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## Embrace Therapy® – The Use of Inner Child Work in The Context of Transactional Analysis and Spirituality

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### Abstract

Embrace Therapy® (ET®) is a therapeutic approach that integrates elements of psychotherapy with profound spiritual insight. Central to this method is the work with the Inner Child, which aligns with the *Child ego state* in Transactional Analysis (TA). What distinguishes ET®, however, is the incorporation of a *fourth ego state*—the spiritual dimension of the Self, referred to as the “God-state”—which facilitates the transcendence of emotional limitations. This article presents an analysis of empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of ET® and explores its theoretical placement within the broader framework of Transactional Analysis.

**Keywords:** Emotions, Inner Child, Transactional Analysis, Embrace Therapy, Spirituality

### Introduction to the Inner Child

Transactional Analysis (TA) is based on the concept of three ego states — Child, Parent, and Adult — which shape our behaviors, emotions, and ways of relating to the world. As Professor Jarosław Jagieła (2020, p. 330) notes, referring to the work of Tony White, approximately 60% of therapeutic interventions focus on the Child ego state, while only 20% relate to the Parent and 20% to the Adult. This structure has been described by numerous theorists, including Kahler (1974), Clarkson (1988), Bradshaw (2008), Capacchione (1991), Stewart & Joines

(1987), and Jagieła (2015, 2020). The enduring focus on this domain highlights its foundational role in human emotional development and healing. As Jagieła (2020, p. 331) adds, every new scholarly contribution enriches our understanding of deeply embedded childhood experiences that significantly influence adult decisions and behaviors. Embrace Therapy® expands the classical TA model by introducing a spiritual dimension that enables deeper emotional transformation and the possibility of transcendence. At the core of this approach is the connection with a *fourth ego state* — the spiritual Self — whose archetype is identified as God. Traditional therapeutic work with the Inner Child, as described by Jagieła (2020, p. 331), is typically framed as healing the wounded child through the strengthening of the adult personality. In contrast, Embrace Therapy® views the healing process as a union of two realms: the psychological and the spiritual. Rather than rationalizing trauma through established psychotherapeutic techniques, ET® facilitates a direct experiential encounter with the presence of the *spiritual I Am* — what the model refers to as the *God-Self* ego state. Here, “God” is not understood as a doctrinal or religious figure but as a universal principle of infinite Life that is accessible to all beings. In this perspective, *WE ARE THAT* — an affirmation of the inherent divinity within each person. Recognizing that resistance may arise when confronted with the concept of the *God-Self* ego state, ET® invites an initial openness to a holistic and integrative understanding of spirituality. As noted by Professor Jagieła (2015, p. 322), there can be multiple variants of both the Child and Adult ego states. In Embrace Therapy®, the *Adult* ego state — traditionally considered the rational and balanced component in TA—is reinterpreted. It is likened to a “Kindergarten Teacher” whom the Child trusts and feels safe with, but by 4:00 p.m., no matter how kind, the Child longs for its Parents. The *Kindergarten Teacher* becomes a metaphor for the mind, which, as the Italian etymology suggests, may mislead:

- *La mente* (noun) – the mind
- *Mentire* (verb) – to lie, to deceive

Accordingly, ET® replaces the conventional Adult ego state with the concept of the *Divine Parent (DP)*, a symbolic representation of God. In line with many cultural and spiritual beliefs, this Divine Parent embodies unconditional love, nonjudgment, presence, and deep listening. It is this presence that offers the love, safety, attention, recognition, and acceptance the Inner Child so profoundly longs for (Szymańska, 2023, p. 121–148).

## Emotions of Inner Child in Embrace Therapy®

Difficult emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, grief, guilt, shame, helplessness, apathy, and similar feelings—which cause us to lose joy, a sense of mean-

