



APPLYING TA NOW - EPISODE 1

CLOSED-MINDED PEOPLE

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It is hard to get along with closed-minded people.

Transactional Analysis, or TA, provides resources that help us cope with them. Hi, Wayne Hart here, sharing some thoughts about applying TA.

When people are unreceptive to new or different ideas, it's tough solving problems, reaching agreement, building consensus, or finding a compromise. Barriers go up. Distance develops.

One tool for coping with closed-minded people is genuine curiosity. It helps people be more receptive to new ideas and more willing to reveal and explore their own thinking.

TA provides tools for this. To learn more, watch the full the video.

I have indicated that genuine curiosity can help us deal with another person's closed-mindedness. To take a closer look at this, I will answer three questions in the next few minutes: what is genuine curiosity; how does it help coping with closed-minded people; and how can we use Transactional Analysis to be truly genuinely curious?

What is genuine curiosity? I think of it as wanting to know or learn something, with no other agenda, especially no inclination to use what we find out to judge or change the other person. It seeks to understand the closed-minded person's point of view and perhaps their feelings about something, without filtering it through our own point of view or bias. It means recognizing and respecting what is expressed to us, absent our own opinions of it. Contrast that, for example, with asking questions or listening to gain enough information to attack the other persons' position or create a stage for our own talking points.

How does genuine curiosity help us deal with closed-minded people? Typically, when people feel heard and understood, their rejection of different ideas and insistence on being right relaxes a bit, making them a little more receptive. Genuine curiosity facilitates feeling heard and understood.

How does TA help us be genuinely curious? The key to being genuinely curious is setting aside our frame of reference, at least to some extent. What is our frame of reference, and how can it prevent us from being genuinely curious?

We all have learned to think about things in our own way. TA calls this our frame of reference. Frame of reference includes our unique, pre-established beliefs and expectations, and it controls what falls within or outside of our awareness. It determines our way of interpreting our experiences. In turn, our interpretations influence what we feel and do.

So, when another person expresses an opinion, such as "the world is flat," our frame of reference processes it in our own way leading to such interpretations as "that person is a crackpot or worse yet delusional," or "that person is talking about our subjective experience of earth in the moment." Note this important point, either interpretation interferes with genuine curiosity.

When our frame of reference is interpreting and responding to events, we are operating on past learning. For example, imagine that, when I was young, I concluded that people with red hair could not be trusted. Throughout life it would be difficult for me to trust redheaded people. This would be



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the case no matter how honest the redheaded person was. That element of my frame of reference would make it difficult for me to be genuinely curious. My pre-established distrust would prevent me from objectively observing, listening to, and thinking about the redheaded person. My curiosity would be limited by my pre-existing beliefs.

If you are thinking that our frame of reference could result in us having a closed mind, you are right. We need to open our own mind to be genuinely curious, in order to engage a closed-minded person with genuinely curiosity.

That is difficult to do. Typically, people want to protect their frame of reference because it enables them to quickly interpret and respond to the events of life. With it they have a readymade analysis and action plan for coping.

Our frame of reference satisfies an important psychological need that TA calls structure hunger. We need, or hunger for, a framework we can use to make sense and meaning of what happens around us, to us, and within us, and tells us what to do during the time in which we respond.

TA can help us recognize and manage patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions that come from our frame of reference. TA calls these kinds of patterns ego-states. Once we recognize them, we can choose to set them aside or operate with them. To be genuinely curious we have to set them aside and energize our genuinely curious ego-state, which, in comparison, is not biased by past learning.

You are welcome to download the text of this video. And I invite you to learn more about genuine curiosity, frame of reference, structure hunger, ego-states at TransactionalAnalysisNow.com, or TA-Now.com, where we offer the Applying TA Basics Workshop, which is a good place to learn about TA. We offer the TA User's Group which is a good place to get coaching and support for becoming better at using TA. And we offer TA Practitioner training and supervision for people who want to apply TA in their work-lives.

In closing, when dealing with a closed-minded person, one powerful tool for establishing productive communication is opening our own mind by setting aside our frame of reference and being genuinely curious.

I'm Wayne Hart wishing you an "I'm OK, You're OK" life experience.

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