

Drivers – and Working Styles- an Essay

© 2013 Julie Hay

In 2008, Kahler wrote that it had been 37 years since he used Berne's five behaviour clues – words, tones, gestures, postures and facial expressions – whilst observing video tapes for several weeks, with the result that he identified five defence-like behaviours that he called drivers after Freud's drive, or basic instinct, to repetitive behaviour. This was presumably, therefore, in 1971.

In 1974, he went on to include the five drivers in the article about the miniscript that he wrote with Capers (Kahler & Capers 1974). Here, he quoted Steiner's (1971) definition of counterscript as "an acquiescence to the cultural and social demands that are transmitted through the Parent" (p.47), suggested that there are OK and Not OK counterscripts, and proposed that the drivers are the Not OK counterscript slogans. Referring to the drivers as counterscript drivers, he then showed how they are the 'I'm OK if' starting position on the miniscript.

Kahler went on to mention process scripts but did not at that time show the direct links of each to a driver. Capers provided the second part of the article, in which he described the OK Miniscript and identified the following allowers (or antitheses to the drivers):

Be Perfect	It's OK to be yourself
Hurry Up	It's OK to take your time
Try Hard	It's OK to do it
Please me	It's OK to consider yourself and respect yourself
Be Strong	It's OK to be open (and to take care of your own needs)

The article also included a miniscript chart showing inner feelings and behavioural clues for each driver, but blanks for the other miniscript positions. For example, Be Perfect has tense for physical, "you should do better" as the internal discount, words such as "of course" and "efficacious", clipped and righteous tones, counting fingers gesture, erect and rigid posture and stern facial expression.

Kahler (1975) picking up on Berne's (1972) comments about a script being repeated over and over and sometimes in a few seconds, described drivers as "behaviours that last from a split second to no more than seven seconds" and that "cause certain sentence structures... [with] a fixed pattern which may be repeated, unconsciously, hundreds of times a day." (p. 280). He proposed that "stopping the driver behaviour also prevents the concurrent script sentence (thought) patterns." (p. 280).

He linked drivers to process scripts as follows:

Never – Try Hard – never finishes sentences
Always – Hurry Up and Be Strong – although not consistent
After – Please Me – positive-but-negative
Until – Be Perfect – often with Be Strong
Almost (Over and Over) – Try Hard and Please Me, in either order.
Open End – no specific driver, process script may be hamartic payoff of After

Kahler went on to explain how drivers reinforce a position of I'm OK if; that they begin functionally in Parent and can be observed in Child; they form the con and the gimmick that start games; and that changing driver sentence patterns may change whole life (process) script patterns.

Kahler also described how a therapist in Please Me driver may invite the patient into the same, so that it will appear that there is rapport but the patient may be setting himself up for the After script payoff. He also mentioned at the end of the article that the miniscript can be used to treat script in a group, but gave no information about this.

Gellert (1975) had an article appear in the next Transactional Analysis Journal issue with the same title as Kahler's – Drivers – but without any extra subtitle about process of scripts. Kahler responded to Gellert in the same issue. Gellert argued that drivers were not part of counterscript but were genetic drives harnessed by decisions. He also suggested there should be more drivers, and specifically proposed Be Weak, Think and Be Careful (preceding Goulding & Goulding 1979 reference to the latter by 4 years). Kahler disagreed, emphasised that the nature of drivers is that we fail to achieve them and challenged the survival values of Gellert's suggestions.

Mescavage & Silver (1977) suggested that there are only three counterscript drivers: Be Perfect, Hurry Up and Be Strong. Based on a sample of 194 cases, representing most major psychiatric diagnostic categories and heavily weighted with adult neurotic types, they proposed that Please Me and Try Hard are more pervasive, taught earlier in life, and necessary conditions to acculturation. Specifically, they saw Please Me as a necessary condition of being with parents, and Try Hard as related to the power of the child to withhold or mess inappropriately during toilet training (but not before).

Tudor (2008) proposed a sixth driver, called by him 'Take It' to "explain certain seeking and aggressive relational dynamics in and between human beings on personal and wider, social/political issues." (p.54). He suggests this driver is about taking and owning objects inappropriately, exploitively and unsustainably, and that it supports the development of narcissism. This is interesting in that Tudor & Widdowson (2008) have criticised personality adaptations theory for omitting narcissism, and Joines (2011) has pointed out that narcissism is no longer a discrete diagnostic category in DSM V (APA 2013).