ing, and the will to live—are present in every human life. However, they are most often not adequate to the actual circumstances of the individuals who seek therapy. People usually come for help when they appear to be struggling with something, but in truth, their pain originates from a completely different place along the timeline of their lives — most often in the distant past, especially in childhood. Because a child does not have the resources to meet its own needs for attention, love, recognition, acceptance, and a sense of safety, it depends on an adult caregiver for support. Yet, for many individuals who attend sessions, these childhood needs were not fully met. The expectations from the child's perspective, and the unmet needs, were in a way absorbed into the adult, permeating their adult world. Despite the age listed on their birth certificate confirming adulthood, within these individuals, the Inner Child remains very much alive, still demanding the fulfilment of those unrealized needs. Berne distinguished three ego states depending on the social situation we find ourselves in: the Child, the Parent, and the Adult. What are these states? They are nothing more than a coherent system of feelings combined with corresponding patterns of behaviour (Krzemiński, 1998, p. 87). While the Parent ego state may manifest as the Nurturing Parent, the Rescuing Parent, or the Critical Parent, and the Child ego state as the Rebellious Child, the Adapted Child, or the Free Child, the Adult ego state is the most factual and pragmatic. It is the state of balance between social norms and emotions. It focuses on facts and tasks, does not seek excuses, nor does it “drift in the clouds” as the Child ego state often does. The Adult is capable of being responsible for itself, focuses on the here and now, is independent, and emotionally competent. It is characterized by high maturity. In contrast to the other two ego states, the Adult has no derivative forms. (Berne, 1998, pp. 29–32.) Although it may seem that the Adult ego state is comparable to the God-Self state in the ET® model, it is not the same. The God-Self state is not the one that knows better than the other two (Child and Parent) because it is “God” — but rather the one that asks questions in such a way to both the Child and the Parent ego states that they return into integration, forming a single Adult ego state. One could say that as the Inner Child matures, the Parent ego state fades proportionally, and the Adult ego state remains. Working with the ET® method involves uncoupling the emotions attached to the mental images of past events, and through a process in which the God-Self state emerges, one can ultimately experience the Adult ego state and be freed from emotions that originated in the unmet emotional needs of the Inner Child.

## **Methodology**

The study included 26 participants who had undergone Embrace Therapy® (ET®) sessions. Respondents completed questionnaires designed to assess emo-

tional changes following therapy, with particular focus on the durability of effects, the role of Inner Child work, and the influence of spirituality on the therapeutic process. The questionnaires were administered at various intervals — ranging from two months to four years post-session — allowing for the assessment of both immediate and long-term emotional and spiritual outcomes. Rather than being structured around thematically similar life events, the analysis was centred on emotional patterns themselves. The responses were coded and grouped according to the emotional states associated with specific memories or experiences. Each questionnaire was analysed in terms of the emotions that accompanied difficult or traumatic memories. This approach made it possible to observe emotional transitions — for example, an initially reported emotion of *fear* often transformed into *calmness* or *relief* over time. For clarity, emotional states were categorized into those predominating *before* the ET® session (e.g., “fear,” “anger”) and compared with those reported *after* the session. A consistent phenomenon observed across all responses was what can be described as emotional dissolution — a transformation of emotional experience, such as “fear → calm.” During the initial intake interview, participants were guided to identify their so-called “emotional sandwich” — a structured grouping of emotions, ordered from the most intense to the least noticeable. This emotional composition would then shift as a result of the therapeutic process. Importantly, since the questionnaires were completed by individuals at varying intervals following their sessions, the data highlight that the elapsed time did not significantly affect the persistence of therapeutic outcomes. In all cases, ET® was associated with immediate emotional relief and a shift in the subjective perception of the problem addressed in therapy. The long-term follow-ups — ranging from 18 months to four years — further confirm the sustainability of these emotional transformations.

## Research Results

To evaluate the effectiveness and long-term impact of Embrace Therapy®, a structured questionnaire comprising six open-ended questions was administered. This section presents the synthesized findings from 26 completed questionnaires, revealing several key emotional and therapeutic outcomes:

- Calmness and Relief – These emotional states emerged immediately following the session and, in many cases, persisted for several years. Respondents frequently noted that while the original problems may have resurfaced, they no longer triggered the same emotional intensity: *“The problems returned, but without the emotions—or they felt much weaker.”*

- Shift in Perspective – Participants often described a transition from perceiving a problem as a threat to interpreting it as a meaningful developmental experience. This shift was frequently immediate and tended to deepen over the following 3 to 6 months, with the effects remaining stable over time.
- Emotional Release and Increased Detachment – A majority of respondents reported that previously unresolved emotions — such as anger, fear, shame, and sadness—had “dissolved.” Many described functioning more from an *observer stance*, allowing them to acknowledge and accept emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them.
- Increased Self-Confidence, Awareness, and Boundary-Setting – Many participants indicated an enhanced sense of self-awareness and emotional regulation. They described greater ease in articulating their needs, letting go of emotional burdens, and setting healthy interpersonal boundaries, along with a growing acceptance of their inner experiences.
- Long-Term Stability of Effects – Notably, all respondents reported enduring therapeutic benefits, with emotional improvements sustained even up to four years after a single ET® session.

Table 1

*Emotional and Therapeutic Outcomes at Various Time Points After Embrace Therapy® Sessions*

Time After Session	Main Emotions and Effects
1 week	Absence of negative emotions, inner calm, harmonious family relationships
2–6 months	Release of fear, increased self-confidence, adaptability to new situations
1 year	Stable emotional release, developmental outlook, Adult-Self as a conscious state
1.5–2 years	Long-term emotional distance from traumatic events, self-acceptance, physical and psychological calm
3–4 years	Lasting dissolution of negative patterns, emotional freedom, lightness in daily life

Source: own research.

