SECTION IV: CLINICAL APPLICATIONS
A "THINK STRUCTURE"
FOR FEELING FINE FASTER

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It has been my experience that telling a person to think is not enough. Just last week Joe related a series of transactions which had culminated in yet another asthma attack. Frankly, I was bored. Several yawns from group members validated my hunch that the. story was a set-up ("Trust your Child's hunches," said Eric Berne's voice in my head).

Someone asked, "Haven't we been through this before?"

"Yes," I replied, "and I'm getting sleepy."

"I don't understand," said Joe helplessly, "what do you want me to do?"

"Think!" chorused the group.

"I don't know how!" Ire said. dissolving in tears.

"Oh Joe," said Jane. "stop crying and tell us what the problem is. We know you can think!"

"Sure, I can think!" said Joe sarcastically. "I have tons of information about-asthma and its causes, and I know lots about what happened to me when I was little, and I know how it all helps me stop having asthma attacks!" The group's interest was renewed immediately as they worked on giving Joe what he needed in order to think.

Simply telling someone "Think!" to solve problems (cathect Adult, in transactional parlance) is not enough. There is a whole sea of information which may or may riot be relevant to solving a particular problem; therefore a structure is needed to organize pertinent data.

By using a structure. "just thinking," or intellectualizing instead of solving problems, is avoided.

STRUCTURE FOR IDENTIFYING EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

I am   _____
                    (feeling)

that if I _____
                 (behavior 1 initiate)

I will be _____
                 (unhealthy Parental response)

instead of _____
                 (healthy Parental response)

So I _____
             (problem-justifying behaviors: games)

When Joe used the structure to organize his information the problem was clear: "I am scared that. if I ask mommy for strokes, I will be abandoned instead of being held and protected, so I get taken care of by getting sick, or bore people to make them go away." Joe was awestruck. He knew, surd the group knew, that now he was in charge of his head. The old, helpless Joe had fallen away, and in his place was an energetic, adequate man. lie beamed, "Wow! I was really miserable, and now I can be real!"

Such a typical reaction confirms that the structure can be a potent therapeutic tool. It can be used to identify all emotional problems. It also provides a solid basis for the therapeutic contract. It reinforces the idea that there are logical reasons for feelings and behaviors, and by providing a statement of those reasons, offers immediate alternative choices to non-problem solving behaviors (games).

The structure is used most effectively if the following points are kept in mind.

1. Express the feeling in Child words. A five-year-old understands scared, mad, or sad and does not understand depression, guilt, anxiety, remorsefulness, hopelessness, etc.

2. Feeling rackets are problem-justifying behaviors.

3. Express the behavior in positive terms, example: "I am afraid that if I stop having asthma attacks" defines what the person is afraid of not doing. To the question, "What would you do instead of having asthma attacks?" the person might replay, "Ask mommy to hold me."

4. Take some time to enumerate all the game behaviors. As soon as "the game is called" (by listing it a, problem-justifying), social control is a realistic expectation.

5. Don't work with the wording of the structure. *Play* with it until it feels right. Solving problems is fun.