PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This book is a practical guide to the use of transactional analysis (TA) in counselling and psychotherapy.

I have written primarily for the counsellor or counsellor-in-training whose background has been in a counselling method other than TA, and who is now interested in adding TA resources to her or his counselling skills. I hope the book will also be useful to counsellors and psychotherapists who are already practising or training professionally in TA.

What the Book Covers

This book is similar in its coverage to the other volumes in the Counselling in Action series:

- It focuses on practical application. Theory is covered only in so far as is essential for the understanding of practice, and then only in basic outline.
- The sequence of chapters reflects successive stages in the typical process of counselling with TA.
- The book deals with one-to-one counselling, not groupwork.
- It describes applications for use with people who are well-functioning in clinical terms, rather than those who might require psychiatric help.

This book is not intended to be a general introduction to TA. Present-day TA offers a multitude of explanatory models and at least three major schools of practice (Barnes, 1977). Rather than trying to cram a mass of detail into this practical guidebook, I have selected the areas of current TA that I believe have most to offer the practising counsellor. These I have covered in enough depth to do them justice.

TA began with Eric Berne, and his ideas still form the core of TA theory. Yet in the two decades since Berne’s death, transactional analysts have continued to innovate. Much – probably most – of what TA practitioners...
do today depends on new theory and practice developed after Berne. You will find this new material emphasized in the content of this book.

There are two other aims that I have kept in mind in choosing topics:

- I have concentrated on theory and techniques that will be useful to you even if TA is not your main counselling approach.
- I have emphasized practical areas of TA that have not been easily accessible until now outside the specialist TA literature.

Indeed, the whole book is constructed around two linked concepts that are central to current practice in TA: treatment direction and treatment sequence. I believe these ideas have much to offer any practising counsellor. Yet, to my knowledge, this book marks the first systematic description of them other than in specialized workshop presentations.

This book is intended to be a resource for TA training, not a substitute for it. If you are interested in becoming professionally accredited in TA, you can obtain details of the necessary training and examination process from the various national and international TA organizations.

‘Counselling’ or ‘Psychotherapy’?

Like anyone writing in this area, I have had to consider the problem of distinguishing between ‘counselling’ and ‘psychotherapy’. It seems to me that while there may be sensible arguments for making a distinction between the two, any dividing line between them must in the end be drawn arbitrarily. And of the various arbitrary divisions that have been suggested, how was I to judge which to use?

My response in this book has been to draw no dividing line. The only restriction I have imposed on the book’s coverage is to exclude applications designed for use with the more seriously troubled or with specialized client-groups. With that proviso, everything I say in this book applies to all professional relationships that have personal change as their aim, whether that work be labelled ‘counselling’ or ‘psychotherapy’.

How the Book is Laid Out

In Part I, Chapter 1 presents some distinctive features of TA practice. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the counselling process in TA, from intake to
termination. This also serves as a ‘thumbnail sketch’ of the structure of the remaining chapters, arranged as they are to reflect the sequence of steps in TA treatment. In Chapter 3 I outline the theory by which TA explains the origins and structure of personal problems. Chapter 4 explains the model of personality that is a foundation of TA theory and practice.

Part II moves on to a step-by-step description of the treatment process. Chapter 5 outlines typical TA procedure at intake. Chapter 6 describes how you can compile information about your client that you can use as the basis for a systematic treatment plan. In Chapter 7 I explain the procedure which transactional analysts have developed for monitoring and forestalling suicide risk.

Chapter 8 shows how you and your client can negotiate a clear contract for change. In Chapters 9 and 10 I describe detailed interventions by which you can help your client achieve that change. Lastly, Chapter 11 discusses criteria for termination.

In describing each aspect of TA practice, I have followed a standard (though flexible) sequence. Its steps are as follows:

- A basic outline of the theory underlying this area of practice. I usually present theory in the form of a ‘Key Ideas’ panel. This lists the central points of the relevant theory. They are phrased as brief statements. I make no attempt to expand the reasoning of the theory or to examine the detailed evidence on which it is based. (If you do wish to go more deeply into these questions, you can pursue the TA literature via the References list at the end of the book.)
- A discussion of the practical actions that follow from the theory. What is your rationale for making this assessment or this intervention? What are your purposes in doing so?
- A description of a specific technique or techniques.
- A case example to illustrate technique.
- A ‘Self-supervision’ sequence. This is a suggested checklist of questions that you can use, if you wish, in appraising your own work with clients. Each self-supervision is intended to help you sharpen your TA skills in the area of practice concerned.

