

Becoming a TA Practitioner

Choosing Transactional Analysis by Karine Danan

Every practitioner chooses a theory and method for psychotherapy based on their own orientation, knowledge, and personality. When I was a teenager, I had a vague image of the therapist as a professional seated in an armchair, listening to people who were seeking a way out of their problems —not necessarily a person who knew it all, but someone who could welcome and facilitate creativity. At the time, I knew only of Freud's writings, so for years I read and reread his books, trying to grasp the meaning and lessons I could draw from them. It was an arduous yet stimulating task.

At university, I had an experience in psychoanalysis, but free association immediately highlighted my difficulties in sharing myself. I was faced with the other's silence, with my own invasive thoughts and my difficulty in expressing emotions in the relationship. I was right back in the spot I'd been in since birth, without anyone asking me what I wanted to do with that or why all that was there. Nothing happened in that relationship, nothing held me in that space of silence, a silence all too well known to me.

Ten years later, as my life was reaching a major turning point, I entered a phase where I needed relationship and stimulation. TA offered me a subtle, usable, pragmatic set of concepts. Script, psychological games, and life positions enabled me to explain my process and to start putting into words the things that mattered, to make meaning rather than fall back into my fantasy world. Words became "hearable" through the shared analysis, which lent them meaning. I could sense how change and cure for me would be reached through the addition of a secure, fair, relational process, through meaning making, defining consequences and problems, developing my creativity in order to find solutions, gaining self-confidence to apply them, acting therapy with a transactional analyst. I was struck by the difference between my ex-analyst and the way this new person practiced. I experienced the therapeutic relationship becoming a tool for understanding and treating psychological difficulties. I was hearing words and questions about my expectations that helped me to articulate a contract. I had been a wordless child, an adolescent prone to fantasies, an introverted adult. The safe, confidential relationship was in sharp contrast to the trauma and non-structuring

relationships I had had before. Thus I discovered a new model and new ways of relating, understanding, naming the henceforth unnamed, feeling, redeciding, and changing well-established patterns.

The underlying theory that was shared with me fed my hunger for understanding, and the method fed my need for relationship and stimulation. TA offered me a subtle, usable, pragmatic set of concepts. Script, psychological games, and life positions enabled me to explain my process and to start putting into words the things that mattered, to make meaning rather than fall back into my fantasy world. Words became “hearable” through the shared analysis, which lent them meaning. I could sense how change and cure for me would be reached through the addition of a secure, fair, relational process, through meaning making, defining consequences and problems, developing my creativity in order to find solutions, gaining self-confidence to apply them, acting autonomously without, however, forgetting about the rest of humanity. All of this anchored me and gave me roots in a fertile social soil.

This experience reawakened my desire to practice psychotherapy, so I started training. The learning methods suited me, I found respect for my personal pace in acquiring theory and practice in depth. The pathway to certification seemed a good way to consolidate the training.

I learned to listen to myself while listening to the other in the relationship, to use the theory and share it so it became the basis of practice. I discovered a scientific and phenomenological theory usable both in everyday life as well as in education, therapy, and organizations. I found words and concepts that could be shared and used in all the dimensions of life. This universal aspect, applicable in so many domains, opened up hope for a better world in which everyone has a place, which fits my sense of meaning in life. I wanted to practice therapy that was humanistic, analytic, scientific, relational, and social. I found all of that in TA. The client and I co-construct, with their creativity as well as mine, ways to solve what they could not solve on his or her own at the start.

Various studies to validate psychotherapy methods have shown that most are effective as long as they fit the characteristics and dysfunctions of the client and if the therapist believes his or her method to be effective (Nadeau, 2012). They also show that the therapeutic relationship is at the heart of the curative effect of the process, so the

choice of theory and method becomes a personal one. TA is a dynamic method, open to new scientific discoveries. We constantly rework it through our shared experiences and our will to develop it. The language of TA, which we share with the client, helps make the therapist a reliable figure, an ally with whom intimacy (albeit one-way) is possible.

I believe we choose TA not by accident but because we are moved and stimulated by it, because it opens up meaning, pushes us toward our best, helps us to live together, respect one another, listen differently, and speak in new ways. It is a tool that enables clients to reach their goals, and it allows me as a therapist to feel the satisfaction of helping individuals to trust their capacities and lead a life for their better self with respect for others and their environment.

Reference

Nadeau, L. (2012). Les études sur l'efficacité de la psychothérapie ou comment la science répond à une question intime [Studies on the effectiveness of psychotherapy or how science answers an intimate question]. Psychotropes, 18(1), 77-88

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