

NEWS

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GAMES PEOPLE PLAY IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS
DESCRIBED IN NEW BOOK BY DR. ERIC BERNE

Noting that people tend to live their lives by consistently playing out certain "games" in their relations with others, Dr. Eric Berne, in his new book - GAMES PEOPLE PLAY - shows how an individual can achieve a new self-awareness by analyzing his behavior in these terms, and freeing himself to live a more positive and constructive life. GAMES PEOPLE PLAY will be published by Grove Press on August 24 (cloth; \$5.00).

Dr. Berne points out that people play out these "games" for a variety of reasons: to avoid confronting reality, to conceal ulterior motives, to rationalize their activities, or to avoid actual participation. He offers the reader an analysis of thirty-six games, which he breaks down into seven major categories:

Life Games, which transcend a specific mode of response in a given situation and pervade one's every action. These include games labeled by the author as "Alcoholic," "Debtor," "Kick Me," and "See What You've Made Me Do."

Marital Games, which two people may utilize to sustain a frustrating or unrewarding life. A favorite is "Frigid Woman," in which one of the two parties provokes an argument in order to avoid sex. Other marital games include "Harried," "If It Weren't For You," "Look How Hard I've Tried," and "Sweetheart".

Sexual Games, in which someone provokes sexual reactions in another person and then, as in the game "Rapo," acts as though he or she is the innocent victim.

Party Games, which by definition are highly social and move from the perpetual gossip to the chronic complainer. These games include "Ain't It Awful," "Schlemiel," "Why Don't You - Yes But."

Underworld Games, most often played for material gains, but also for psychological rewards.

(more...)

Consulting Room Games, which can be played by a patient with a doctor, to avoid getting cured.

Good Games, where the social contribution outweighs the complexities of the motivations.

Here is an example of a Life Game called "See What You Made Me Do":

"White, feeling unsociable, becomes engrossed in some activity which tends to insulate him against people. Perhaps all he wants at the moment is to be left alone. An intruder, such as his wife or one of his children, comes either for stroking or to ask him something like, 'Where can I find the long-nosed pliers?' This interruption 'causes' his chisel, paintbrush, typewriter or soldering iron to slip, whereupon he turns on the intruder in a rage and cries, 'See what you made me do.' As this is repeated through the years, his family tends more and more to leave him alone when he is engrossed. Of course it is not the intruder but his own irritation which 'causes' the slip, and he is only too happy when it occurs since it gives him a lever for ejecting the visitor. Unfortunately this is a game which is only too easily learned by young children, so that it is easily passed on from generation to generation. The underlying satisfactions and advantages are more clearly demonstrated when it is played more seductively."

An example of the Sexual Game called "Uproar":

"The classical game is played between domineering fathers and teen-age daughters, where there is a sexually inhibited mother. Father comes home from work and finds fault with daughter, who answers impudently; or daughter may make the first move by being impudent, whereupon father finds fault. Their voices rise, and the clash becomes more acute. The outcome depends on who has the initiative. There are three possibilities: (a) father retires to his bedroom and slams the door (b) daughter retires to her bedroom and slams the door (c) both retire to their respective bedrooms and slam the doors. In any case, the end of a game of 'Uproar' is marked by a slamming door. 'Uproar' offers a distressing but effective solution to the sexual problems that arise between fathers and teen-age daughters in certain households. Often they can only live in the same house together if they are angry at each other, and the slamming doors emphasize for each of them the fact that they have separate bedrooms."

Dr. Eric Berne was formerly a Consultant in Psychiatry to the Surgeon General, U.S. Army, and is now lecturer at the University of California Medical School and Chairman of the San Francisco Social Psychiatry Seminars.

In his earlier book, Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy, Dr. Berne introduced a new, unified system of individual and social psychiatry, using group therapy as the basic method and the analysis of games as a major element in the treatment.