You may wish to choose one client with whom you will follow through the successive steps in the process of counselling with TA. You can then apply the self-supervision exercises in sequence to your work with that client. If you choose not to do this, simply read ‘a client’ wherever I have written ‘your chosen client’ in the self-supervision panels.
Cases and Names

An extended case history runs through the book to illustrate practice and theory. The case of ‘John’ is based on that of a real client. However, I have disguised his story at some points. To do this I have inserted case material from work with other clients whose journeys were similar to John’s. If I had given exact detail of John’s case, there would have been a risk that he might be identified, even under a fictitious name.

At some points I have used examples from the work of other clients, collated in the same way as I have described for John.

In all the case examples, the names I use are fictitious. If they have any likeness to the real name of any person, this is purely by coincidence.

Pronouns and Genders

I use a simple system of pronouns throughout the book. You, the counsellor, are ‘you’. I, Ian Stewart, am ‘I’. Your client is either ‘she’ or ‘he’. I vary your client’s gender at random.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

I have drawn material for this book from the writing and teaching of hundreds of TA professionals. Whenever I knew whose work I was quoting, I have named her or him in the References list. There will be others whose ideas I have used without knowing their names. To all these contributors, named or anonymous, I am grateful.

There are a few people in particular whose work I draw upon time and time again throughout the book. They are master practitioners and teachers of TA. I have benefited from their writing, learned from them in workshops and supervision, and changed as their client in therapy. They are: Fanita English; Richard Erskine; Mary Goulding; Robert Goulding; Ken Mellor; Shea Schiff; Marilyn Zalcman. My thanks to them all.

Petruška Clarkson was ‘expert reader’ for the book. In her comments on successive drafts, she gave me the benefit of her vast experience in TA and other fields of psychology and psychotherapy.

Dennis Bury commented on the manuscript from the viewpoint of an experienced counsellor using an approach other than TA. He helped me
be aware of the importance of *apologia*: the need to write in ways that would be meaningful to people who viewed TA ‘from the outside’.

Windy Dryden, series editor, is a master of motivation. Wielding both carrot and stick, Windy propelled me through one revision of the manuscript after another. He vetted every word of every re-write, always sensitive to the needs of the reader. This book is immeasurably better for his work.

I am grateful to the following authors for their permission to use copyright material originally published in the *Transactional Analysis Journal*, issues as shown:

- My thanks to Marilyn Zalcman also for her permission to use copyright material she presented in a workshop on ‘Racket Analysis and the Racket System’ at the EATA Conference, Noordwijkerhout, Holland, 1986. (This includes the use of the term *scripty fantasies*, and of the words *rage*, *terror*, *despair* and *ecstasy* to describe script feelings.)

I believe that a book can be a two-way communication, not simply a one-way vehicle. In writing this book I have had the pleasure of conveying ideas to you. I hope that as you read, you will convey your ideas back to me. If you have criticisms, compliments or comments, please send them to me via Sage Publications. Happy reading.

Ian Stewart
Nottingham, February 1989
In the Preface to the first edition of this book, I said that ‘in the two decades since Berne’s death, transactional analysts have continued to innovate’. Now the ‘two decades’ have become three, and transactional analysts are still innovating. The TA literature continues to expand, mirroring the expansion in the use of TA as a method of counselling and psychotherapy.

Yet during the past ten years, innovation in TA has seen a distinctive change in direction. The ‘cutting edge’ of new thought has moved on to more advanced and specialized areas of TA theory and practice, leaving the core concepts and basic techniques of TA essentially untouched. Perhaps this shift in emphasis is fitting for a mature discipline that has a documented history now going back more than forty years (Stewart, 1996b). TA theorists in the past decade have concentrated largely on comparative and cross-disciplinary issues (particularly, the relationships between TA theory and that of psychodynamic and object-relations approaches). Innovations in TA practice over the past ten years have focused on work with specific client-groups – notably on clients with borderline and narcissistic disorders, as well as on work with children and adult survivors of abuse. Both theory and practice have been codified, and TA now has its own Dictionary (Tilney, 1998).