The analysis of the questionnaires indicates that Embrace Therapy® produces rapid, profound, and enduring outcomes, consistently observed across all respondents. These include:

- A reduction in the intensity of difficult or distressing emotions,
- A reframing of personal challenges, shifting perception from threat to opportunity for growth,
- An increased sense of inner strength and self-awareness,
- The integration of emotional experiences within a developmental and transformational framework.

Overall, the therapy facilitates a transformation of emotional responses into states of love, acceptance, and inner freedom. These shifts were not only immediate but also continued to deepen and stabilize over extended periods, confirming the long-term effectiveness of the ET® process.

Based on the collected questionnaires assessing the effectiveness of Embrace Therapy®, several key findings emerged:

1. **Inner Child Work and Transcendence** Respondents reported that engaging with the Inner Child facilitated profound emotional healing, particularly in releasing childhood traumas and deeply rooted fears. By incorporating a spiritual dimension, Embrace Therapy® enabled participants to transcend painful emotions and attain a higher state of inner peace—an outcome frequently described as pivotal in daily functioning. Many participants emphasized that ET® helped them connect with unresolved emotional experiences from childhood, leading to their transformation into more constructive emotional states such as calmness, acceptance, and compassion. This deepened relationship with the Inner Child also clarified the origins of various present-day emotional challenges.
2. **Reduction in Emotional Intensity** Respondents observed a significant decrease in the intensity of negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and fear. Through connection with the Inner Child and the fourth ego state—referred to as the God-Self—these emotions were transmuted into more harmonious affective states, including spiritual calm and acceptance. These once-dominant emotional responses became far less intrusive in daily life. Following therapy, participants described themselves as more composed and conscious in the face of triggering situations.
3. **Heightened Spiritual Awareness** One of the most profound outcomes noted by participants was an increased sense of spiritual awareness. The inclusion of the God-Self in the therapeutic process allowed individuals to integrate emotional experiences within a transcendent framework, contributing to greater resilience and longer-lasting therapeutic change.
4. **Growth in Self-Awareness and Self-Acceptance** Many respondents indicated that ET® contributed to an expanded awareness of their emotional world and an enhanced ability to accept themselves. They described learning to identify, understand, and prioritize their emotional needs. Working with the Inner Child helped them reconcile with difficult past experiences and fostered a more compassionate and integrated sense of self. This often led to a discovery of self-love and a greater commitment to both emotional and physical self-care.
5. **Improvement in Interpersonal Relationships.** Participants frequently reported improved interpersonal functioning following ET® sessions. The increase in both emotional and spiritual awareness allowed for more mindful

communication of needs, enhanced empathy, and greater authenticity in relationships.

6. **Durability of Emotional Change.** The analysis revealed that even a single session of Embrace Therapy® led to lasting emotional shifts. Many respondents stated that the therapeutic effects endured for one, two, or even four years following the session. Emotions once linked to distressing past experiences became significantly less intense—or in many cases, ceased to be problematic altogether. Participants described a persistent sense of calm, emotional clarity, and enhanced emotional regulation.
7. **Sense of Inner Peace and Harmony.** A recurring theme among responses was the emergence of a stable inner sense of peace and harmony. This newly acquired equilibrium enabled participants to navigate daily challenges with greater mindfulness and composure.
8. **Improved Coping with Similar Situations.** Finally, respondents noted that they were better equipped to handle situations that previously triggered intense emotional responses. The emotional tools and insights gained during therapy empowered them to approach similar circumstances with increased emotional mastery and inner calm.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study indicate a high subjective effectiveness of Embrace Therapy® in fostering emotional, spiritual, and existential integration. The transformations reported by participants are consistent with the framework proposed by John Bradshaw (2008), who emphasized the central importance of Inner Child work in restoring self-connection and converting childhood wounds into sources of inner strength. Similarly, Lucia Capacchione (1991) underscored the value of emotional expression and creative dialogue with the Inner Child as foundational to psychological integration. Within Transactional Analysis (TA), the Child ego state plays a pivotal role in shaping emotional personality and intrapsychic scripts (Clarkson, 1988). The findings of this study support the assertions of Tony White (1994), who argued that the majority of effective therapeutic interventions target this ego state. Embrace Therapy® offers a secure and supportive context for confronting emotional imprints from the past. It enables participants not only to become aware of painful experiences but also to reframe and transform them into more adaptive and conscious emotional responses. A particularly distinctive element of Embrace Therapy® is the introduction of a fourth ego state—the God-Self — which expands beyond the classical TA model. While this spiritual dimension may initially appear unorthodox, it finds conceptual resonance in Transpersonal Psychology (Wilber, 2000), as well

