

## Rainbow Specs Updated

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### Introduction

Put analysis of personality through colour preferences, coloured hats on the organizational head, and descriptive analysis of ego states into a pot of rainbow colours and the Rainbow Specs emerge. Yellow specs are preferred for seeing what's happening, and green specs for working things out, while orange specs give permission to go ahead with new ideas, and when well used, red specs are a playful way of solving life's problems. Connections are made between rainbow colours and descriptions of ego states. The parable of James tells how the Rainbow Specs were discovered. Use of the specs is illustrated through several examples.

### Birth of an Idea

Walking past a bookstall at an airport, my attention was attracted to a book showing a clownish figure with six hats on its cover. Since the book was by Edward De Bono (1985), I bought it. Entering the plane and seating myself, I noticed a woman with sun-glasses get into the seat across the aisle. After a few moments, she took out a book and I noticed her put on another pair of specs. The plane took off. I was looking out the window. I saw a lovely rainbow above as we climbed into it. We never caught it and it blended into the sky. After a while I began reading De Bono and having read, let my thoughts float with the clouds, a little bumpy now and then, but delightfully creative under a bright blue sky. De Bono had said that clear thinking can be learnt. He proposed the metaphor of coloured hats for different types of thinking.\*

My thought was: coloured hats and ego states. Going up into the skies I remembered that colour itself has strong psychological implications, and I remembered the student who was unable to study for her final exams; she rejected the colour yellow. She accepted a suggestion to force herself to like yellow (Lüscher, 1969). She did so and was surprised to find that she studied with zest and success. Colours, thinking caps, specs, rainbows and decision-making with ego states

\* Portions of this article appeared previously in *Tasi Darshan*, 8(4), 1988, and also in the *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 23(3), 1992.

(Summerton, 1988, pp. 50-52). Flowing through the sky as blue merged to indigo and violet, I remembered from childhood days: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red — colours of the rainbow — and I relaxed into fantasy.

### After the Flight was Over

The plane hit the tarmac with a bang. I came out of my reverie and for a moment I thanked God that we passengers were still in one piece. Then the thought struck me that colours could be a more enjoyable way of remembering ego state descriptions, in place TA jargon, especially when some nasty person says, "Stop using your TA on me." I suddenly saw that Eric Berne's diagram of the descriptive qualities of ego states (1972, p. 11), plus Pearl Drego's sub-division of Adult into Photographic and Combining added up to a total of seven. This complete set of ego state descriptions numbered seven, the number of colours in the rainbow, and I realized that in my airborne fantasy I had made connections! As soon as I could, I wrote down the fantasy I'd had on the flight. This has already appeared in *Tasi Darshan*, in 1988, and here I give a few excerpts to provide a context for the using of colours in everyday life as metaphors for ego states.

### Fantasy of the Rainbow Specs

The Rainbow Specs fantasy tells a story of a young executive who finds "psycho-chromatic spectacles", that is, eyeglasses which

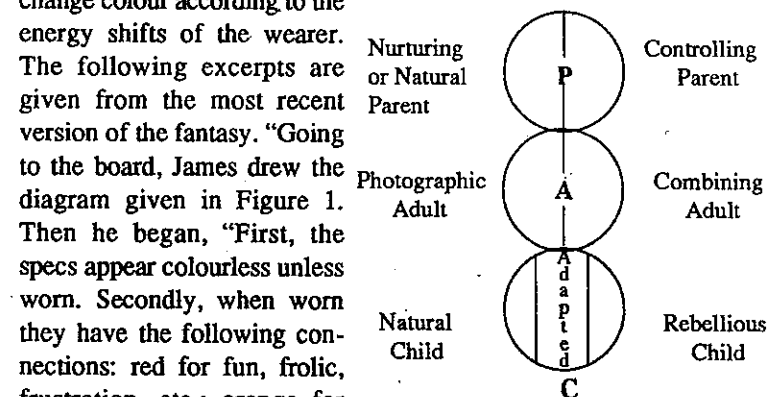


Figure 1  
Descriptive Aspects of Personality  
Berne, 1972, p.13), plus  
Photographic and Combining Adult  
(Drego, 1979, p.26)

