



Transactional analysis to strengthen resilience

how to improve your health and well-being in a targeted manner



The better we understand and can meaningfully classify our own thoughts, feelings, actions and experiences, the sooner we can begin dissolving unhealthy patterns or schemata from childhood and identifying and implementing the next steps towards strengthened autonomy and resilience.

Transactional analysis, according to Eric Berne, offers simple models from the field of psychology which can have a profound and lasting effect and expand our understanding of ourselves and others. The theory of transactional analysis is divided into four **pillars**:

- **Script Analysis**
References our childhood to identify thoughts, feelings, actions and experiences that still connect us to our past.
- **Structural analysis**
Helps us to understand what is happening inside of us (intrapsychically in our human experience).
- **Transaction analysis**
Focuses on interpersonal contact and how people can communicate with each other in a meaningful, understandable and purposeful way.
- **Psychological Game Analysis**
Looks at interpersonal communication from the perspective of negative, recurring patterns that might limit our autonomy and agency.

Each of the four pillars contains different models, each of which can be considered individually, but which are nevertheless connected to each other at a higher level. Together, they help make human thoughts, actions, feelings and experiences more comprehensible, understandable and relatable, and can be used in a meaningful way for personal development and reflection.



Transactional analysis offers numerous models and theories that can also be helpful in building **resilience**. I will gladly introduce you to a theory that I consider particularly informative for self-reflection and which I often use in my practice as a psychological counsellor.

In addition to basic biological needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping and sex - to name some of the most important ones - there are also basic psychological needs which are written in the developmental history of mankind (evolution).

In transactional analysis, we talk about the basic needs of the soul. Eric Berne names three types, which are described in more detail below:

- Stroke (stroking/appreciation/respect)
- Stimulus (stimulation/excitation)
- Structure

Strokes can be a physical hug from a good friend or verbally expressed recognition from others, e.g. praise for a good performance or unconditional appreciation of our existence, for instance between long-time friends who send each other birthday cards. Physical contact, caressing, kissing and sex within a well-functioning relationship also fall into this area. But strokes can also be negative, e.g. when someone insults or rebukes us. And because strokes are an important basic need, negative recognition in the case of an undersupply of strokes is sometimes better than not being noticed by others at all.

Stimulus is all about stimulating the five senses (tasting, smelling, feeling, seeing, sensing, hearing). We love variety in our lives and might enjoy, for example, a nice-smelling perfume, hot coffee, a soothing massage, a tastefully prepared dinner, a colorful dress or even an intense sports experience or an exciting dating adventure. All these things provide variety and personal development and enrich our daily routine and living experience.

Structure also manifests itself in different ways. In this area, we can focus on temporal structuring, for instance breaks for coffee, meetings with friends, lunch at 12 o'clock, etc., but also on common social experiences like small talk at a company aperitif, going to a concert with friends, or simply "alone time" enjoying our favorite pastimes or hobbies.

As you might have noticed, there is some conceptual overlap in the three categories. But all three should have sufficient time, space, expression, and fulfillment in our lives.

In times of stress, however, it is often the case that we only "function" and that these areas are neglected. We then suffer from their undersupply, which can have a negative effect on our health, our well-being and our enjoyment of life. Depending on the level of stress, this can lead to a downward spiral in which first one area and then possibly several others are simultaneously neglected, or forgotten.

A conscious activation and living out of these three basic mental needs is thus essential for a healthy, fulfilled and happy life, also with regard to our resilience and preventing burnout or "boreout".



As social beings, we are dependent on our fellow human beings, but this does not imply that we can shift our responsibilities onto others. It is important that we ourselves actively and consciously ensure that we have enough strokes, stimulus, and structure in our lives to cover our basic mental needs, and that we even actively ask others for support, appreciation or attention if necessary - even if the particular situation makes it difficult to do so. Here, it can be useful and healing to take a closer look at experiences from our childhood which have shaped us and consider how we may have unconsciously derived behaviors to deal with these three basic needs. Personal development and change are always possible, and can heal us and make us stronger.

For personal self-reflection

Where do yourself with respect to these three basic needs? Do you receive enough recognition from the outside for your personality, your uniqueness or your achievements? What makes you feel valued and loved? Do you dare to ask others for a stroke (e.g. feedback or praise)? Do you give yourself and your needs enough recognition and attention? How do you show yourself the appreciation you need? How generous are you with yourself? In which cases do you find it easy? In which cases do you have more trouble living out the three basic needs intuitively and consciously? Do you sometimes treat yourself to something without having to deliver something else in return? Where and how do you make your life diverse and varied? What gives you particular pleasure in the everyday? Where can you relax best? In what can you completely immerse yourself for hours? What gives you strength for your professional and day-to-day life? What are you grateful for?

When was the last time you were consciously aware of yourself and your surroundings in peace and with all your senses? How do you make sure that you eat a balanced diet and, if possible, bring different tastes and colors to your plate? How consciously do you shape and enrich your life, in the sensory (massage, sauna, sport, sex, etc.), intellectual (further education, reading, discussions, etc.), action (needlework, handicrafts, dancing, etc.), perception (clothing, ambience, decoration, etc.), taste (baking, cooking, tasting, etc.), or smell (perfume, nature, flowers, scented oils, etc.)?

What gives you structure and security in your day-to-day life? What kind of break do you particularly enjoy? What social contacts do you particularly value and why? How could you communicate this to the person in question? (-> give out strokes yourself) What kind of leisure activity gives you strength and lets you distance yourself from your everyday (work) life? What were you particularly good at as a child? Which activities could you re-activate from your childhood?

These are only a few questions and suggestions that might help you fulfil the three basic spiritual needs. Of course, expectations, wishes and desires differ from person to person, and thus it is up to each one of us to choose an approach according to our personal preferences. At the end of the day, it's best to just try things out and discover what's possible! Perhaps you'll discover completely unknown resources for strengthening your personal resilience?!

A holistic approach is important with regard to both resilience and basic psychological needs. It's all about finding a healthy balance and building in safety mechanisms for your everyday life, so that, in the event of a



"lean period", you can come back to your equilibrium as soon as possible. It does not require perfect implementation, but only a little courage and seeing the fun in deciding on the first steps!

Start with ONE of the three basic needs and determine the first, small steps that you can easily implement and integrate it into your daily routine. Take stock at the end of the first week: for instance, you can start with a resilience diary and actively celebrate your successes! Doing this should be fun!

With this in mind, I hope you enjoy discovering and trying out transactional analysis!

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