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# Leadership Development: Supporting And Developing Colleagues

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## Abstract

A description is given of an leadership development programme designed and run within an organisation, including how the multi-party contracting was conducted, and how the psychological, professional and administrative levels were addressed. In addition to an overview of the programme, details are given of the content and process of the third session, as well as the reactions of the participants who shared what they had learned.

## Key Words

*leadership, transactional analysis, ego states, multi-party contracting, cycles of development, supporting colleagues, organisational culture*

## Introduction

I was given the task of doing a complex development program for leaders of a big company. The organisation was struggling with the inability of its managers to retain their new recruits so the aim of the development was to help them sort this problem out. Whereas I had been working with organisations for several years and knew about contextual TA (Sedgwick, 2020), I was aware that sometimes we need to change the culture to be different and the company was working on that (thinking about the renewing of the recruiting process, benefits etc.) However, at the same time they wanted to give personal support for their leaders to be better managers, and for those leaders to be more able to use their behaviour consciously in order to make better relationships to help their colleagues. That was the part of the project I was invited to do.

Please note that, although I am a member of different TA and non TA professional associations and I know their Codes of Ethics, for the ethical considerations I used the Code of Ethics of the International Centre for TA Qualifications (ICTAQ) (2023) in this case study as a reference.

I know these are similar to other TA Codes and based on the same values and I wanted to be consistent in the work by using one source. The ICTAQ Handbook says: “In establishing a professional relationship, members of ICTAQ assume responsibility for providing a suitable structure, including but not limited to such things as specifying the nature and limitations of confidentiality to be observed, particularly when other parties are involved, and obtaining informed consent from all parties to the processes to be utilised.” (p.2) and “the ICTAQ member shall resolve the relationship in such a way as to minimise harm to (any of) the parties to the contract”. (p.1). Hence, in this article I will not give the name of the company nor any information that would identify the specific company (it could be any I worked with in my career as an organisational development consultant) and I do not use the real names of the participants in order to give protection to the participants and any other stakeholders.

## Multiparty contracting

In this part of the case study I would like to present my thinking about contracting for the whole project. The ICTAQ Code states “the ethical practice of transactional analysis involves entering an informed contractual relationship” (p.1) so every time we are working we have to think about this and of course it is the base of being a TA professional.

As I was an employee of the company at that time, I knew I needed to be very aware of the dependencies and relationships in terms of organisational hierarchy. To analyse this during the contracting I identified the stakeholders first. After this, I used Hay's (2009) model of the multiparty contract, which is a further development of English's (1975) three-cornered contract. In this, the solid lines represent the open, stated or written contractual elements, and the dashed lines those where no direct agreement can be made (Figure 1) but we have to be aware that there is a psychological level contract too.

