

The paranoiac and paranoid person

Tony White
Wednesday, 2 May 2007

This follows on from the previous blog post
(23. Confidentiality under threat)

The four original life positions

I'm OK, You're OK (the healthy position)

Im' not OK, You're OK (The depressive)

I'm OK, You're not OK (The paranoid)

I'm not OK, You're not OK (The hopeless suicidal position)

After a series of journal articles that I wrote in the Transactional Analysis Journal in the mid 1990s the conclusion was that there are in fact seven basic life positions that one can take as an approach to life.

I'm OK, You're OK - I+U+ (The martyr)

I'm Not OK, You're OK - I-U+ (The depressive)

I'm not OK, You're not OK - I-U- (The suicidal position)

I'm not OK, But you're worse - I-U-- (The paranoid)

I'm OK, You're irrelevant - I+U? (The narcissist)

I'm not OK, You're irrelevant - I-U? (The borderline)

I'm a little bit more OK than you are - I++U+ (The healthy position)

The paranoid person basically sees the world as a dangerous place. They do not trust people, they are overly suspicious and hypersensitive. They see that the best form of defence is attack and thus they are often angry people. Sometimes the anger is openly shown and at other times it can be well hidden. They feel they are unfairly treated and that they give out much more than they get back. There are more males who are paranoid than females.

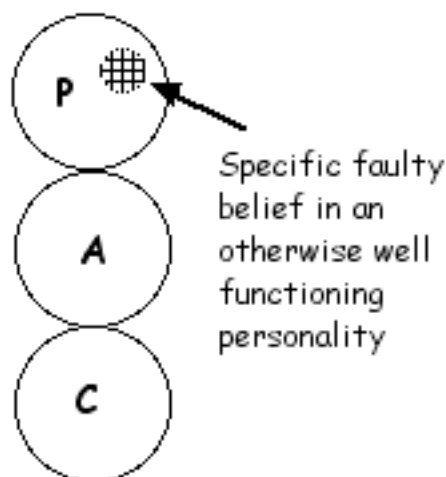


The idea of paranoids being I-U-- is clearer because inside the angry person is usually a frightened person. Anxiety is the basis of the paranoid personality not anger as it appears on the surface. So if the therapist can facilitate the paranoid to understand and appreciate the anxiety and scare in him then that is a major therapeutic achievement. he is then in a better position to see that in order to make himself feel OK he has to make other appear as "less than" to him.

They tend to sexualise contact. If you go up to a paranoid and start talking to him then he will to some degree suspect that you are coming onto him. His personal sense of self (boundary) is hypersensitive. Sexual contact between two people requires crossing what the individual feels is their personal boundary. Ultimately this becomes true physically when there is penetrative sex. Freud suggested that the primary thing that the paranoid person fears is anal rape. In such cases the individual is physically invaded, but of course the invasions can also be emotional and these are what the paranoid is usually hypersensitive to. So never hug a paranoid person with out first getting their permission to do so and even then they will tend to sexualise that anyway.

Paranoiac

An interesting offshoot of the paranoid person is the paranoiac. The paranoiac is a normally functioning personality with one area of delusion or faulty beliefs. So this person does not appear paranoid or disturbed. They seem like an average type of person. Have you ever been talking to someone new and the conversation is going well and then you start talking about a particular area and you discover that this person has very strong beliefs about it. Often this is about other groups such as racial groups, religions or the male or female gender. This can come as a bit of a shock as you didn't expect this person who seemed quite normal to be like that. This could be an instance of the paranoiac.



Sometimes it is diagrammed like this. A normal functioning personality except with one spot that has odd and strong beliefs. In particular the Adult ego state

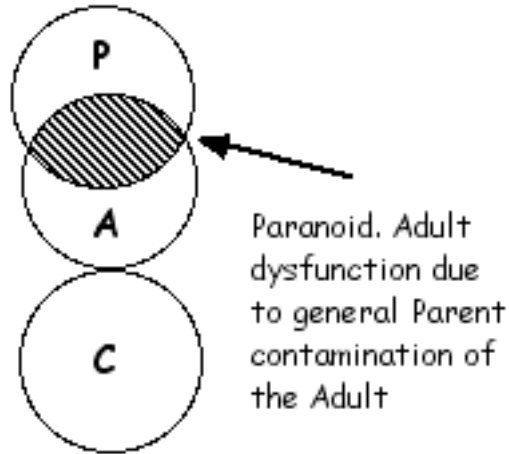
will be quite well functioning and in the Parent ego state there is a vigorously held belief that is associated with strong emotion. A good example of this is Adolf Hitler. He must have had a very well functioning personality to create and lead the organisation that he did (The Nazi party). That was a very effective and powerful organisation that was created by him. His thinking, manoeuvring and politicking must have been highly effective. But he had one area of faulty belief that is paranoid in nature, anti-Semitism.



An extreme example of the paranoiac personality

What can happen sometimes with the paranoiac is that in the beginning the person's thinking and Adult ego state functioning is very good. The effect of the faulty belief is not disruptive to the overall personality. Over time however the faulty belief can become more pervasive and the range of beliefs increase in number and then the personality starts to be disrupted more. The Adult ego state begins to function less effectively and then you get a more common paranoid personality structure like so

The faulty Parent ego state beliefs 'invade' the Adult and thus the Adult functions less effectively. The person then starts making bad decisions and it all eventually falls into a big heap. This is what could have happened in the case of Hitler.



Paranoid. Adult dysfunction due to general Parent contamination of the Adult

As the Adult gets more clouded by the Parent ego state it thus functions less effectively. This means that more poor decisions are made. If this process continues, then over time the list of poor decisions will grow and the persons behaviour and life will deteriorate. Obviously if one is fighting a war they need to make good decisions regularly. If they don't then they will quickly start loosing the war.