

# The Functional Fluency Model Has Come of Age

(Update of "Action on the Functional Model")

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(Originally published in the EATA Newsletter Feb 2003)

## **Introduction to this 2009 update.**

*In the October 2002 EATA Newsletter, Ian Stewart, at the end of his article about TA ego state theory and the "functional model" in particular, made a "call for action" to help end the conceptual difficulties with this model.*

*I wrote this article originally in response to his call and to let the TA community know what I had been busy doing with my five years' research work related to Ian's topic.*

*In July 2003, EATA honoured me with a Silver Medal for this research work that had culminated in the updated Functional Fluency model and the Temple Index of Functional Fluency (TIFF®).*

*Since 2002, along with ongoing research studies evaluating the efficacy of TIFF, I have developed a network of professionals interested in becoming involved in the promotion of Functional Fluency and TIFF in their work as "people developers" in a wide variety of contexts. I have created a flexible licensing process and now have 21 licensed TIFF Providers in the UK, 12 in Germany and 2 in the Netherlands. Many of the Providers are transactional analysts or have studied TA.*

*TIFF Online was launched in 2005 and Providers can now use it for clients in English, German or Dutch. All tool administration is online and there are additional tools for using TIFF in groups, doing data analysis and setting up new translations. The Network offers Providers support, training and quality assurance and is developing materials to promote lively learning of the important concepts in the Functional Fluency Model, which is the key to the whole thing.*

*Now, six years on, I am in the process of creating a social enterprise company for the promotion of Functional Fluency and TIFF as tools for enhancing well-being in the workplace, and elsewhere, through empowering leadership from which everyone benefits, and collaborative teamwork in which people enjoy working well together.*

## **Original Introduction**

"I have been taking some action on this matter of the functional ego states! I have spent five years researching and creating a TA tool for behavioural diagnosis based on ego state theory. It uses a now updated model of human functioning (Temple 2004) first published in the Transactional Analysis Journal (Temple 1999)."

I agreed with Ian that it was time to move on from the possible stereotyping and trivialising effects of the functional model with its potential dangers for the future of TA. Previously in TA, I consider that 'functional analysis' using the traditional model has in fact not been an analysis of human functioning, but an analysis of certain types of ego state that were categorised by particular functional characteristics. The 'functional model' is not, therefore, a model of behaviours, as Ian suggested. It does not "show five modes of behaviour". However, confusingly, the traditional model has been used as though it did do so, even though at the same time the five 'behaviours' have often also been referred to as 'ego states'! The most important task to my mind, therefore, was to make clear the difference between talking about ego states and talking about behaviours. To do this, it was necessary to make rational and consistent conceptual differentiations.

What I have done addresses all the points that Ian made and more. I believe that as well as 'uncoupling', or differentiating, my 'Functional Fluency' model of behavioural modes from the various models of ego states, I have achieved several very important things:

- I have created a stand-alone TA model of human functioning that is valid and reliable as a basis both for behavioural diagnosis and for use as a tool for personal development. A key point here is that as well as 'standing alone' the Functional Fluency model is consistent with the original essence of ego state theory on which it is clearly based.
- I have made the Functional Fluency model compatible with other research and psychological models e.g. Baumrind's Parenting Styles (1991) the Adlerian Basis A Inventory (Curlette, Kern & Wheeler 1993) and the Hogan Personality Inventory (Hogan & Hogan 1996) etc.
- I have avoided and moved on from the conceptual confusions in past ego state theorising referred to by Ian Stewart in his 2002 article.

It is important to note that my conceptual '**uncoupling**' makes possible a coherent and logical theoretical **re-connection** between analysis of ego states and an analysis of functioning using the Functional Fluency model. In practice, either analysis can be used to illuminate the other.

In my article in the 1999 TAJ mentioned above, I proposed an initial version of the Functional Fluency model. **This model has now been further developed.**

What I slowly realised through the research process was that in order to demonstrate conceptual differentiation from traditional TA models I had to make one thing very clear: **The Functional Fluency model is NOT A MODEL OF EGO STATES!** It is a model of human functioning informed by ego state theory as well as by other theories.