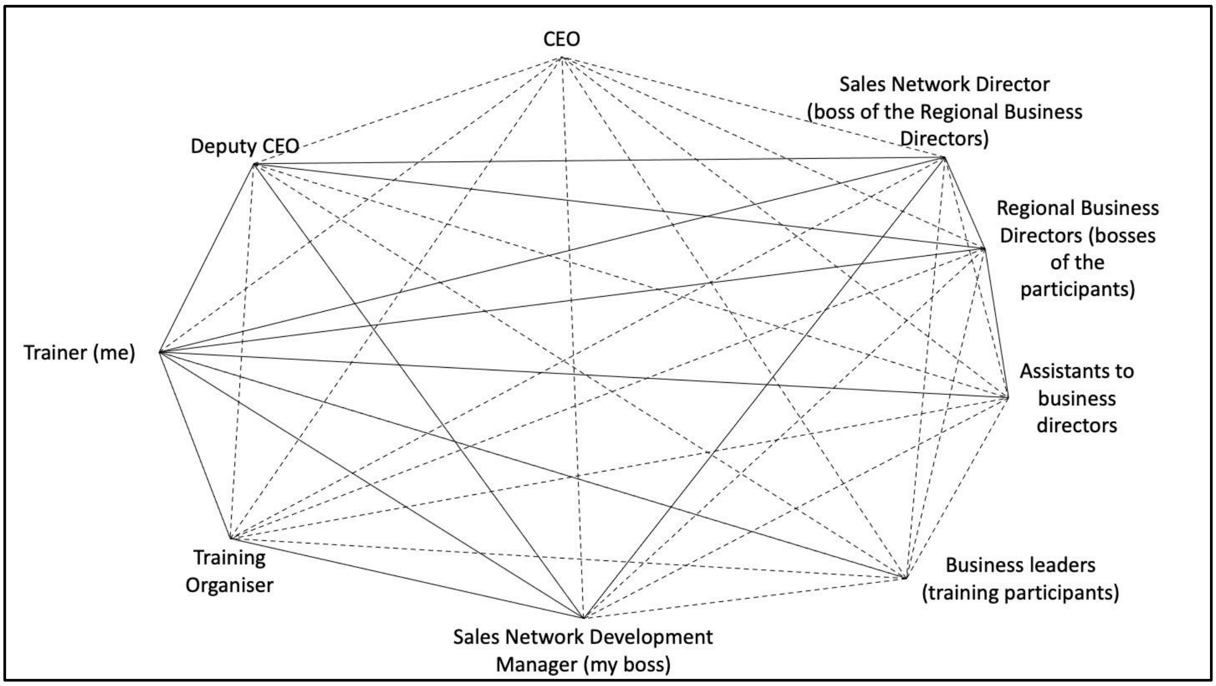


*Figure 1: Multiparty Contract with Stakeholders*

I spent 1.5 months getting to know the company, the culture, the managers and the staff. I attended trainings and had one-to-one meetings with a lot of colleagues. During this time, I also gathered information on the opportunities and risks that our leadership development project would bring. After thinking about these, I defined the elements of the contract, which I thought through based on Berne's (1966) three levels of contract.

### Psychological level

- Because of a multiparty contract, I was concerned that there was a risk that the Sales Network Director and Deputy CEO would want to have too much say in the content, even though they are not professionals in training and people development. I knew this from my colleagues, based on their experience of prior development, and it required increased attention on my part.
- Discretion with training participants can be guaranteed in cases where the business is not compromised by what we see and hear; otherwise we have a reporting obligation to the director and this is transparent to the participants - this may involve them not sharing certain information with us.
- We had no experience of what people liked and disliked about previous developments, or whether there were any negative events that could undermine the success of the current project, because the people who worked with them before were no longer there.
- Business leaders interest in the scheme did not include an assessment of the people in leader roles, and motivation to implement changes may therefore be mixed.
- There was no leadership competency and roles model in the organisation and this might imply that different images of the leadership role live in people's minds - in addition, it invites more of the patterns of 'leader' experienced in our original family and first group experiences, which may make it difficult to develop them (group imago theory based on Berne, 1966).
- Participants may fear that they need development because something is wrong with them, which invites more of the Internal Child ego state instead of the Adult.
- Perhaps business directors are not supportive or make it impossible to put this development into practice because of competition; fear may appear on their part in Internal Child (labels used for internal and behavioural ego states are from Hay, 2009).
- There are different levels of leadership competencies (none, potential, do it well instinctively, do it well based on learning) in the organisation.
- There was no culture of leadership skill development, so it may be unexpected, or maybe it will be surprising, unusual for participants.

- Part of the organisational culture is that business leaders are perceived at headquarters as “they are not fit to lead, they don't want to work" - so as a professional I have to be able to keep the faith that they can develop, because what I have in my head later functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Perhaps this was something that previous trainers had not considered enough - the impact of this on a psychological level. But of course maybe it is true and we have to think about how to change the organisation to be more motivating instead of helping them to change themselves.
- Relational embeddedness - those who are not fit but are there, for example, because of good connections or their established business portfolio.
- In areas where family members are co-workers, confusion may arise and the manager-worker and parent-child roles may be confused. By role I use Schmid's (1994) definition, where role is a feeling, thought and behaviour and a perception of reality and a pattern of relationships in an interrelated, consistent co-existence and pattern. This is an extended definition of ego-states. It means when we are in a situation, at the moment we are in the role and we perceive reality differently from that role and different relational patterns are activated in each of the roles. We are almost always living and acting in some role, and the role we are in has a great influence on what we see. The potential danger in this regard can come from the way in which, for example, professional and private roles are mixed up in these areas, because for example family members do not let people go, family does not monitor performance, family does not pay for performance as managers do with their staff. Equally true from the staff side: you do not leave your family and find another one, as staff may do with managers. So role confusion occurs as private roles and professional roles get mixed up.