My task of revision for this second edition, therefore, has been pleasantly easy. All the features of theory and practice covered in this book, drawn as they are from the well-established ‘central core’ of TA, remain as immediate and valid as they were ten years ago. The structure and content of the book thus stay essentially unchanged in this new edition.

Changes from the First Edition

The revisions in this second edition consist mainly of changes in wording, designed to clarify explanation or change emphasis. I thank the readers and reviewers of the first edition who suggested many of these revisions.
In particular, I have expanded the description of ‘closing escape hatches’ (Chapter 7) to emphasize that this procedure is always to be regarded as a crucial step in counselling, never as something to do ‘as routine’ or ‘by rote’. In Chapter 4’s account of ego-state theory, I have standardized the wording to bring out the point that each person has three classes of ego-state (Parent, Adult and Child) and not ‘three ego-states’. I have re-worded the discussion of contract-making (Chapter 8) to fit the important realization that a contract can be observable without necessarily being ‘behavioural’. There are other clarifications of wording throughout the book. I have, of course, updated the literature references.

How This Book Relates to Developing TA Counselling

My book Developing Transactional Analysis Counselling (Stewart, 1996a) offers thirty practical suggestions on how to enhance your effectiveness in TA counselling. In choosing the thirty suggestions, I followed the principle that I would not duplicate any of the material in the present book. Instead, Developing TA Counselling is designed to complement this book; in a sense, it ‘starts where this book leaves off’. The present book lays down a solid groundwork for TA counselling, while Developing TA Counselling is more to do with fine-tuning and expanding your TA skills. At the same time, either book can be read on its own without loss of usefulness.

Where particular suggestions (called ‘Points’) in Developing TA Counselling are immediately relevant to topics covered in this book, you will find references to these Points in the boxes headed ‘Further Reading in Developing TA Counselling’ which I have added at the ends of the chapters concerned.

Once again, I wish you happy reading, and I hope this book will continue to be useful to you in the ten years to come.

Ian Stewart
Nottingham, May 1999
Seven years – rather than my predicted ten – have flown past, and here we are with the third edition of this book. Once again, just as in the ten years leading up to the second edition, transactional analysts have continued to innovate and expand the boundaries of the discipline. Yet once again also, the well-established core theory and techniques of TA, described here, have stayed virtually unchanged.

The structure and coverage of this book therefore remain essentially the same as in the two earlier editions. At the same time, this new edition contains some major revisions and additions.

Changes from the Second Edition

The most substantial changes are in the chapters in Part II that deal with the process of treatment, including contract-making. Already in the second edition, I had re-written Chapter 7, ‘Blocking Tragic Outcomes’, to underline the fact that the therapeutic process of ‘closing escape hatches’ should never be regarded as an operation that can simply be carried out ‘as routine’. Yet, even in the months in which I have been preparing this third edition, I have encountered the ‘urban myth’ which still seems to be circulating among some TA trainees: the myth of ‘rote escape-hatch closure’. In this edition, I have therefore re-written Chapter 7 yet again, using every device of language and typography I can think of, to specify the reality: there is no such thing as ‘rote escape-hatch closure’, because if the process is carried out by rote, then the client will almost certainly not close the escape hatches. I have also suggested some answers to the good question: ‘If you don’t invite hatch closure at the very beginning of counselling, then when do you invite it?’

In Chapter 8, on contract-making, I have also amplified some amendments that were first introduced in the second edition, to clarify
the distinction between the terms ‘behavioural’ and ‘observable’ as applied to contracts in TA. I have rewritten the relevant section to make the distinction still clearer and explain more specifically why it is important. I have also added a new subsection to the list of features of an effective contract, namely that the contract goal should be set in a clear context.

I have re-written the section on ‘Impasses’ in Chapter 10, ‘Making New Decisions’, so that the description now consistently follows the theoretical model most often used by transactional analysts today, that of Ken Mellor (1980a), and have added some practical guidelines on distinguishing the three types of impasse one from another.