Positive Drivers

Tudor (2008) wrote of Take It as having a positive version, in that instead of it referring to greed, competition and power, as a Grab it Style, it can be Go For It as positive aggression and sustainable taking from the environment.

A much earlier reference to positive drivers was made by Klein (1987), who described the assets and ways of relating positively for each. For example, for Be Perfect she wrote: "If you are mostly Be Perfect you undoubtedly have a better idea of how to live well than most people. You realise that, regardless of whether there is an ultimate meaning to life, the only appropriate way to live is purposefully and morally. You set high standards for everything you do, and it makes little difference to you what other people's standards are." (p.155) and "A Be Perfect person – minus his or her intolerance, bigotry, and autocratic self-righteousness – is as wise, steadfast, warm and good a person as you will ever know." (p.156).

Referring to each driver as a personality type, Klein provides a table of assets, liabilities, needed permissions and ways to "get the best out of them" (p.161). Elsewhere, she gives her understanding of

the basic fears of each type (p.154); she also updated this in Klein (1992). Below are her comments on assets from the table, plus her basic fears:

Style	Assets	Basic Fears (1987)	Fears (1992)
Be Perfect	Wisdom, purposefulness, high moral (and other) standards	Death	Death
Be Strong	Self-sufficiency, consideration of others' needs, reliability, resilience	Rejection	Rejection
Please	Pleasantness, compliancy to others' wishes, generosity	Being blameworthy	Responsibility
Try Hard	Passionate commitment, sympathy for the underdog, persistence	Failure (and success)	Failure
Hurry Up	Adventurousness, responsiveness and sensitivity to others' feelings	Life	Life

Hazell (1989) also commented on the positive aspect of drivers, presenting them as “habits that we all utilise to deal with the challenges... useful when well moderated...” and “positive when used to achieve” (p.212). To reflect this positive aspect, he proposed renaming Be Perfect as Be Right, so that all of them “describe a goal that is desirable and possible to achieve, within reason.” (p.212). He also suggested we use Be Pleasing instead of Please Me/Please You. Hazell presented a drivers checklist he had developed, together with an explanatory handout that gives information on how drivers help as well as hinder.

Hay (Hay & Williams 1989) also began to focus on the positive aspects of drivers, writing of them as working styles (and using the term Please People).

Clarkson (1992) wrote in her abstract that “the values of being fast, energetic, pleasing, strong and excellent – as prized qualities of the autonomous individual under the influence of Physis... are differentiated from the counterscript drivers... under the influence of script.” (p.16)

Working Styles

Hay (1989, 1992/2009, 1997) introduced then term working style as a label for the positive aspects of the drivers, commenting that “The TA concept of *drivers* provides an easy-to-use model of working styles that is readily recognised and applied in ways to suit different people. Based on original work by Taibi Kahler, it has been developed over the years into a relatively simple set of five characteristic styles. These were called drivers to reflect the ‘driven’, or compulsive, quality of them when we are under stress. Identified first in therapy settings, the styles can still be recognised in somewhat less extreme forms in each of us. They are subconscious attempts by us to behave in ways that will gain us the recognition we need from others; they are also programmed responses to the messages we carry in our heads from important people in the past.” Hay 2009, p. 96)

Cautioning that people in the real world rarely fit into the neat boxes we finish up with when we simplify models such as this for ease of use, Hay (2009 p. 97-102) provides the following outlines of each (in awareness) working style and its associated (unconscious) driver (reproduced with permission.

Hurry Up

People with Hurry Up characteristics work quickly and get a lot done in a short time. Our major strength is the amount that we can achieve. We respond particularly well to short deadlines, and our energy peaks under pressure. We actually seem to enjoy having too many things to do. The saying “If you want something done, give it to a busy person” was probably invented with us in mind.

Our underlying motivation is to do things quickly, so we feel good if we can complete tasks in the shortest possible time. Like organisation and methods specialists, we look for the most efficient way to do work in the hope of shaving even a few minutes off each task. These few minutes can add up to significant time savings across the week, we also spend less time preparing than others do, giving us chance to meet more people and contribute more to the team.