### Professional level

The aim is to develop the leadership skills of managers, so that they can retain their staff. Business leaders need to have the basic leadership skills, the tools to effectively manage their staff throughout their careers. We support this through training, group coaching and interim tasks.

Because of ethical considerations, I included thinking about discretion and the information flow direction; we agreed on discretion, with the exception of when we learn of a factor that could jeopardise the business.

Except in such cases, the trainer does not disclose information about individuals, but if a topic arises that has been mentioned by at least two people, it may be shared anonymously by the trainer with the professionals in the HQ and business directors. It was important because without this we cannot behave ethically. The quotation I have given above from the ICTAQ Code of Ethics about specifying the nature and limitations of confidentiality is relevant here.

The structure of the overall development process was:

1. Conduct a focus group (I considered this important because I identified at the psychological level of the contract that we did not have information about what had happened to participants in previous development sessions) ;
2. Leadership role training (non TA);
3. Leadership communication training, based on Working Styles (Hay, 2009);
4. Supporting and developing colleagues - training, based on cycles of development (Levin, 1982) and strokes (Steiner, 1971);
5. Performance evaluation and objectives training, including Internal ego states and M&M’s (Hay, 2009);
6. Interview techniques training (non TA);
7. Closing ceremony.

I planned to do reflective consultation with business directors between training sessions, and included this in the professional contract because I had identified a potential danger at a psychological level that if they become competitive or feel left out, it may make it difficult to do the project successfully.

All training sessions are followed by optional individual coaching opportunities for participants.

To prevent problems at the psychological level, I have included and shared a three-cornered contract in the professional contract section, which I presented to the participants in the first session (Figure 2).

### Administrative level

- Number of training days: 5 days, including 2-3 weeks break among them;
- Time frames - 9:00 - 16:30, lunch break from 12:00 to 13:00 each day;
- Location – the offices of the directorates;
- Flipchart board and paper, moderation card, markers - tools are in trainer's bag, our colleague can order others if required, we carry flipchart to the trainings;
- Lunch will be funded by the company for the training, arranged by the assistants of the business directorates;
- Attendance - Adult learning data request is done by the central team in HQ;

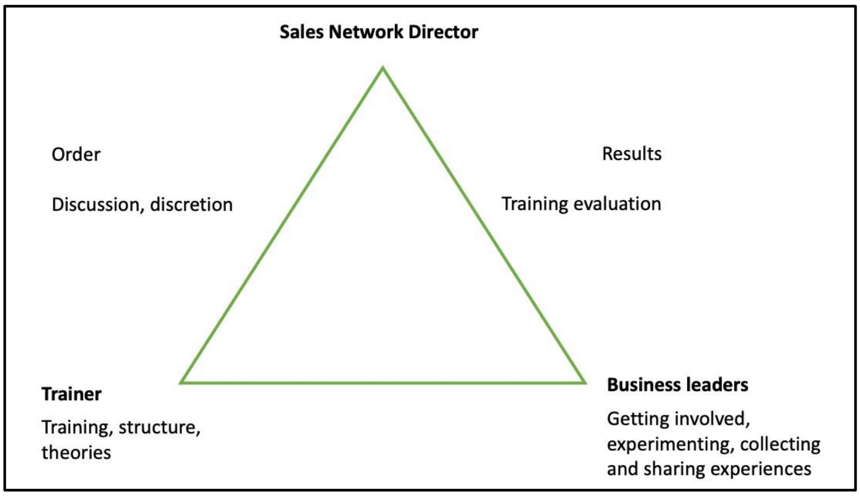


*Figure 2: Our Contract for Development*

- Required attendance of participation 85%;
- Training evaluation form in digital form at the end of the day, per training, prepared by me and delivered to the Sales Network Development Manager;
- Contact with participants (uploading of preliminary, intermediate and follow-up material): I do it by e-mail;
- Approximately 11 participants in the first round, then all managers in the country will be involved later;
- It is possible for the trainer to travel to the training location the evening before the training and the cost of this is financed by the company and it is organised by the trainer himself;

All of the above has been shared and agreed with the Sales Network Development Manager (my immediate boss at that time I was working there). I considered it important that this person should be made aware of the risks (psychological contract level) that we will maybe face during our project, as it is in our mutual interest to be aware of and to address them. In an organisational context, I think it is particularly important to help my manager to be aware of the potential threats that I can identify as a TA student, so that they can focus their awareness, and in this way I support my manager’s development and growth as well.