as in developmental models of consciousness such as the “observer self” in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes et al., 1999) and Loevinger’s (1976) theory of ego development. Participants’ descriptions of spiritual transformation and the transcendence of emotional pain are also aligned with Maslow’s (1962) concept of “peak experiences,” which can catalyse lasting shifts in self-perception and identity. The durability of emotional change — often observed after a single ET® session — may raise questions when viewed through the lens of traditional psychotherapeutic models. However, similar long-term outcomes have been documented in modalities emphasizing intense emotional processing (Greenberg, 2011) and in systemic or constellation-based interventions (Hellinger, 1999). The integration of emotional material through the lens of spiritual presence (the God-Self ego state) may act as a critical mechanism in reorganizing meaning structures and reshaping habitual emotional responses. Notably, participants also reported increased levels of self-awareness and self-love — findings that correspond with a growing body of research on the psychological benefits of self-compassion and acceptance (Neff, 2003). ET® thus appears to support not only emotional relief but also the development of a more coherent, compassionate, and resilient sense of self. By consciously engaging with emotional content, incorporating spiritual perspectives, and maintaining a relational focus, Embrace Therapy® offers an alternative approach to emotional healing—one that avoids pathologizing psychological distress and instead addresses it through the lens of inner transformation. This non-normative and integrative perspective may be particularly well-suited for individuals functioning within the range of psychological normativity. In conclusion, the findings of this study are in alignment with existing literature on Inner Child healing, emotion-focused therapy, and spiritually oriented developmental work. Embrace Therapy® may serve as a bridge between psychotherapy and coaching by offering a structured, yet holistic tool for emotional, spiritual, and identity-level transformation — without encroaching upon the clinical or medical domain.

## Conclusions

Embrace Therapy® has demonstrated effectiveness in facilitating meaningful work with the Inner Child, as evidenced by lasting emotional transformation and improved quality of life among participants. Beyond enabling the release of difficult emotions, the therapy fosters the integration of the Inner Child in a way that positively influences other ego states, contributing to a more coherent and resilient self. Accordingly, Embrace Therapy® may be regarded as a valuable complement to classical Transactional Analysis (TA) techniques, particularly in addressing unresolved emotional wounds originating in childhood. It is also



noteworthy that the questionnaires were completed at varying intervals post-session—ranging from two months to as long as four years—allowing for an assessment of both short-term and long-term therapeutic outcomes.

## Summary

Embrace Therapy® has demonstrated considerable effectiveness as a tool for emotional healing among the majority of respondents. A central component of the therapeutic process is the release and transformation of difficult emotions — such as fear, anger, and sadness—into more constructive emotional states, including calmness, acceptance, and self-love. These changes have proven to be durable over time, underscoring the therapy’s efficacy in fostering emotional regulation and resilience in the face of life’s challenges. Participants frequently reported that Embrace Therapy® enabled them to establish a meaningful connection with their Inner Child. This facilitated deeper self-reflection and the identification of emotional deficits rooted in early life experiences. Engaging with this aspect of the self-allowed individuals to better understand the origins of their emotional patterns and to cultivate greater inner peace and acceptance. The findings suggest that Inner Child work is a key contributor to the long-term effectiveness of the therapy, leading to sustained emotional transformation and enhanced self-awareness. Moreover, the integration of the spiritual dimension — specifically the God-Self ego state—introduces a distinctive and powerful dimension to the healing process. By bridging classical therapeutic techniques with a spiritually grounded perspective, Embrace Therapy® supports profound, lasting transformation that encompasses both emotional and spiritual aspects of the self. The introduction of the fourth ego state — the God-Self — serves as a gateway to deeper emotional integration and more comprehensive healing.

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## **Embrace Therapy® – zastosowanie pracy z Wewnętrznym Dzieckiem w kontekście analizy transakcyjnej i duchowości**

### **Streszczenie**

Embrace Therapy® (ET®), jako metoda terapeutyczna, łączy w sobie elementy psychoterapii z głęboką duchowością. Kluczowym elementem terapii jest praca z Wewnętrznym Dzieckiem, co ma swoje odniesienie do stanu Ja-Dziecko w analizie transakcyjnej (AT). Jednak unikalność ET® polega na wprowadzeniu czwartego stanu Ja – duchowego aspektu Boga, który pozwala na transcendencję emocjonalnych ograniczeń. W artykule analizowane są wyniki badania nad skutecznością ET® oraz jej miejsce w kontekście AT.

**Słowa kluczowe:** emocje, Wewnętrzne Dziecko, analiza transakcyjna, Embrace Therapy, duchowość.