

Identify Your Ego State

A Transactional Analysis self-awareness worksheet | PersonaGuru.in

Every reaction you have comes from one of three ego states: Parent, Adult, or Child. This worksheet uses Eric Berne's own diagnostic method to help you recognise which state is running the show, so you can choose your response instead of repeating it on autopilot.

1. Know Your Three Ego States

Ego State	Core Belief	Common Phrases	Tone & Body Language
Nurturing Parent	"I must guide and protect."	"Let me help with that." "You'll be fine."	Warm, gentle, open posture
Critical Parent	"There is a right way to do this."	"You should have known better." "Always / never..."	Stern, pointed finger, raised voice
Adult	"Let's look at the facts."	"What are the options?" "I understand, let's solve this."	Calm, level voice, relaxed posture
Free Child	"I want what feels good right now."	"This is exciting!" "Let's just try it!"	Animated, playful, energetic
Adapted Child	"I must comply or rebel to stay safe."	"Whatever you say." "It's not fair!"	Withdrawn, defiant, or overly compliant

2. Berne's 4-Point Method to Diagnose Your Ego State

Eric Berne used four lenses to identify which ego state is active in a moment. Run any tense reaction through these four questions.

Lens	Ask Yourself
Behavioural	What did my body do? Tone of voice, posture, facial expression.
Social	How did the other person react? Did they respond as if I were scolding, comforting, or negotiating with them?
Historical	Does this reaction remind me of a specific childhood memory, or a parent's exact words?
Phenomenological	When I replay the moment, whose voice do I actually hear in my head?

Worked example: Rohan noticed his jaw clenched and his voice got loud (behavioural). His colleague went quiet and nodded quickly (social). It reminded him of his father's tone at the dinner table (historical). When he replayed it, he realised he had used his father's exact words (phenomenological). All four lenses pointed to the same answer: Critical Parent.

3. Self-Reflection Questions

Answer each question below using the four-point method from Section 2. Write the ego state you identified at the end of each answer.

1. Recall a moment this week you felt judgemental or overly responsible for someone else's choices. What happened, and which ego state was active?

2. Recall a moment you stayed calm and focused on facts despite pressure. What helped you access your Adult state in that moment?

3. Recall a moment you reacted with a strong emotion, excitement, anger, or withdrawal. What childhood memory, if any, does this resemble?

4. Daily Ego State Log

Every time a conversation feels tense over the next week, log it here. This turns the theory into a habit you can actually track.

Day	What Happened	My Ego State	Ego State I Wanted

5. Quick Self-Check: Which State Am I In Right Now?

☐	Sign
☐	I am giving advice without being asked (Parent)
☐	I am judging someone's choice as "wrong" (Critical Parent)
☐	I am weighing facts calmly before reacting (Adult)
☐	I feel a rush of excitement or spontaneity (Free Child)
☐	I feel like I have to obey or rebel against someone (Adapted Child)

6. Five Ways to Strengthen Your Adult Ego State

- Pause for three seconds before responding to anything that feels tense.
- Name the emotion out loud, even silently, before you speak: "I notice I feel defensive."
- Ask: "What would I say if I were coaching a friend through this exact moment?"
- Separate the fact from the judgement: write down what happened, then write your interpretation, on two different lines.
- Check your body first. Unclench your jaw, drop your shoulders, and only then decide what to say.

Based on "Transactional Analysis in Personality Development" on PersonaGuru.in — your guide to personality development, communication, and emotional growth.