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## How to Maintain Self-Esteem and Inner Balance in Discounting Transactions

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### Abstract

Discounting is a process that accompanies the life of every person. And, although this is one of the ways to distort reality, it is necessary for maintaining the stability of the world perception. Discounting can refer to events, phenomena, tasks, objects, as well as people. It manifests itself in an internal dialogue. However, sometimes transactions are used in communication, in which internal discounting is transferred to the outside world and to other people (I call them “discounting transactions”). This often looks like non-constructive criticism. In many cases, people experience unpleasant feelings when they are discounted. The degree of unpleasant feelings and the possibility of restoring inner comfort depend on the Script. The author examines this process using the concepts of Transactional Analysis and offers a specific express methodology for working with internal dialogue. As a result of the application of the technique, the internal state of a person changes, self-esteem is restored and the possibility of Adult reaction to the Critic’s stimulus appears.

**Keywords:** transaction, discounting, script.

### Theoretical provisions

The theory is based on E. Berne’s concepts of Functional ego states and Life Positions, K. Steiner’s elaboration of the Critical Parent (CP), P. Clarkson’s supportive Nurturing Parent (NP), propositions of R. and M. Gouldings about the use of external elements of behavior to describe internal dialogue, Schiff’s ideas

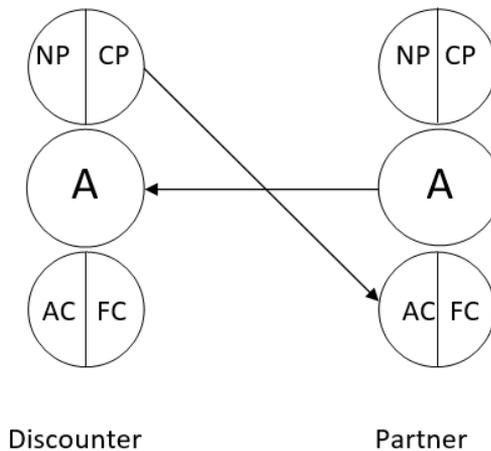
about Discounting, and E. Stuntz's many-chair method (Berne 1972, Steiner 2004, Clarkson 1992, Gouldings 1997, Schiffs 1971). E. Berne defined ego states as "consistent systems of ideas and feelings associated with the corresponding models of behavior" (Berne, 1966). To describe behavior, E. Berne used a separate model, which he called the Functional Model of ego states (Berne, 1972). Here he outlined that a person can manifest as a Controlling Parent (structuring, regulating, punishing), Nurturing Parent (supportive, soothing, caring), Adapted Child (obeying or rebelling in response to the actions of the Parent), and Free Child (manifesting natural behavior, creative, impulsive). E. Berne and K. Steiner emphasized that a dialogue between ego states takes place inside a person. In particular, if in childhood the parent was often a dominant, punishing, discounting negative CP (Critical Parent), this behavior is introjected along with other parental characteristics. And, subsequently, the criticizing parental part continues its pressure on the child in the Inner space (Steiner, 2004). At the same time, the inner Child reacts to such an impact adaptively, that is, the way it reacted once in childhood to a real Critic.

The result of such a dialogue may be feelings of depression, helplessness, apathy and others. One of the goals of TA therapy is to bring into awareness the content of ego states and the interactions between them, so that a person can, if desired, change their cognitive and behavioral stereotypes, that is, elements of the Script. A Script is an unconscious plan created in early childhood, mainly under the influence of parents (Berne, 1972). P. Clarkson suggests as one of the methods of psychotherapy the formation of a Nurturing Parent to increase stability, self-esteem and security (Clarkson, 1992). If a person already has such a structure inside, it can be used for self-support and strengthening self-confidence. It is also worth mentioning that Berne spoke of Life Positions, which he defined as "childhood decisions based on a person's attitude to the world as a whole" (Berne, 1972). He believed that a person is born with the position I am OK – You are OK (healthy position). Then, under the influence of others, Parental Figures in particular, this position can be transformed into one of three others: I'm OK – You're not OK, I'm not OK – You're OK, I'm not OK – You're not OK. If a person is in a Healthy position (I am OK, You are OK), they feel comfortable, stable, can control their emotions and behavior, and communicate normally with others. With any other Life Position, self-awareness and communication with the environment are disturbed. A person reacts to external stimuli not quite adequately. One powerful negative external stimulus is a discounting transaction, that is, a transaction in which one person belittles, ignores, or criticizes another. It is known that "Discounting is a distortion of reality within the psyche, with the help of which a person defends their frame of reference" (Schiffs, 1971). However, while protecting the frame of reference, a person can take the internal process outward, that is, belittle and insult another person,

their qualities or behavior, playing their Script. They project images or individual qualities of their parental figures onto people. And the one to whom the discounting transaction is directed may perceive this situation in different ways.

