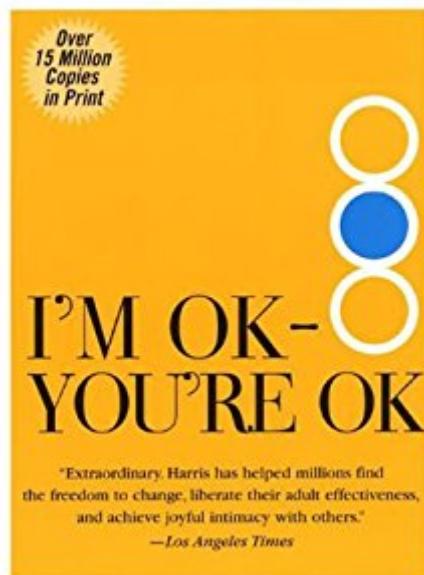


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I'm OK--You're OK

Thomas A. Harris, M.D.

The Classic Bestseller That Has Changed the Lives of Millions



Synopsis

Transactional Analysis delineates three observable ego-states (Parent, Adult, and Child) as the basis for the content and quality of interpersonal communication. "Happy childhood" notwithstanding, says Harris, most of us are living out the Not ok feelings of a defenseless child, dependent on ok others (parents) for stroking and caring. At some stage early in our lives we adopt a "position" about ourselves and others that determines how we feel about everything we do. And for a huge portion of the population, that position is "I'm Not OK -- You're OK." This negative "life position," shared by successful and unsuccessful people alike, contaminates our rational Adult capabilities, leaving us vulnerable to inappropriate emotional reactions of our Child and uncritically learned behavior programmed into our Parent. By exploring the structure of our personalities and understanding old decisions, Harris believes we can find the freedom to change our lives.

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Customer Reviews

Using the Transactional Analysis theory first introduced by Dr. Eric Berne, Dr. Thomas A. Harris has published the results of his pioneering work in this best selling book. This is probably one of the best books that explains how to use this theory in improving all kinds of personal relationships. Dr. Harris

starts off by going into the history of Transactional Analysis and the theories of those before Dr. Eric Berne. The second chapter explains the basic of Transactional Analysis which is the concept of the Parent, Adult, and Child ego states that are supposed to compose each and every one of our personalities. The Parent ego state contains all the information we accept as true that we have gathered from authority figures including our parents. The Adult ego state is the collection of all information that we have proven to ourselves as being true (using some sort of logic). The Child ego state is our natural good and bad side of feelings - love, anger, greed, empathy, etc. The author extensively uses the phrase P-A-C (Parent-Adult-Child) through the rest of the book. Dr. Harris then introduces the concept of the four different life positions that each of us adopts at any given time. All of us apparently go through four life positions ending up with the last one in a sequential manner except some of us get stuck in the earlier stages (this results in problems that typically need therapy). These four positions are -1. I'm Not OK, You're OK2. I'm Not OK, You're Not OK3. I'm OK, You're Not OK4. I'm OK, You're OK. The next few chapters of the book focus on the fact that we can change no matter what stage we are stuck in and the theory behind how to change.

I believe I found this book abandoned in a box on my street, or was given it, or possibly even paid a dollar for it at a used book store clearance sale. However I got it, I wasn't expecting much: I had heard the title & assumed it was some coddling, outdated '70s feel-good hippie crap, to be perfectly honest. Instead it is about the most useful "self help" book I've ever read by far, though I haven't read many of that genre... let's just say it is the most useful book I've read in quite a while, one that I actually understood & was inspired by &, even more amazing, find myself applying. The gist is, we all have competing forces in us, except that instead of the Freudian Id, Ego & Superego (which I never felt too excited about), we have P-A-C, Parent, Adult, & Child. Now I'm not sure, but I think this might be the origin of the irritating & irrelevant (to me, at least) concept of "getting in touch with your inner child," but the way this is presented in the book is anything but facile or condescending, & relevant to just about every human being I know. We start off as a child, obviously, and this Child voice seeks instant gratification, & pleasure, it avoids pain, & it thinks it's the Center of the Universe. As the child learns it can't have its way, as it is blocked in various ways, limited, as desires are denied, it creates the Parent, the Voice that Knows, knows when to punish, to withhold, to control, to prescribe, to explain, etc. The idea is that most of us are existing as little more than those two forces fighting it out inside of us, moment to moment. The Parent that wants to be in charge & control & know it all, & the Child that wants to relax & indulge & have it his way, right away.

I recently finished reading this book. This is really a great book and gave me some insight into my own behaviour. It would be fair to say that this book has great value to those who get through first 3 chapters and understand the theory behind rest of the book. Some reviewers have written about the validity of the theory itself. While I am not qualified to comment on these reviews, one thing I can definitely conclude is that this book provides a solid base to those who are trying to understand their own behaviour and trying to achieve improvements in it. A theory, that too developed quarter century ago, can not be expected to stand 100% vindicated today. The more important question is what use you are trying to put it to. So maybe for a psychiatrist this is not a great book but for a layman like myself this book explains most of the things. After reading this book I could find out why I behave the way I behave most of the times. To a certain extent I learnt to control my responses. Also I have a feeling that the claims made by Dr. Harris might be quite right in 1972 in light of the knowledge, then prevalent. Second objection seems to be dividing 5 or 6 billion population in 4 types of people. I think this conclusion is far from correct. Dr. Harris has repeatedly said that most of the people belong to "I am not ok and you are ok" category. Out of the remaining 3 categories 2 are shared by people who have not had proper childhood and the fourth is achieved by enlightenment of an individual. The objective here is not to merely categorize, but to show that how most of us have the common position "I am not ok and you are ok".

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