, with more turn on, he starts jumping up and down. A TA party isn't

considered successful unless people get so happy they start jumping up and down. Any mirth or merriment for the Child up to and including jumping up and down is O.K. for TA writing.

**K IS FOR KNOWLEDGE.** Children like to think and to learn and to figure out puzzles and to predict. Oppressive psychiatric systems that employ the term "intellectualize" deprive the Child of much that he can learn. When Adult information simultaneously hooks the Child we have "insight": TA hooks the Child with child's words; Gestalt hooks the Child with child's play; Psychoanalysis hooks the Child with child's memories. Children like real life information. The Little Professor is suspicious of high-sounding theories and wonders where the convincing proof, the specifics, and the facts are. Vague generalizations are a turnoff and seem to be a lot of bull.

**L IS FOR LOVE.** L is for the love of little children . . . - and the ABC's of what they like. Love is not the exclusive realm of the Nurturing Parent, with maudlin reminiscing of "I Remember Vienna" or "My Favorite Patient" which often ooze from the pages like melted marshmallows. Love is meeting the Child's needs. Love is never having to bow to the ancestors in the opening paragraph.

**M IS FOR MARTIAN.** Berne would ask "How would you explain this to a man from Mars?" and "How would this look to a man from Mars?" "Martian" is a language so simple that a child (or a man from Mars) would be able to grasp a concept the first time it was explained. Martian also refers to a naive obvious way of looking at something that has escaped everyone except a newcomer from Mars who sees it as it really is.

**N IS FOR NEW.** An idea is new

when it's first heard. Some articles have a sense of freshness about them; others come across as tiresome, "derivative," and a chore to wade through. The Child is anticipating creativity and originality, or an innovative twist to an old idea; not yesterday's news. Vi Callaghan once surmised that Berne wrote from the injunction "Don't say anything that has ever been said before."

**O IS FOR OCCAM'S RAZOR.** The roots of TA go back to the 14th century philosopher William of Occam. With Occam's Razor one cuts away at all the non-essentials until only the evident essentials are left, usually a single one. A game is reduced to a single key quote which economically tells the entire story. An ambivalent patient is asked to single his thinking down to "What is the question of your life?" An author is asked to focus sharply on "What is the point of your article?" In order to avoid "an interesting evening" the presenter at the TA seminar is asked to ask one question; the audience is directed to give only the best answer they can think of and not the lesser ones. A patient collects one color stamp, the game has one antithesis, the script has one witch message. The goal of TA is curing patients in one session (with one statement).

**P IS FOR PEOPLE.** TA is all about people, not theories and diagrams. Spontaneous new ideas in TA come from new observations about people, not new observations about diagrams. When an article is too theoretical and diagrammatic, the Child wonders "Where did all the people go?" The colorful description of the action in a game is more revealing than the theoretical breakdown of its dynamics. Original theoretical articles about

infancy, childhood, and new script matrixes should mention the people and actual cases that they were derived from. The opposite extreme is an article, only about people, lacking in original scientific merit. "Games People Play" talked about what people do, and identified scientifically the fun the Child was up to while they were doing it.

**Q IS FOR QUOTES.** Berne defined reality as that which can be photographed and tape-recorded. In writing about reality, imagery can substitute for the photographs and quotes can substitute for the tape recorder. Therefore, the most real way to write about what's going on is to find a quote that contains an image, as in the game "I'm Only Trying To Help You," the sweatshirt "Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen" and the Witch Message "Don't be in a hurry to grow up." Clear examples make an observation come to life, but the quote makes it talk.

**R IS FOR RECOGNIZABLE.** A really crisp idea is so instantly recognizable that it needs no further elaboration. The Child should be able to picture the characters, situations, cons, and possible switches just by hearing the name of the game; e.g., "Drunk and Proud" and "Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch." Many new games are submitted to this journal with a forgettable, useless name but brilliantly worked out dynamics. Titles should be fun, not functional. The name Rapo is more fun than if it had been named functionally by the roles "The Seductress and The Wolf." "Rapo" sounds like a child's game, like "Spud" and "Hah Hah, Hermann." If the name doesn't make you laugh, then it didn't hook the Child.

**S IS FOR SAFE.** S is for the "safety

factor" in TA treatment. The reader's Child can identify freely with lively descriptions of people without fear of a sudden introduction of a "Blemish" game to make him feel Not O.K. Ominous terms from the Standard Nomenclature's "List of Putdowns" are carefully avoided, in favor of seeing everyone as O.K. The absence of the Parental disease model (I'm O.K., You're Not O.K.) is a help. The focus on social reality and Adult problem solving prevents regression.

T IS FOR TREATMENT. The Child is turned on by the hope, inspiration, and permission in TA writing; to clearly see the way to start being O.K. again and getting a new script on the road. This spirit of renewal introduced by Berne has been presented in an exciting way in Harris' *I'm O.K.-You're O.K.* and James and Jongeward's *Born to Win*.

U IS FOR USEFUL. Useful means something useful to the patient, like Parent, Adult, and Child; something that works, that he likes, can remember, and put to use right away to get his Adult in control. Handy Household Hints ("if you're nervous, count to ten") and gimmicks are less useful in that there is too much appeal to the Adapted Child and less or none to the Natural Child. An idea has "leverage" if its usefulness is increased to that of an antithesis or a contract. Levers make work easy for the Child. An article is useful if it tells the Cowboy how to get cures, not progress.

V IS FOR VIVID. Vivid refers to a love of language that is concise, clear, concrete, crisp, colorful, and colloquial; not fuzzy, vague, speculative, bland, generalized, and non-specific. Graphic reality hooks the Natural Child ego state so the person can see again with eidetic imagery as he did as a child.

Vocabulary derived from the psychoanalytic school is pro-regression, id-oriented, hypnosis-related, and Parentally polysyllabic.

W IS FOR WIDEN. TA widens the limits of the Child's world. When the tendency to understand the Child's present behavior is to look to the past, focus on the future payoff. When there is an over-focus on what the Child is doing, ask what the Adult and Parent are doing. When a person says that scripts end with death, stretch it to end when the will is read. Have it begin with the grandparents, not the parents. See if the Child's game is four-handed, instead of two-handed. When the limits are stated, ask what's on either side of the limits. Berne got the overview and perspective of an idea, asked of what series did it belong, and then added to either side.

X IS FOR EXCEPTION. The rebel Child thrills at being the defiant exception in the game of "Me Too," and resisting the "Corner" game of conformity to the prevailing power. Berne took on the "thinking is bad" and "therapy must be serious" convictions of the prevailing psychoanalytic power and developed TA. When therapists told patients "work out your problems, then get well," Berne told them "get well first, then work out your problems." The gutty Child will defy both the developing trends of Parental canon and dogma, or the intoxicating persuasion of the Child's "Me Too" game in any system, including TA. When Berne saw that the tallied vote was unanimous for something, he would promptly cast the lone vote against it, to prevent an unhealthy situation from developing. No system can "rest on its oars" to use Toynbee's term in *A Study of History*. An idea that will be appealing to the Child is one

that's not overcomplete, so he can fill in some blanks himself, as in "Y" below.

Y IS FOR...

Z IS FOR ZZZZZ. This is the sound of the sleeping Child after having his needs discounted in an article, both in

the writing style and the dearth of original ideas or angles. The Adult and Parent may be working on the article trying to derive some merit from it, but the Child is asleep while that is going on.