There are two crucially important outcomes from this realisation. Firstly I have used the suggestions of Ian Stewart, Valerie Heppel (and maybe others) that stacked squares would be more suitable than stacked circles in my model diagrams. Secondly I have strictly avoided use of any Parent, Adult or Child terminology and created a new and appropriate terminology to describe and explain the Functional Fluency concepts. These changes are incorporated in the personal/professional development tool now known as the Temple Index of Functional Fluency (TIFF<sup>®</sup>). They also feature in the updated version of the 1999 TAJ article now published in the Zeitschrift für Transaktionsanalyse 4/2002, and the TAJ (2004).

### **Theoretical Outline of the Functional Fluency Model**

The model is based on three basic aspects of human existence and functioning, namely growing up, surviving and raising the next generation. (This is also true of the concept of ego states, which is why the ego state model can be used to diagram transference, as Ian outlined in his article).

These three aspects are fundamental to our humanity, more basic than personality factors or traits (Gopnik, Meltzoff & Kuhl 1999). (Is this why TA works across cultures as it does?).

The three aspects are in essence to do with the survival and continuation of the species and could be said, therefore, to have a 'biological mandate', a term used by Hogan, Hogan & Trickey (1999) with respect to the Hogan Personality Inventory.

The logical elaboration of these three categories of functioning into nine constructs, each indicating one clear concept (Neuman 1994), uses George Kelly's (1963) framework for analysing such complex construing.

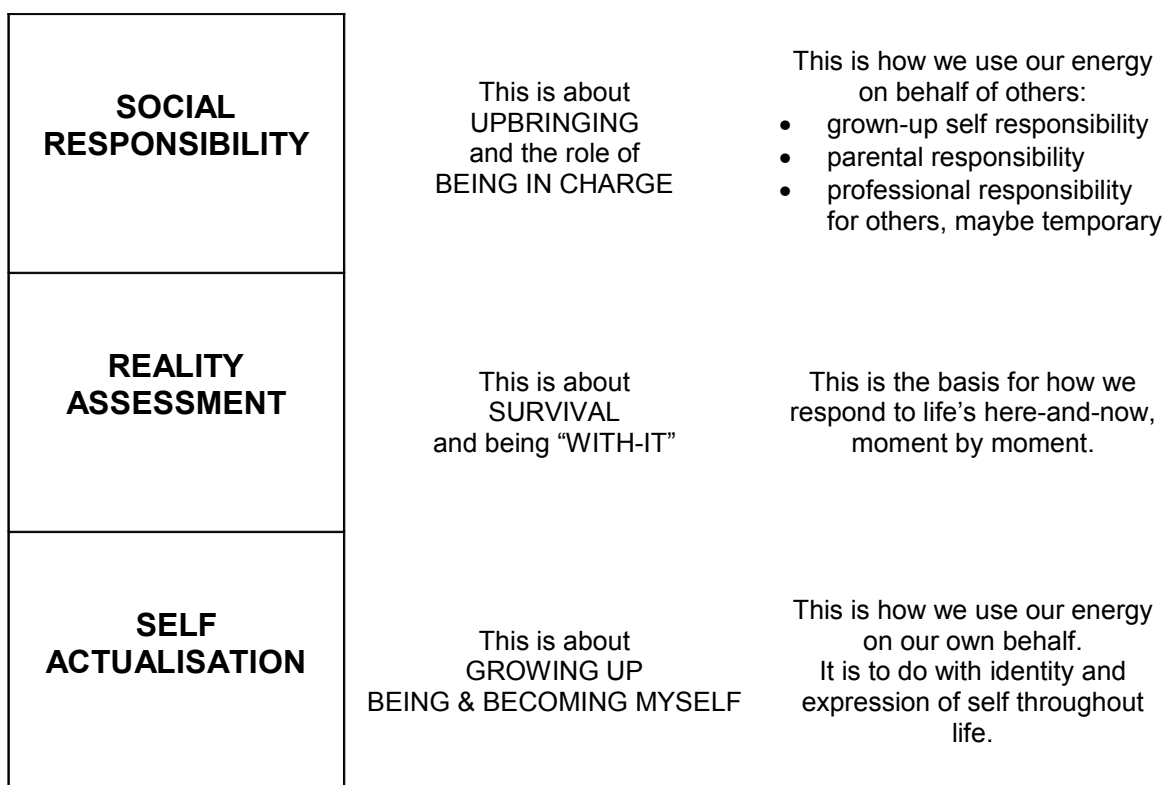
There are three levels:

