

If you, or your client are voluntarily self sacrificing in a relationship, then if there is going to be resentment, recrimination or guilt afterwards, then the dynamic has gone wrong. We all make sacrifices for our partners, but these should always be on the grounds that they are necessary, fair and will not be repaid with a guilt-trip afterwards.

Compare these behaviours with those of someone being **negatively selfish**. Remember this is the behaviour where the person is selfish at the deliberate cost of others. In the above examples this personality would be the one forcing the other into a position of submission and cooperation. Perhaps the abuser, dominator or other manipulative type character.

The person who is positively selfish however is very different. They are selfish in order to ensure their own well being and balance. They do not willingly do so at the detriment of others, and will sacrifice if it is needed and fair. Thus they will make sacrifices when it “feels right” to do so, not because of any false obligation.

By being centred, stable and having all the resources they need, the positively selfish person is usually strong, dependable and reliable. They can therefore easily assist and support those around them, because it suits them to.

### **The positively selfish person helps others because they want to.**

This want can be driven by self interest (helping a colleague for the benefit of the group), out of love (helping a family member), or out of some other instinct to make a difference. In each case it is not out of obligation, but out of caring and instinctive desire to be helpful. This is often referred to as “unconditional love”. In other words they do not have to, they do not feel obligated to, they simply feel “right” about it.

If you now refer back to the diagram, you can see how a positively selfish person is happy in “self” and brings that happiness to the other groups that follow down the diagram. At each level the person should avoid dysfunctional behaviours like martyrdom, guilt, obligation and manipulation, and instead act according to what fits best with their beliefs.

This is often called doing what fits with the “highest version of you”. In other words doing what feels right, and which you will feel OK with afterwards too. This expression was coined by N.D. Walsh in his books on multi faith spirituality.

From the coaches point of view, the critical aspect of working through these stages, is looking at why your client is doing what they are doing, comparing that with their ideal view of what they might do, and checking out why any imbalances occur.

For example:

- The client might say they are unhappy in a relationship.
- They say they would prefer to be single again.
- They might indicate that they are only staying out of obligation.

Once they recognise this, you can assist them in formulating a list of responses, such as renegotiating elements of the relationship, right through to separation. Obviously you would never suggest to a client to leave a relationship, it has to be entirely their decision!

Often realisation of why they are doing things, is the key to the client deciding new strategies for themselves. Often their partners (or whoever else) are quite receptive to change, as long as it is explained and fair, especially if it then creates a harmonious environment for them. Very often, once the client stops doing all the things they feel obligated to do, they will then choose to do other things that are far more meaningful to others around them.

For example the husband who resolves to stop being a “taxi service”. The wife then takes responsibility and catches a bus. The husband removes a source of obligation and stress from themselves, feels happier, loses a source of resentment towards the wife, and begins to be romantic, affectionate and happy again. The wife might have to get up half an hour earlier to catch a bus, but is more than happy to do so because while she is home, she has a loving husband again, rather than a grumpy resentful one! Be warned that often there is a list of such seemingly silly little examples, that become symbolic of various emotions, and turn into a “big deal”. Resolving them can make a huge difference to your client.



### **TUTOR TALK: Key Learning Points**

The first map of the areas of self, teaches us that we have to put ourselves first, in order to be there for others. Self-martyrdom causes guilt, resentment and dysfunctional relationships.

The flip side of this are those relationships where the strong partner dominates the weaker partner, forces them into self sacrifice and is thus being emotionally abusive.

### **Transactional model of people relating to each other**

This model is derived from the work of Eric Berne, the founder of transactional analysis. It relates directly to the last section in which we discussed martyrdom and abusive partners in relation to self sacrifice. Many models exist around Berne’s work, and the following is one such adaptation.

One of the models used in Transactional Analysis uses three terms: Child, Adult and Parent. These are not completely literal, they refer to the roles each one plays in relationships.

The child is dependent, needing the advice, guidance and discipline provided by an adult.

The adult is independent, making their own way and decisions, and owning their own opinions.

The Parent is the dominant character, making decisions for others and looking after the child, who is in their care.

Often in life we play an inappropriate role, this entering one of these roles in an inappropriate way. Often we are quite appropriate in wandering into the role:

e.g. Giving comfort to a partner who is in pain, “mothering” them because they are temporarily dependent and incapacitated.

However when we enter the role in an inappropriate way, we either cause friction, or we cause the other person to change roles too. Generally grown-ups should be living in the “adult” state. When they leave that state, problems occur.

If a person takes the parenting state and acts in this way towards another person, they will either create conflict, or force that other person into the “child” state. In this situation the “parent” is being dominant and forcing the “child” into self sacrifice.

If a person takes the “child” state, they are acting the martyr, and this either creates conflict, or it results in the other person accepting the “parent” state.

At any stage if the second person refuses to change state, and adheres to the “adult” state, conflict occurs. This is because the adult is refusing to either be **patronised**, or to “**mother**” the other.

Assuming two adults, playing the different roles				
Person 1	Person 2	Relating:		Result
Parent (P)	Parent (P)	(P) + (P)	=	Conflict
		(P) + (A)	=	Conflict
		(P) + (C)	=	Dominant relationship
Adult (A)	Adult (A)	(A) + (A)	=	Harmony
		(A) + (P)	=	Conflict
		(A) + (C)	=	Conflict
Child (C)	Child (C)	(C) + (P)	=	Martyrdom relationship
		(C) + (A)	=	Conflict
		(C) + (C)	=	Conflict

Where conflict occurs, either there will be a change in states to adult-adult, or the two people will avoid each other. Obviously this is only valid where both people are adult.

Other dysfunctional examples occur, such as when an actual child is forced into either an adult, or a parent role by someone else (for example a parent feeling needy and acting in a child role).



### TUTOR TALK: Key Learning point

Sometimes it is appropriate to play roles other than adult, but only when it is short term and non abusive to others. Generally, assuming we are adult, the best policy is to be deliberately adult at all times, except only for those rare exceptions when it is helpful to choose otherwise.

### Expectations from areas of life

Our lives are split into various environments and activities on a practical level. These may interact with the levels in the first model, in that we often experience these environments either as an individual (self) or as part of a larger group. There are many sections, and in the diagram below, typical potential outcomes are listed for each one. These outcomes are the positives we aim to get from each environment. These are only guides however, since depending on the individual, different outcomes will result from each area. For example one person may achieve job satisfaction, another might not, one person may be in a relationship, another may be a bachelor.

Area of Life	Occasional benefits	Typical benefits / outcomes
Work	Teamwork Creativity Mental Stimulation Physical Stimulation	Productivity Interaction with colleagues Responsibility Reward Financial empowerment
Social	Sex Recreational activity Legal or illegal recreational substances Creativity Spiritual activity	Interaction with friends Interaction with strangers Interaction with groups Interpersonal communication
Physical e.g. Sport	Social interaction Teamwork Competition Achieving targets	Physical stimulation Fitness Health Adrenal regulation
Spiritual	Beauty Unconditional love Religious guidance Self development Social interaction	Sense of belonging to something greater Models of understanding
Close interpersonal (romantic)	Sex Love	Support Interpersonal communication Self exploration
Family	Love Procreation	Belonging to a group Support Identity
Hobbies	Productivity Social Interaction Mental Stimulation Physical Stimulation	Creative

As you can see, there are a number of factors, such as social interaction that may exist in a variety of areas of life, and have a number of nuances. Others, such as creativity and mental stimulation can be harder to allocate.