However, give us time to spare and we delay starting until the job becomes urgent – then we start work on it. This can backfire because in our haste we make mistakes. Going back to correct the mistakes takes longer than doing the job right first time, so we may miss the deadlines after all. At the least, the quality of our work may be poor because we have not left enough time to check it over or improve it. Our urge to save time may be inappropriately applied to everything we do, instead of being reserved for those tasks where it will make a real difference. Our ability to think fast may lead us to appear impatient. We speak rapidly and have a habit of interrupting others. We may even finish their sentences for them, often misunderstanding and getting involved in needless arguments. Our body language reflects our impatience through fidgeting, tapping with our fingers or toes, looking at our watch, and perhaps even sighing or yawning ostentatiously.

Our appointments get planned too close together, so we rush from one to another, arriving late and leaving early. We are likely to turn up at a meeting having left the necessary paperwork in our office; we may even fail to arrive because we didn't stop to check the location of the meeting. When we do arrive, others must wait while we are given a summary of what we missed. Our constant rushing coupled with an emphasis on task efficiency may prevent us from really getting to know people, so that we feel like an outsider.

A typical event for a Hurry Up is the time we approach a door that opens towards us, while we are carrying two cups of coffee. Most people would put one cup down, open the door, go through, put the cup down and then return to fetch the second cup. Not a Hurry Up, though. We juggle! Usually it's quicker. Every so often, it's a lot slower because we have to stop to clean up the coffee we spill. (If you never get the coffees, imagine an armful of files to be picked up from the floor, or the pulled muscle from carrying too many bags of groceries in one trip from the car, or the piece of wood that is too short because you didn't check the measurement carefully before you sawed!)

Be Perfect

Be Perfect people are as unlike Hurry Up's as can be. Be Perfect characteristics involve a quest for perfection – no errors, everything must be exactly right, first time. Our major strength is our reputation for producing accurate, reliable work. We check the facts carefully, we prepare thoroughly and we pay attention to the details. Our written work will look good because we aim for perfection in layout as well as content.

This working style means we are well organised because we look ahead and plan how to deal with potential problems. In this way, we are not taken by surprise but have contingency plans ready to put into effect. Our projects run smoothly and efficiently, with effective co-ordination and monitoring of progress.

Unfortunately, we cannot be relied on to produce work on time because we need to check it so carefully for mistakes, and this checking takes time. Because of our concentration on how something looks, we are likely to call for a whole series of relatively minor changes to layouts. Our concern about being seen to be

wrong means we are reluctant to issue a draft rather than the final version, so opportunities for incorporating the ideas of others may be lost.

We are also likely to misjudge the level of detail required. We include too much information and have the effect of confusing the recipient. Our reports become lengthy; our sentence patterns also suffer whether we are writing or speaking. We have a tendency (as demonstrated here) to add in extra bits of information in parentheses; not so difficult for the reader (who can always glance at it again) but hard for a listener to follow. We choose our words carefully and may therefore use long, less familiar words or technical terms that others do not understand.

There is a danger that we end up doing everything ourselves because we do not trust others to do it right. We apply our high expectations constantly and fail to recognise when a lower standard would be appropriate and acceptable. This makes us poor delegators and may earn us a reputation for demotivating criticism. On the other hand, when we recognise the errors in our own work we may well feel worthless and not good enough even though others are satisfied with our performance.

The Be Perfect carries the coffees on a tray! The really Be Perfect even has a napkin on the tray to mop up any spills. And they never saw the wood too short; they check the measurements several times with a range of different measuring tapes, find they get different results, and postpone cutting the wood at all while they write to complain to the manufacturers of the measures!

Please People

Please people are the good team members. We enjoy being with other people and show a genuine interest in them. Our aim is to please other people without asking. We work out what they would like and then provide it. This working style means we are nice to have around because we are so understanding and empathic. We use intuition a lot and will notice body language and other signals that others may overlook.

We encourage harmony within the group and work at drawing the team closer together. We are the one most likely to invite the quieter members into the discussion so that their views are shared. This is especially useful when someone is not airing their concerns and might otherwise remain psychologically outside the group. At the same time, we are considerate of others' feelings and will not embarrass or belittle them.

Unfortunately, this style can have serious drawbacks because of our avoidance of the slightest risk of upsetting someone. We may worry so much about earning approval that we are reluctant to challenge anyone's ideas even when we know they are wrong. We may be so cautious with criticism that our information is ignored. Our own opinions and suggestions are so wrapped around with qualifying words that we seem to lack commitment to them.