If they are in the I am OK – You are OK position, they may not notice the discounting, or notice, but not attach any importance to it, and remain calm. If they are in a different position, they can perceive the situation very painfully. Let's take a closer look at the internal process. The Discounting Transaction most often proceeds from the Critical part of the Parent ego-state, the Discounter, and is directed to the Adapted part of the partner's Child ego state. Three scenarios are possible. (I will follow the practice of some authors (Steiner, 2004, Gouldings, 1997, Shtunts, 1973) and use elements of external behavior to describe internal processes).

1. If a person is in the I am OK – You are OK position, they can give a crossed transaction, for example, Adult – Adult, and complete the communication. (Fig. 1)



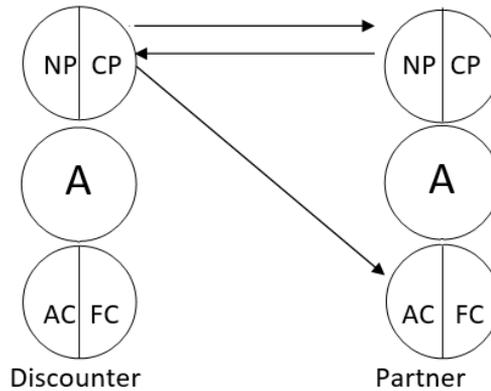
*Fig. 1*

The discounting transaction: crossed transaction  
Own resources.

For example, a husband says to his wife who has bought a new dress: "What a bad taste you have!" If the wife is in the Healthy position, she may respond: "Tastes differ! Let's go for lunch".

2. Another option, when the position is I am OK – You are not OK.

In this case, there may be a conflict, a crossed transaction from the CP, and then the exchange of parallel negative transactions, for example, from Parent to Parent. Answer like: "You don't understand anything in this" (Fig. 2). And then mutual accusations are possible.

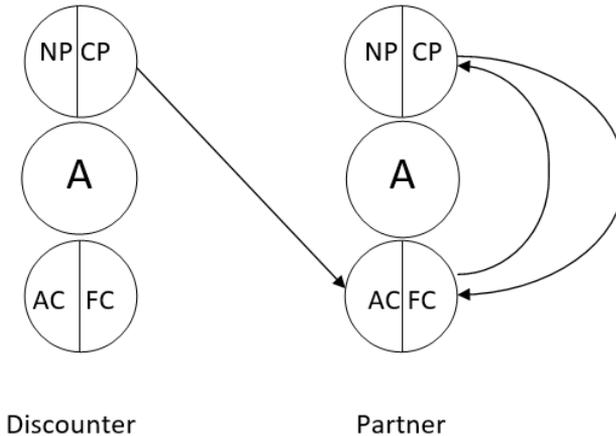


*Fig. 2*

The discounting transaction: I am OK – You are not OK

Source: own resources.

3. If the position is I am not OK – You are OK or I am not OK – You are not OK, the stimulus will most likely launch an internal script process, where own Critic (CP) will continue to persecute the Child (AC) (fig. 3).



*Fig. 3*

The discounting transaction: I am not OK – You are OK or I am not OK – You are not OK

Source: own resources.