Level one - comprehensive construct

Level two - subordinate construct

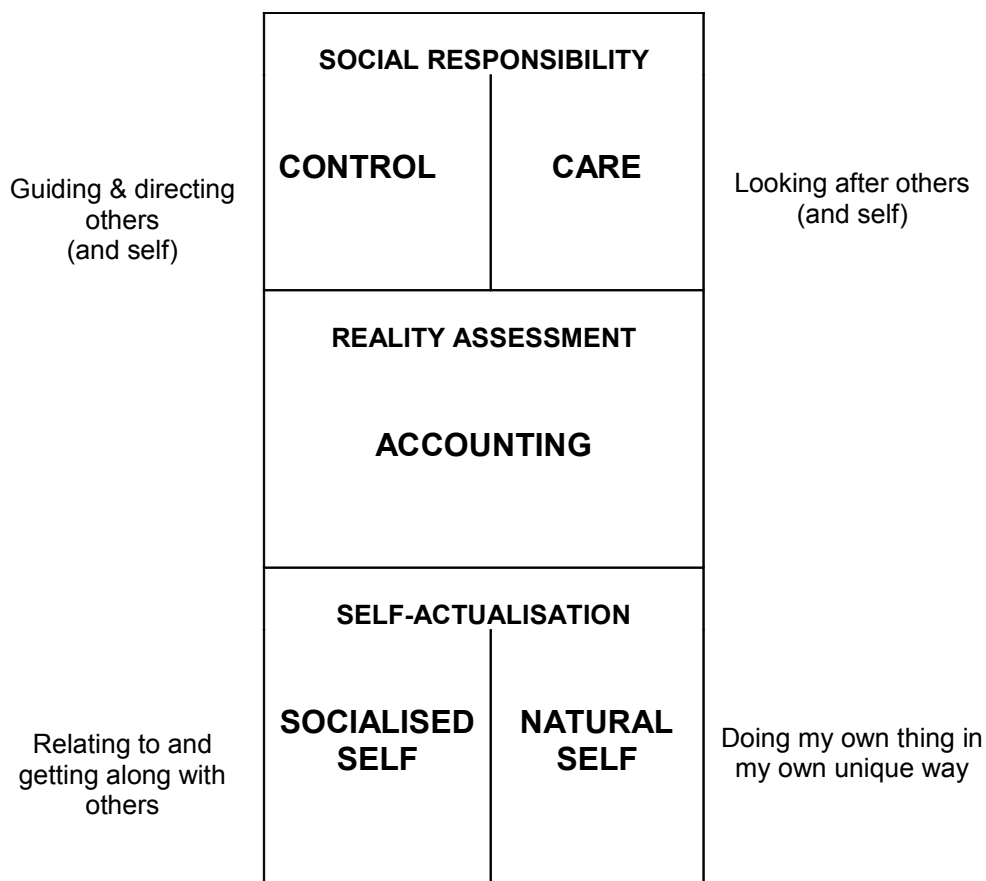
Level three - further subordinate construct.

## Level 1: Three Categories of Functioning



These categories can then be divided into two subordinate elements. I have in fact kept the Reality Assessment category undivided, but given it the term Accounting at this second level, in order to match the other four elements conceptually.

## Level 2: Five Elements of Functioning



In the third level of construing, the elements are divided qualitatively, so that CONTROL, CARE, SOCIALISED SELF and NATURAL SELF all have a positive and a negative manifestation. (ACCOUNTING is regarded quantitatively at this level and measured in terms of 'more or less', rather than 'how well'. In practice, when the final scores are displayed on a profile, all the ensuing analysis is qualitative, and the nature of someone's Accounting can then be explored in the collaborative feedback-dialogue).