We spend a lot of time smiling and nodding at people to indicate our agreement with them. Our own views are presented as questions only, with us ready to back off if they do not like what we are saying. Our facial expression is often questioning, with raised eyebrows and an anxious smile. We may be seen as lacking assertiveness, lacking critical faculties, lacking the courage of our convictions. When criticised by others, we may take it personally and get upset even when the comments are worded constructively. Because we are reluctant to say no, we let people interrupt us and we are likely to accept work from them instead of concentrating on our own priorities. We hesitate to ask questions because we feel we should somehow know the answer, only to find out later that we've not done it the way they wanted. Our attempts to read people's minds often result only in us feeling misunderstood when they do not like the results.

Please People fetch the coffees frequently. They also open doors for other people who are carrying coffees, even those with only one cup to carry who could open the door themselves. Please People rush to open the door long before you reach it with your coffee – or offer to carry the coffee for you anyway. And they want to know if you approve of the way they are about to saw the wood!

Try Hard

The Try Hard working style is all about the effort put into the task, so we tackle things enthusiastically. Our energy peaks with something new to do. People value our motivation and the way we have of getting things off the ground. We may be popular with colleagues in other sections, and with customers or clients, because of our enthusiastic approach to problem solving. Managers especially appreciate the fact that we often volunteer to take on new tasks.

Because of our interest in anything new and different, we may well be noted for the thorough way in which we follow up on all possibilities. Given a project to undertake, we will identify a whole range of ramifications and implications that should be taken into account. The result is that we pay attention to all aspects of a task, including some that other people may have overlooked.

However, we may be more committed to trying than to succeeding. Our initial interest wears off before we finish the task. Managers begin to realise that we are still volunteering for new projects even though we have not completed any of those tasks given to us previously. Our colleagues may come to resent the fact that we do the early, exciting parts of a project but then expect others to finish off the boring, mundane, detailed work.

We may fail to finish also because we spread our interest over too broad a range. Our attention to so many aspects makes the job impossibly large. Even if we complete most of it, we may still think up yet another angle to pursue before we can really agree that the job is done. Thus a small straightforward task may be turned into a major exercise, creating havoc with the time schedule. We miss the deadline or hand in a report full of items that are largely irrelevant. It is as if we are secretly making sure we do not succeed, so that we can just keep on trying.

Our communication with others may be pained and strained, as we frown a lot while we try to follow them. Our own sentences are likely to go off at tangents because we introduce new thoughts just as they come to mind. The listener becomes confused, both around the constantly changing content and about judging whether we have finished speaking. Sometimes we string questions together so the listener has to 'try' and sort out what to respond to. When asked questions, we may well answer a different question – a skill used deliberately by politicians but not so useful when it is outside our awareness.

Try Hards forget they were going to collect coffees because something more interesting occurs on the way. Or they stop to oil the door when they hear it squeaking – so the coffee gets cold. They change their mind about what the wood was for anyway and they may have several half-built items. Or they decide to redesign the saw or build a better workbench. They end up with lots of unused wood with saw marks!

Be Strong

Be Strong people stay calm under pressure. With this working style, we feel energised when we have to cope. Because we are so good at dealing with stressful situations, we are great to have around in a crisis. We are the ones who will keep on thinking logically when others may be panicking. We seem to be able to stay emotionally detached from the situation, enabling us to problem solve around difficult personal issues and to deal efficiently with people who are angry or distressed. We are able to make 'unpleasant' decisions without torturing ourselves with guilt about the effects of those decisions on others.

Because we are so good at staying calm and dealing with all that the job throws at us, we are seen as consistently reliable, steady workers. Our strong sense of duty ensures we will work steadily even at the unpleasant tasks. As supervisors, we are likely to handle staff firmly and fairly. We will give honest feedback and constructive criticism. We stay even-tempered so that people know what reaction to expect from us.

One problem with this style is that we hate admitting weaknesses – and we regard any failure to cope as a weakness. So we get overloaded rather than asking others for help. We may disguise our difficulties by 'hiding' work away; often our desk looks tidy but correspondence is filed away in a rather large pending

tray. We may be highly self-critical about our shortcomings, as well as seeing it as weakness if other people ask for help.