We also agreed on the administrative and professional part of the contract with the Sales Network Director and Deputy CEO. It was an interesting phenomenon that during the conclusion of the contract, the latter two did not want to have too much say in the content (as I had expected and therefore included in the psychological contract). I realised afterwards that perhaps the professionals themselves (who had previously had this project) had blamed too much involvement by not having the necessary competence themselves (which is probably why they hired me to fill the missing competence).

## What happened before the 3rd session

On the first training session, we contracted with the group. They then learned about the leadership role and understood what elements of leadership matter in today's modern organisations and what they need to be able to do to remain competitive. They recognised the risks of not paying attention to the role. Most of them had learned that as leaders you need to be aware of psychology to some extent in order to better manage your people. Another useful lesson for them was that they need to invest in all 'relationships' in order to get results from their team members and that not all performance problems can be solved by strongly indicating that more and more performance is needed. Many people started new things in their teams by the end of this training, which was noticeable from the fact that at the beginning of the second session, more than an hour was spent sharing experiences from the time between the two trainings.

In the second session, they learned about working styles, ego states and communication channels. They identified their own strengths and weaknesses. They were able to identify themselves and their colleagues and figure out some options about what to with them to have better relationships. They experimented with it and by the third time they were telling me about more ‘clues’ they had discovered about their colleagues.

I now present part of the third session of the training, which focused on supporting and developing colleagues and was implemented using a transactional analysis model.

## Contract for the 3rd session

As the different topics I work with in leadership development can provoke different difficulties, and as I work with groups in the above-mentioned process, I also have new insights into what dangers might be present at a psychological level, I revisit this contract between each training session. I did so before the 3rd training module, where I came to the following conclusions.

### Psychological level

I anticipated that someone might be at the same stage of development as me at the time when the project happened, which could trigger a parallel process, so I thought it important to include this in the psychological contract. I sensed that I was in a recycling phase myself, as I had changed jobs, which was a really big change in my life. Even mathematically it comes down to what Levin said, every 13 years or so a recycling starts. This means that even if a parallel process occurs, I will be able to be very empathic with the person, because I am at that stage myself, but I have to be careful that it does not stop me from helping them, because what is happening to them is not exactly the same as what I am going through.

Alongside this big cycle, I had also started a small cycle of settling into my new job. Here I was currently in the identity formation phase as I found myself searching for my role in the organisation. This was helped by my experience of always being able to develop my identity and clarify my roles. My parents have typically responded to this with support, love, patience and acceptance. So I could easily draw on this experience at this stage of my life.

I know for myself that my biggest gap is in the thinking stage, perhaps because my mother's overprotective attitude ignored encouraging me to form my own thoughts and opinions and instead told me what to think. This caused problems later in my life and now, learning TA and in supervision, I get the support to help me form and believe my own thoughts.

### Professional level

I did not change the professional contract much; I used the three cornered contract as the first time (Figure 2). The only thing I added was the content of this particular training. I found Pam Levin's (1982) model, cycles of development very useful for the topic of developing and supporting colleagues. Based on Levin's clinical experience, the model describes what a child goes through in his or her development, what developmental tasks they have to do and what needs they have to meet to do so. We also learn from Levin that the cycle plays out over and over again throughout our lives and that areas where there have been deficiencies cause difficulties later in life.

I have chosen this model to help managers identify as many options as possible to support and develop colleagues and to be able to choose their behaviour based on what their colleagues need at that stage. So, at a professional level, this is what I have included in the professional contract.

In terms of approaches, I have basically chosen Classical TA, so I teach the clients models that describe complex human behaviours and internal processes and then let the clients analyse themselves. I do this so that the client can generate increased Adult options (Widdowson, 2010). I have combined this approach with the Developmental TA approach (Hay, 2016), where the focus is not on healing past hurts but on people's development and focuses more on the present and the future, which has proved more useful to me in working in organisations, as through this we help clients to help themselves to develop rather than 'heal'. This is also important because in an organisation we are most often working with healthy people who can usually cope with their tasks, so they are not pathological enough to need to be cured by a psychotherapist or in a psychiatric hospital.