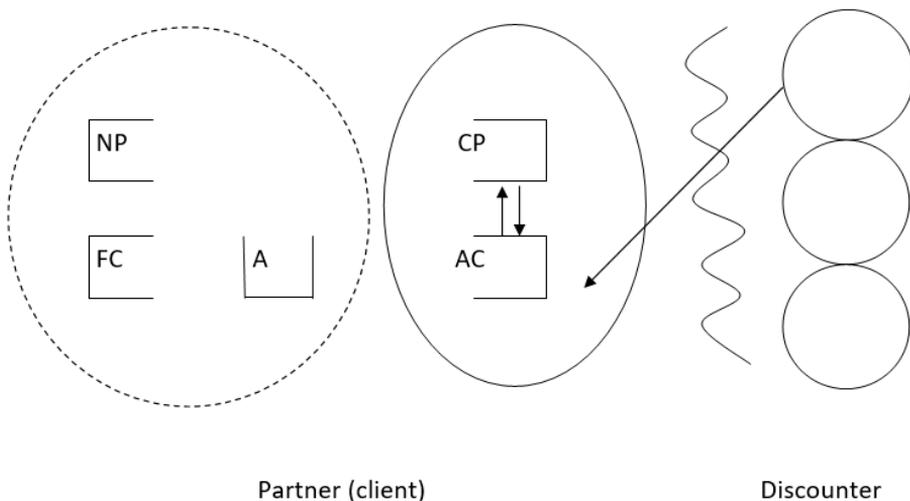
In our example, it can be the following: “Of course, you are nothing, you are miserable,” says CP minus inside (the Critical, negative part of the Parent). The Adapted Child part answers him: “Yes, I am terrible, ugly, and it is better for me not to show myself to anyone.” At the same time, the external Discounter strengthens the influence of the internal Critic. It is difficult for the Adult to

wedge into this process; the Free Child (FC) is also blocked. Therefore, this person can remain upset, offended, humiliated or sad for a long time.

### Express technique for getting out of an uncomfortable state

This is a method by which a person will be able to control their inner process. The method is suitable for counseling and therapy (when the client's Adult ego state is functioning well). It is advisable to first apply it with the help of a transactional analyst, and then one can do it themselves. Further, with frequent repetition, new neural connections are formed, and the person acquires the ability to easily cope with discounting transactions. Restrictions: Not recommended for clients with a highly contaminated or excluded Adult, with severe personality disorders, psychotic processes or organic brain diseases.

The idea is as follows. We can arrange 5 chairs and with their help carry out some resourceful internal work according to the method of E. Stuntz (Stuntz, 1973). Stuntz invites the client to actualize the elements of their internal processes, expressed in behavior, in the appropriate chair. Next, the client conducts a multi-log of CP, AC, NP, FC, and finishes in the chair of Adult. Stuntz used the technique in therapy for Decontamination, Redecision, and Parenting. My modification is an express technique that helps to get an improvement of condition in the current situation here and now. Figure 4 shows the chairs and the first stage of work.



*Fig. 4*

The first stage of work

Source: own resources.

The client first tells their situation. Then the therapist can play the role of a Discounter (in the group it can be one of the participants) and says a toxic phrase. The client plays an internal dialogue on the chairs, changing seats. First, it is a dialogue between CP and AC, and the energy is there. Adult, NP and FC are not involved. To change the situation, it is important to activate these ego states. It is easiest to strengthen a Nurturing Parent who can support the Child. It can be a message like: "You are cool, you have great taste, I love you." This is a transaction to the Free Child part (FC). The client goes to sit in the appropriate chair and monitors their feelings in the FC chair. In practice, the client's state changes, and it immediately becomes evident from bodily manifestations. Energy moves, and the Adult, with the support of NP and FC, can already calmly give an answer to the Discounter (and at the same time to own Critic) (Fig. 5)