### Level 3: Nine Behavioural Modes of the Functional Fluency Model

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Negative control<br><b>DOMINATING MODE</b>                       | Negative care<br><b>MARSHMALLOWING MODE</b>      |
| Positive control<br><b>STRUCTURING MODE</b>                      | Positive care<br><b>NURTURING MODE</b>           |
| Accounting element<br><b>ACCOUNTING MODE</b>                     |  |
| Positive socialised self<br><b>COOPERATIVE MODE</b>              | Positive natural self<br><b>SPONTANEOUS MODE</b> |
| Negative socialised self<br><b>COMPLIANT/<br/>RESISTANT MODE</b> | Negative natural self<br><b>IMMATURE MODE</b>    |

These are the nine modes of behaviour that are profiled in the TIFF<sup>®</sup> tool. This is the updated model, refined as a result of my researches and according to my aims as above. The necessary details of explanation and analysis are in my thesis (Temple 2002) and also in various articles since (see in Resources at [www.functionalfluency.com](http://www.functionalfluency.com)).

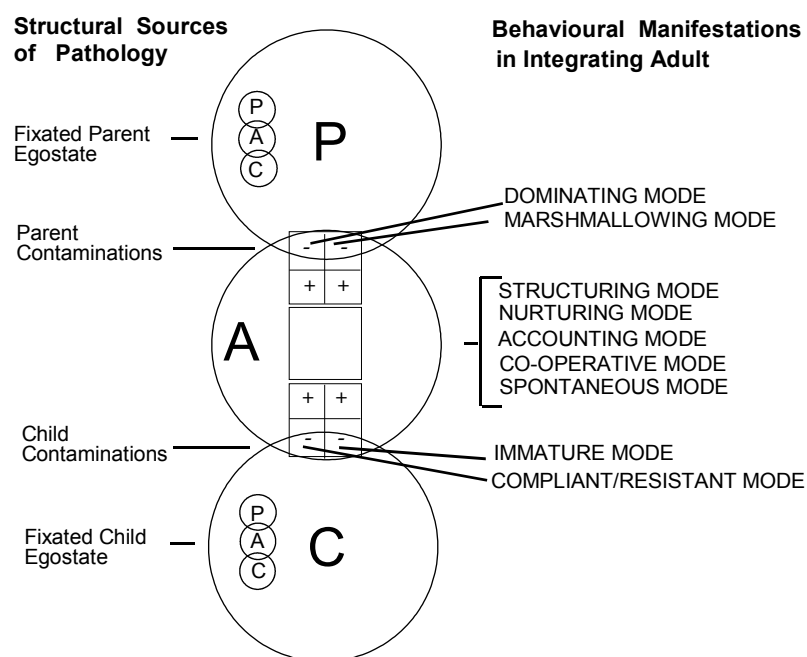
The five central modes of Structuring, Nurturing, Accounting, Cooperative and Spontaneous, seem to me to equate to Karpman's (1971) Five Options and to offer a positive range and combination of ways of responding effectively. The four negative modes are less effective ways of responding and can be explained as being manifestations of contaminated aspects of Adult functioning. All nine modes are manifestations of an Integrating Adult ego state.

One of the most exciting parts of the research pilot (N=302) results was the evidence that was found to support this claim. In fact my original intuitive depiction (Temple 1999)

of the Functional Fluency model superimposed onto a structural ego state diagram has been shown to make theoretical as well as practical sense (Temple 2002).

The Combination Diagram below, using the Integrating Adult ego state model, is an updated version from which it can be seen that the Functional Fluency model could be used for behavioural diagnosis of any class of ego state –as mentioned by Ian Stewart. It is shown in place for use with Adult.