### Administrative level

The administrative level of the contract was not changed.

## Events during the 3rd session

In the morning, I invited participants to choose a picture (I printed these out) that best expresses how they are feeling now. This was a transactional stimulus

from my Nurturing Parent ego state, which appealed to their Natural Child ego state. They responded well to this. Some said they felt bad (Natural Child). I responded to this with Nurturing Parent by expressing "I understand, with that said I am glad you are here". There was also an expression that was clearly from Natural Child, but it was directed at my Natural Child (he chose a funny picture, spiced with humorous thoughts and there was no particular point to what he was saying, just fun), so I responded with Natural Child ego state instead (laughed).

In addition to this, I asked them to share their experiences from the previous session. I projected this instruction to them as a PowerPoint. The need to project the instruction as well as verbally was necessary because working with the same group before I realised the pattern was that they were easily distracted a lot. When I analysed why it is happening, I realised there are several participants in the group whose working style (Hay, 2009) is Try Hard and they tend to digress and quickly take the conversation to a different focus than what it was originally. On the one hand, this is a very likeable way of working, but on the other hand, I found myself at times getting too attached to the Natural Child way of working which is very typical of Try Hards and losing focus myself. Weighing my options, I decided to go with a different one this time and structure the group better with my Structuring Parent mode (I would select the instruction differently from before and if someone did not answer a question, I would redirect their attention back). I found that this was a useful choice as the kick-off round went more smoothly and more useful content and experiences related to the training topic were shared. I needed to use this later on, for example for group formation. I appreciated that it proved to be a useful intervention on my part and I noted to keep it for the future.

Then, in Structuring Parent ego state, I asked them to think about who in their lives had been a supportive role model and write it down on a post-it. I gave them a permission to do the task, but this can only go with protection (Crossmann, 1966), so I told them to choose someone they would like to talk about later, but they could also give them a nickname so they would not be identifiable if they wanted. The potency (Steiner, 1968) was manifested in the form of my confidence in their ability to deliver this and their ability to think. Their Adapted Child ego state responded when they performed the task.

I then asked them to think about the five qualities that made them choose this individual and to write this down on a post it and share it with each other by putting it on the flipchart. In this I addressed their Functional Adult ego state as I asked them to analyse and draw logical conclusions as to why they chose this individual.

This was done by all participants without exception, confirming my experience with this group on previous occasions that participants are able to function flexibly in different communication channels (FF-FF, SP-AC, NP-NC, NC-NC). There were no problems with this in the group.

I intended this as a sensitising exercise, drawing attention to how much they themselves had gained by having someone who supported them in the right way and also drawing attention to the fact that they themselves could be good role models for their colleagues. I told them that we would now work on how they could do this consciously - I addressed their Functional Adult ego state as I talked to them about the logic of why we were doing this exercise.

I then showed them Pam Levin's cycles of development model. I did this using creative tools (string, ribbons) and while I was doing it, I told them about children's development and what developmental tasks they have at a given stage (blue moderation card) and what they needed to do well to complete them (green moderation card) (Figure 3). In addition to this, I also shared with the participants the difficulties of not getting the support they need at a given stage and the difficulties this can cause in adulthood.

Then, on a slide (Figure 4), I showed them the cycles in the loops and gave an example. This helped them to understand why it is sometimes stressful when otherwise positive changes happen to us (e.g. marriage, birth of a child, buying a new house).