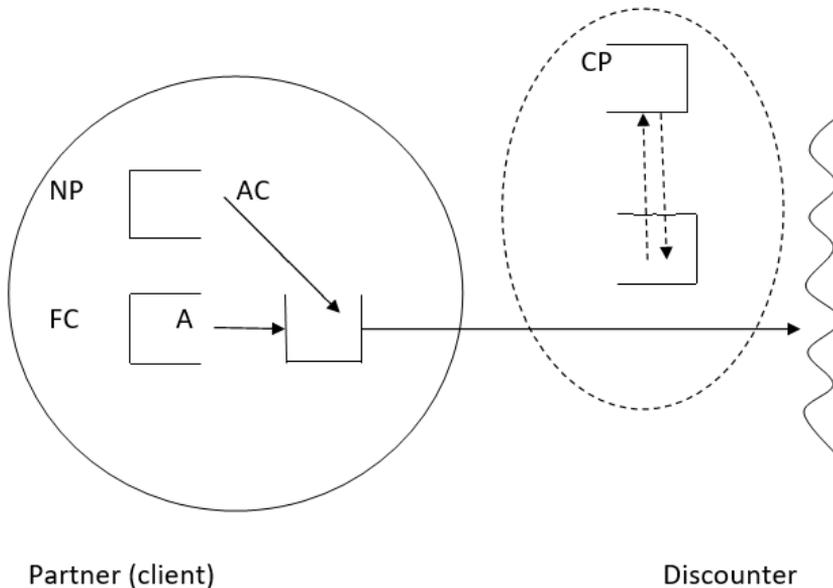


Fig. 5

Answer to the Discounter

Source: own resources.

After this work, a person feels a rise of energy, joy and strength.

## Client cases

To illustrate the effectiveness, I would like to cite a few specific cases of working with clients.

### **1. Case example of client M**

(transcript of transactions)

Discounter: "You can't drive a car".

Further is the client's work on chairs with moving to the appropriate chair and pronouncing an internal dialogue, feelings and bodily sensations.

Client:

AC: stupor, surprise, fear

CP (inside): "You can't do it, you are too old, you can't cope".

NP: "Yes, you can do a lot, look how many achievements you have, you took on difficult tasks and you did it".

FC: joy, energy, relaxation.

A (answer to the Discounter): "Next time I'll come by car".

### **2. Case study of client A**

Discounter: "You are fat".

Chair work - client:

AC: a feeling of an arrow in the back, breath caught

CP: "You are really fat, you are unlovable".

NP: "I love you the way you are, I believe in you, you can be whatever you want".

FC: lightness, faith that this is not the end. Hope. Joy. Calmness and confidence.

A (answer to the Discounter): "I love myself the way I am. And I can change my body whenever I want".

### **3. Case study of client D (she is an artist)**

Discounter: "Your paintings are not interesting to anyone!"

Chair work, client:

AC: fear of criticism, shame, embarrassment.

NP: "You put feelings into paintings, and there will definitely be people who will like them".

FC: "Yes, I love painting; each painting is a story of my life." Joy, inspiration.

A (answer to the Discounter): "I will demonstrate my paintings. Some people will like them, and some will not. But the main thing is that I like them. I will get strokes from those who will be touched by my feelings".

## **Conclusion**

The proposed technique is based on the classic concepts of Transactional Analysis and is highly effective for therapy and counseling, provided that the

client can freely switch to the Adult and be aware of what is happening to them. Regular use of the method allows a person to learn how to manage their states and feelings, change the script, and increase resistance to toxic communications. The use of the proposed method is of particular importance in situations where a person is forced to be in constant contact with the Discounter. For example, if such is the boss, parent or spouse.

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## Jak zachować poczucie własnej wartości i saldo wewnętrzne w transakcjach dyskontowych

### Streszczenie

Dyskontowanie to proces, który towarzyszy życiu każdego człowieka. I choć jest to jeden ze sposobów zniekształcania rzeczywistości, jest niezbędny do utrzymania stabilności postrzegania świata. Dyskontowanie może dotyczyć zdarzeń, zjawisk, zadań, przedmiotów, a także ludzi. Przejawia się w dialogu wewnętrznym. Czasami jednak w komunikacji wykorzystywane są transakcje, w których dyskontowanie wewnętrzne jest przenoszone na świat zewnętrzny i inne osoby (nazywam je „transakcjami dyskontowymi”). Często wygląda to na niekonstruktywną krytykę. W wielu przypadkach ludzie doświadczają nieprzyjemnych uczuć, gdy są dyskontowani. Stopień nieprzyjemnych odczuć i możliwość przywrócenia wewnętrznego komfortu zależą od Skryptu. Autor analizuje ten proces z wykorzystaniem koncepcji analizy transakcyjnej i proponuje specyficzną ekspresową metodologię pracy z dialogiem wewnętrznym. W wyniku zastosowania techniki zmienia się stan wewnętrzny osoby, przywracana jest samoocena i pojawia się możliwość reakcji Dorosłego na bodziec Krytyka.

**Słowa kluczowe:** transakcja, dyskontowanie, skrypt życiowy.