As well as these revisions, I have made changes in detail in every chapter, to clarify various points of explanation, add hints on practical application, and provide extra cross-referencing. Literature references have, of course, been updated.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

Mark Widdowson was invited by Sage to be the ‘critical reviewer’ for this third edition. Mark took a fine-tooth comb through the text of the second edition, and presented me with a detailed and perceptive list of suggested revisions. His suggestions, plus the thoughts and reflections they sparked off in my own mind, are the source of all the major changes that I have just outlined (and most of the minor changes, too). I thank Mark most heartily for his work. My thanks also go to the readers who have contacted me with suggestions for revision, and to my trainees, supervisees and clients, from whom I continue to learn.

New Thinking in TA Since 2000

While the area of innovation in TA in the 1990s was principally concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of specific client groups, the first decade of the twenty-first century has so far seen a shift in emphasis toward new thinking on the philosophy and meta-theory of transactional analysis. Much of this new literature has centred around what has come to be called the ‘relational approach’ to TA. This school of thought is a broad church, subsuming elements of constructivism (Allen and Allen, 1997), co-creative
TA (Summers and Tudor, 2000) and integrative psychotherapy (Moursund and Erskine, 2004). It emphasizes a rapprochement between TA and psychoanalysis (for example, Novellino, 2005).

If I may attempt to summarize the relational approach in a few sentences: it calls for an increased focus on unconscious processes, and on the manifestation of these processes in the transference and countertransference exchanges between therapist and client. In terms of the practice of TA, the relational approach sees the process of change as materializing from moment to moment in the therapist–client relationship, rather than as being a planned movement toward an agreed contractual goal. If you are interested in exploring the relational approach in detail, I would recommend the symposium volume From Transactions to Relations (Cornell and Hargaden, 2005) as a good starting point from which you can trace the literature on the subject.

Cornell and Hargaden (2005: 5) suggest that the relational approach constitutes a ‘paradigm shift’ that will redefine the discipline of TA. In my view, this claim probably overstates the case. I think it is more likely that when the dust settles, the relational approach will take its place as one of many useful perspectives on TA theory and practice, its main contribution being to remind us that the client–therapist relationship – conscious and unconscious – must always be considered alongside treatment planning and technique. Time will tell. It seems to me in any case that this area of innovation in TA, like the new thinking of the 1990s, still lies on the outer frontiers of the discipline. The books and articles so far published by the members of the relational school are aimed at advanced practitioners and theorists; I find it difficult to see them as practical ‘how to’ guides for immediate application by working counsellors, therapists or trainees. Nor do the ideas of the relational theorists detract from or contradict any of the well-established theory and practice described in the present book.

‘Counselling’ vs. ‘Psychotherapy’

In the Preface to the first edition, I said that I regarded the distinction between ‘counselling’ and ‘psychotherapy’ as arbitrary, and that my response in this book was to make no distinction. I want to re-state that position here. Everything I say about in this book about counselling can equally well be applied to psychotherapy.
I know that in some other European countries it is politically and legally important for colleagues to maintain a sharp distinction between the activities labelled ‘counselling’ and ‘psychotherapy’. Luckily, in the UK we do not have to do this. On the contrary, since this book’s second edition appeared, there has been a continuing movement to run the two labels together. Some ‘straws in the wind’: the former British Association for Counselling is now the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. (And even before their name change, the BAC defined counselling as including psychotherapy – eminently sensibly, in my view). Sage’s volume on contract-making, previously called Contracts in Counselling, has been re-badged for its second edition as Contracts in Counselling and Psychotherapy (Sills, 2006). Perhaps by the time the fourth edition of the present book appears, the entire series of In Action titles will have been re-named Counselling and Psychotherapy in Action. I hope so.

I should have liked to use the words ‘counselling’ and ‘psychotherapy’ interchangeably throughout the book, but did not get round to asking Windy Dryden about this in time for the print deadline. Therefore, I ask you to imagine I have done so. As it is, I have taken the liberty of retrospectively changing the first sentence in the Preface to the 1989 edition to say: ‘This book is a practical guide to the use of transactional analysis in counselling and psychotherapy.’ That was the book’s purpose seventeen years ago, and it still is. I hope you continue to find it useful in this new, revised edition.

Ian Stewart
Nottingham, January 2006