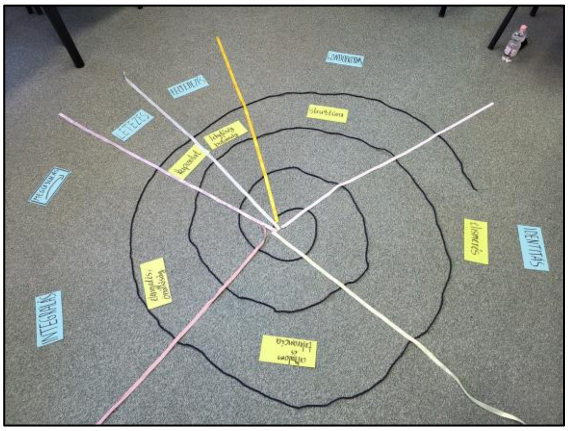

*Figure 3: Illustration of the Cycle*

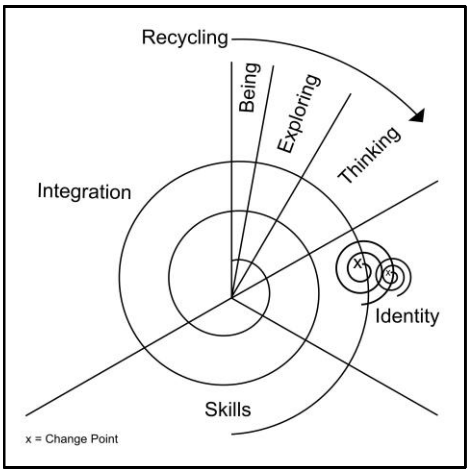


*Figure 4: Spirals within Spirals (Hay, 2009, p.206)*

I then asked them what questions they had. One of the participants, asked me about how old are we in the identity stage and I said about 3-6 years old.

I then asked the participants where they thought they were in the cycle and what insights they had (Functional Adult to their Functional Adult) We went around the circle and everyone shared their thoughts logically.

*Tom*: he is about 60 years old and has realised how many times he has gone through the cycles. He said "I've been through a good few of them". He said that as a leader you need to be constantly renewed, and he has experienced this in his career.

*Adam*: he recognised why it was difficult for him when his 3 young children were born, he no longer feels guilty for not having experienced joy at that time. His wife is starting a new job in January, Adam realises what they will be going through. So, on the one hand, he has become more aware and able to analyse what s happening using the cycles of development, and on the other hand, he will be able to change his behaviour accordingly, so that he can be as close as possible to his partner in this change.

*James:* he recognised what he was going through now that he had joined the organisation 3 months ago. He identified that this is his small circle in the big circle. He recognised that he is in the renewal stage in the big circle (that's why he changed jobs) and in the discovery stage in the small circle, as he is discovering things about the company. The change I have seen in him is that instead of frustration, he has become more understanding of himself, as he now understands what he is going through. Although we did not go into it in the training, it would bring him important insights on an individual level if he would consider what causes him to experience frustration when he has to discover new things. I think it is possible that some of his needs were not met in this regard in his childhood. I will monitor this in the future and, if necessary, I will be the one to give him what he was lacking before (perhaps not enough support, freedom and protection to explore).

*Logan*: he joined James because he is also fresh in the organisation. He had similar insights as James. He had an "aha!" experience when he saw the model and realised what stage he was at.

*Noah*: very logical in his thinking, Be Perfect in his working style. He was interested in the numbers.

*Monica:* asked whether the fact that a new IT system is coming into the company, that has not been used before, mean that you are starting to recycle? I replied that it's more like being somewhere in the big circle in your life and within that phase you start a small circle - it becomes a small circle of IT system, but it goes through much faster than the big circle. She recognised how interesting it is that we go through the same thing every time we change. She said that this now made her very thoughtful and touched her. She did not say more and it was probably a private issue. It was very touching to see and hear her talk about this realisation.

*Mia*: she realised how many times her identity has changed in the 20 years she has been working here; for example when she first started working here, then when she went from being a staff member to a leader. Now she feels she is in a recycling phase. She has recognised that this leadership development training series can provide her useful support to do it. She told me how this was an important realisation for her. At that point I understood why she just "was" in the previous trainings with us and realising this, I encouraged her to explore new things, I gave her a positive conditional stroke (Steiner, 1971) when I told "That is so good you realised it, so now you can do some exploring, it's fantastic!" I gave her this because I felt that she was really at the stage she recognised and she needed more opportunity to explore and I wanted to encourage her to do so. So I gave her a permission, and of course protection at the same time as I told her that in this leadership development process we meet again and again, so she will always have somewhere to bring her new experiences, she will not be alone, even if it is difficult. To make her aware of this, I referred to the model and told her that if she was thinking about it, the opportunity was there because the company had created this programme, and also she could bring back her questions, her stumbling blocks, her experiences, so she could experiment safely like when we are children - if we have something to talk about it is good if we can always go back to parents to talk about it.

*Evelyn:* was already thinking further about the model when it came to her and she started thinking about how she could use this to develop her staff and what stage they could be at. I redirected the question back to where she perceives herself to be (my Structuring Parent) and complimented her on her great thinking (my Nurturing Parent) and how we will work with that further.