Colleagues may feel uncomfortable about our lack of emotional responses. This may be especially pronounced in those situations where most of us would feel the strain. They may suspect that we are robots rather than human beings. It can be hard to get to know us when we seem to have no feelings. Occasionally, someone with this style will appear to be very jovial and friendly. However, this will be a mask that prevents anyone from getting to know the real person beneath the superficial layer of jokes. Our communication may reinforce the barriers to getting to know us. We are likely to use passive rather than active voice – “It occurred to me...” rather than “I thought...”. We may depersonalise ourselves – “One often does...” rather than “I often do...”. Our voice may be monotonous or dispassionate; our face may be expressionless. The observant person will spot that our smile does not extend from our mouth to our eyes. Deep down, we fear that we are unlovable so we avoid asking for anything lest it be refused. Be Strongs are very matter-of-fact about having coffee. They get coffee when they are thirsty. They carry only one cup because they get it for themselves. This means opening the door is not a problem. Neither is sawing a piece of wood. Be Strongs never have problems – they specialise in coping with anything. If the saw breaks and cuts them, they apply a tourniquet and finish what they were doing before driving themselves to hospital!

References

- American Psychiatric Association (2013) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association
- Bastianelli, L. & Ceridono, D. (2013) Drivers and Self Ego States in Social Cognitive TA: a research on drivers as protective strategies *International Journal of Transactional Analysis Research* 4:1 January 30-39
- Berne, E. (1972) *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* New York: Grove Press
- Capers, H. & Goodman, L. (1983) The Survival Process: Clarifications of The Miniscript *Transactional Analysis Journal* 13:3 July 142-148
- Clarkson, P. (1992) In Praise of Speed, Experimentation, Agreeableness, Endurance, and Excellence: Counterscript Drivers and Aspiration *Transactional Analysis Journal* 22:1 January 16-20
- Conway, NV (1978) Drivers and Dying *Transactional Analysis Journal* 8:4 October 345-348
- Falkowski, W. & Munn, K. (1989) Interrater Agreement on Driver Questionnaire Items *Transactional Analysis Journal* 19:1 January 42-44
- Gere, F. (1975) Developing the OK Miniscript *Transactional Analysis Journal* 5:3 July 285-289
- Gellert, S (1975) Drivers *Transactional Analysis Journal* 5:4 422-429
- Goulding, Robert L. & Mary M. (1979) *Changing Lives through Redecision Therapy*. New York: Grove Press Inc.
- Hay, J (1992/2009 2nd ed) *Transactional Analysis for Trainers*. Hertford: Sherwood Publishing
- Hay, J (1997) Transformational Mentoring: Using Transactional Analysis to Make a Difference *Transactional Analysis Journal* 27 : 3 158-167
- Hay, J. & Williams, N. (1989) The Reluctant Time Manager, *Opportunities* May
- Hazell, JW. (1989) Drivers as Mediators of Stress Response *Transactional Analysis Journal* 19:4 October 212-223
- Johnson, D. (1997) Working Styles: The Application of the Concept of Drivers to Owner- Managers of Small Businesses *Transactional Analysis Journal* 27:1 January 65-75
- Joines, V. (2011) Personality Adaptations Further Clarified *Transactional Analysis Journal* 41:1 January 92-96

- Kahler, T. & Capers, H. (1974) The Miniscript *Transactional Analysis Journal* IV:1 January 26-42
- Kahler, T. (1975) Drivers: The Key to the Process of Scripts *Transactional Analysis Journal* 5:3 July 280-284
- Kahler, T. (2008) *The Process Therapy Model: The Six Personality Types with Adaptations* USA: Taibi Kahler Associates
- Klein, M. (1987) How to Be Happy Though Human *Transactional Analysis Journal* 17:4 October 152-162
- Klein, M. (1992) The Enemies of Love *Transactional Analysis Journal* 22:2 April 76-81
- Mescavage, A. & Silver, C. (1977) "Try Hard" and "Please Me" in Psychological Development *Transactional Analysis Journal* 7:4 October 331-334
- Stickley, ASG. (1996) Validation of a Driver Checklist for Team Design Research *Transactional Analysis Journal* 26:3 July 239-247
- Steiner, C. 1971. *Games Alcoholics Play* New York: Grove Press
- Tudor, K and Widdowson, M . 2008 From Client Process to Therapeutic Relating: A Critique of the Process Model and Personality Adaptations *Transactional Analysis Journal* 38:3 July 218 – 232
- Tudor, K. (2008) "Take It": A Sixth Driver *Transactional Analysis Journal* 38:1 January 43-57
- Woollams, SJ. (1979) Decision Scale *Transactional Analysis Journal* 9:3 July 209-212