### Combination Diagram A Structural Model of Ego States with the Functional Fluency Model



**The term Accounting is of crucial importance.**

Depending on which class of ego state is activated, a person may be Accounting with their full here-and-now capabilities in Adult, with the abilities and propensities of one of their Parent figures, or with the immaturity of one of their Child ego states. Identifying the nature of a person’s accounting contributes to sensitive and accurate ego state diagnosis. It is often easier to recognise what people **are** doing rather than what they are **not** doing. It is another way to use the TA concept of discounting. (Bear in mind that the term Accounting also offers a way to avoid the confusing past use of the word Adult to mean both an ego state and a type of functioning.)

**Rationale for the development and use of the Functional Fluency model**

The difficulties in trying to use the traditional five-part functional model in research are many. I have written about them in detail in my doctoral thesis. I was determined to avoid the pitfalls of the past; the vagueness, variableness, bias and distortions of definition and most importantly the fact that the five constructs (Controlling Parent, Nurturing Parent, Adult, Adapted Child and Natural Child) are multi-dimensional and therefore unsuitable for psychometric measurement (Neuman 1994).

Apart from this, I think that there is an inherent problem in the ongoing use of the traditional TA functional model that is quite serious. I think this model reinforces cultural and historical stereotypes that are a hindrance to certain aspects of personal and social development that are badly needed as we enter the twenty first century. As an educator I want to promote empowering ways of exerting authority, sensitive and

empathic ways of caring, potent and assertive ways of relating with others and vibrant creativity that enhances the world we all share.

**We need to ask “Which characteristics does the traditional model reinforce?”, “Which human attributes are invisible in the model?” and “What might the effects of that be?”**

**Firstly**, there is a general assumption that control is negative and damaging. Positive control does not have a name, so that leadership that offers inspiration, boundaries and discipline is not reinforced as strongly as the authoritarian type that involves coercion and fault-finding. It matters not that the latter is decried or denounced. It is named and constantly described in TA examples, which inevitably reinforces the concept.

**Secondly**, caring is only identified as nurturing, and is assumed to be positive. The sort of negative caring often called Rescuing is not named on the traditional model, which makes it harder to differentiate between genuine kindness and compassion and harmful over-indulgence. Fear of Rescuing can reduce people’s natural urge to nurture spontaneously and appropriately, with kindness and compassion, meanwhile unidentified negative caring may go unchallenged.

**Thirdly**, socialisation is termed ‘adaptation’ and carries an assumption of negativity and undesirability. There is no naming of the positive social learning that develops people’s capacity to stand up for themselves in an I’m OK, You’re OK way, to consider others’ needs and feelings and to collaborate assertively. There is a risk here of people showing reluctance to conform in any way for fear of being labelled ‘adapted’, even in situations when some conformity would be helpful and considerate. Rebellion may be stroked instead of assertiveness.

**Fourthly**, and conversely, Natural/Free Child is assumed to be positive, and of a certain outgoing temperamental type. There is no naming of a negative aspect of this construct, that of immaturity of behaviour, shown up through egocentricity or impulsiveness for instance, that are hopefully grown out of by the time someone becomes adult. This means that differentiation between the effects of lack of social learning and the effects of counter-productive social learning, such as submissiveness or defiance is not provided for. Another danger here is that people who are naturally of a quieter or more contemplative disposition can be led to believe that they are somehow lacking in spirit because they don’t fit the stereotypical TA ‘Free Child’ image. Their creativity can go unrecognised and unrewarded and thus both they and the world can lose out.

### **Conclusion**

I think models and diagrams convey permissions simply through their design and terminology (Allen 2002), which is why I have aimed to develop a conceptually balanced model that shows how positive ways of being in charge, positive ways of relating and expressing the self, and effective ways of accounting for reality, can be integrated. They are the ingredients of the 'Integrating Adult in Positive Action'.

What I hope I have done in producing this research-based Functional Fluency model is to provide a creative and worthwhile missing link in the array of TA models, with useful potential for future research, for personal support and development programmes and for aspects of clinical diagnosis and measurement. The foundations were laid. Further necessary research is continuously under way, and the development and use of Functional Fluency and TIFF® promotes effective ways of behaving socially in many contexts, along with other TA models and concepts.

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