I then gave them an example of how this model can be used in management to analyse colleagues. As integrating and retaining new colleagues is the biggest challenge in the organisation and our professional contract is about showing managers opportunities that support them in this, I used this as the basis for my example: the arrival of a new entrant. Together, we went through what happens to a new entry colleague and how they can be supported by leaders at that stage.

I then invited the participants to work in pairs for 20 minutes, where they could reflect on how they themselves could use their new knowledge to develop their colleagues.

I gave them the instructions below, to support them to make their own decisions about how they would like to use their new knowledge and to help them make decisions about their behaviour with their colleagues.

As there had been no signs of danger so far in the training, I had confidence in the participants, and knew they would be able to do this as they were all in the here and now, Internal Adult, at this stage of the training.

Small group work briefing:

- Choose 1 team member from your team.
- Where do you think he/she is now in the development cycle? Where is he/she in the big circle? Is there a small circle, and if so, where is he/she in it?
- How can you help your team member move to the next stage of the cycle? Help each other with ideas! - This will be one of your homework assignments!
- Write down the questions that arise and bring them back to the big circle.

After the small group work, there was one person who said that she now understood why one of her colleagues had left after 13 years and started something completely different, and that she feels she can be more understanding with him now. Here I reflected that yes, it is probably about his recycling, but I also pointed out the many ways in which you can renew yourself, even within a workplace, because they have done it, especially those who have been here for more than 20 years.

The question was raised of how best to support their group members when they do not know what stage of life they are at? I replied that, of course, as leaders they have less information about this and therefore often find it harder to influence. However, when they talk to their colleagues many of these issues come to the surface and they know the ages so they can calculate as well as guess. But I also said that they could easily see how a change in the company could trigger a small cycle and how they could provide useful support to their colleagues.

The dilemma also arose of what to do if, at a particular stage, their colleague had suffered a gap in their growing up. I told them that if they perceive this, it means that they can be very empathic with the person and understand what their problem is, so they will be able to develop and help them effectively. I gave an example of when I was not very confident in representing and sharing my own thoughts because my mother was overprotective and never encouraged me to formulate my own thoughts and develop them and this caused difficulties later in my life. That applied until a professional came along who constantly challenged me and refused to keep telling me what to do and how to do it, but encouraged me to formulate my own thoughts on the subject. This was very unpleasant at the time, but I know now that in this way that professional made up for a shortcoming I did not recognise at the time.

In this group there were staff from two directorates. Both directorates had new directors in the past year.

Some members of the group reflected on who experienced what during the change. They used the model well for this and I perceived that they used their Functional Adult ego state to analyse logically what happened to them and was still happening.

The change in most participants' behaviour was that instead of lack of understanding, they turned to their colleagues with greater understanding and curiosity, as they already had a model for this. Once they understand what is happening to their colleagues, they can consciously choose their leadership behaviour to best support them. Just as we discussed several options with the leaders in the training itself, they will be able to choose their behaviour based on these options in their everyday life, thus creating more autonomy for themselves.

There were managers who, in the light of this knowledge, made themselves aware of what they would need to do to help their team when they moved office to make this change go smoothly.

One explained that initially he needed to let the team just exist, just "be" with the idea of newness, and then, when they started to explore the newness of it, he needed to both facilitate it and let them do so freely. But you also need to provide security during this time, so you invite anyone who is finding it harder to experience change to a one-to-one meeting to help them move on to the next stage: reflection, so that they can then make the new place, the new office part of their identity and use the skills they have already acquired here.

Another manager discussed how he would support his staff to discover the system, to think about it, to make it part of their identity, to acquire the skills to use it and then integrate it into their operations, in the context of the introduction of a new IT system.

Although we did not listen to everyone, I did ask and the group gave feedback that everyone could formulate one-to-one action for themselves, what they planned to do with their colleague and I know they can use their own resources, so I did not ask them individually what they chose to do.

## Evaluation

My assumption is that the training was effective in terms of giving the managers the opportunity to have a framework for thinking, and on the other hand, this framework supported them to explore more options for possible behaviours, thus becoming more autonomous. Classical TA approach combined with Developmental TA proved to be practical and useful with this group. This required the participants and my internal Adult ego state to be available so this meant during the training most of the time we were in the here and now.

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