



You have already written your own life story and yet you are unlikely to be aware of having done so.

You began writing it when you were a baby. By the time you were a teenager, you had completed the outline and main characters, written the beginning, the middle and the ending, and were working on the additional elements that would add realism to the retelling of the story.

*Now that you are an adult, you are most probably living out the story you drafted all those years ago. That story is your **life-script**.*



When to use it

When you notice:

- A repeating pattern of 'winning', 'losing' or 'non-winning' language
- You are coaching a client in a stressful situation that ended badly
- Client's body language such as holding tension in the arms and shoulders

These might be indicators that your client's behaviour is becoming 'scripty'.



What it is

A key concept in Transactional analysis (TA), a life-script explains how our present life patterns originated in childhood. We tend to repeat these patterns even if they produce painful or frustrating consequences.

A life-script:

- Is a *specific* plan for life with a beginning, a middle and an ending
- Inexorably leads up to the final scene
- Is decided on in childhood and reinforced by parental figures
- Is outside of our awareness
- Is justified by subsequent life events
- Comes from the Child ego-state, hence is led by emotions
- Was the strategy a person chose for survival in very early childhood



How it fits

The life-script differs from the course a person's life actually takes. A life course is influenced by hereditary factors and external events as well as the life-script. These factors can disrupt the life-script, as does making autonomous choices. The future is unwritten.

Autonomous (script-free) choice comes from the Adult and is rooted in the here-and-now. Our coaching goal is to generate autonomous choice.

**How to use it****Rubberbands**

'Rubberbands' is the term used in TA to refer to Transference – when behaviour in the present recreates experiences from the past that are painful. Our coaching goal is to disconnect the rubberband so our client can make autonomous choices in the here-and-now.

Invite your client to recall an instance in the past year of being in a stressful situation that ending badly. Then invite them to find an example five years ago. Then from their teenage years. Then from child-hood, or even early childhood. What age were they? Who was there? What was happening?

Hero(ine) of your own story

Invite your client to choose a character from their favourite story, book or film and then to embody that person. Encourage them to talk about themselves for as long as they can using the first person, e.g. "I am Harry Potter, the *Chosen One*, I have magical powers, ...". When they are done, use your and your client's intuition to surface the underlying life-script.

Object in the room

Invite your client to choose an object in the room – the best one is often the first one they think of – then ask them to embody that object and talk about themselves. Then coach the object, e.g. Client: "I'm the window, people look right through me." You: "As a window, how does it feel when people look through you?"

**More ideas****Dreams**

Accessing recent or repeating dreams is often a good way to explore life-scripts. What associations does your client make with their current reality?

The Dr Pepper question

Life scripts are a Child ego-state response to what is perceived as an existential threat. They are probably not relevant in the present, which requires an Adult response. Ask your client the Dr Pepper question - "*What's the worst that could happen?*" - to explore the reality of the here-and-now.

Further reading

Stewart, I and Joines V (2012), *TA Today (2nd Ed)*, lifespacebooks.com.