etc.; green for thinking,

calculating, comparing data, etc.; blue for protecting, safeguarding, doubting, etc.; indigo for resisting, rebelling, etc.; and violet for complying, surviving, etc. In all, the glasses show the seven colours of the rainbow." James continued, "Thirdly, it seems possible to link the colours of the rainbow to Dr. Eric Berne's descriptive model of ego states (Berne, 1972, p. 13), as expanded by Dr. Pearl Drego". Drego wrote "distinguish two main qualities of the Adult ego state: (a) Photographic Adult, with the use of perception, memory, codification and breaking down of data; (b) Combining Adult with the use of analogy, hypothesis, reasoned intuition and exploitation of new possibilities" (1979, p.26).

James proceeded further, "The Parent is described by Berne as Nurturing and Controlling; Nurturing Parent connects with orange, and Controlling Parent with blue. The Child is Natural, Rebellious and Adapted; the Natural or Free Child connects with red, the Rebellious Child with indigo, and the Adapted Child with violet. Berne's Adult is sub-divided by Pearl Drego into Photographic and Combining; the Photographic Adult links with yellow, and the Combining Adult links with green." James then concluded, "Just as when the colours of the rainbow merge, the sky becomes clear, so with these spectacles. They are clear when I am scanning through all colours at once, before choosing the one I want. Just as a person has power to use any ego state, the same person has power to use any behaviour appropriate to any ego state, and can THINK COLOUR as a way to do this, that is, use colours of these spectacles for transacting. Table 1 gives in a nutshell the connections between the colours of the rainbow and descriptive aspects of personality.

James summarized: "I use each of the colours for providing different ingredients of an effective decision: yellow for data gathering, green for feasibility studies and analysis, red for brainstorming and creating, violet looking for traps, blue looking for questions and doubts, indigo for rejecting rubbish, orange for creative encouragement of ideas and data and discoveries. Since the seven colours of the rainbow can be linked through the descriptions of ego states, I suggest we call these the rainbow specs because they make a person's inner worth available for use."

Ego State Descriptions	Rainbow Colours
Free Child	Red
Nurturing Parent	Orange
Photographic Adult	Yellow
Combining Adult	Green
Controlling Parent	Blue
Rebellious Child	Indigo
Adapted Child	Violet

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of**  
**Rainbow Colours and**  
**Ego State Descriptions**

### Using the Rainbow Specs

Having got the idea of using colour as a therapeutic intervention, the next step was to try it out. After the Rainbow Specs story had been read in a training group, members were invited to try them out in their everyday life, to find out if they were helped by using colours in place of the usual terminology of ego state descriptions. After some weeks, the reports came rolling in. 16 years old Joe had trouble with his mathematics teacher. After hearing about using colour for shifting from one ego state to another, he put on his green specs as the teacher explained a problem, only to find that the mathematics teacher had contradicted himself. Joe shifted from green specs to indigo and asked, "How can it be?" The teacher went into blue and scolded him for asking irrelevant questions. Joe changed to violet specs as he apologized for seeming to be rude, and then shifted to yellow and explained what he'd heard. He found that the teacher put on his own yellow specs and accepted the contradiction and then shifted to orange specs and encouraged him saying that he should continue to ask questions. Joe also reported that he found colours easier to use than TA language. In the following weekend, Joe attended a TA101, and learnt to use the rainbow specs to break his games.

At another session Joe reported, "I wanted to have a glass of milk and put some milk on the stove to warm it. My mother called me for some work and I forgot about the milk. When I'd finished the work, I went back to my room, and my father came and found that the milk had boiled over and the container had become charred. Father put on his blue specs and scolded me for my action. I put on my violet specs and the locked transactions continued. After a while, I went into the kitchen to clean up the mess. Mummy then came into the kitchen and gave me a mischievous smile. My first reaction was to rebel that she would be happy when I was being scolded. I automatically put on my yellow specs and then green and thought about the incident remembering similar incidents between mother and father. Father and I had been locked into a Kick Me and Nigysob (Now I've Got You, SOB): I looked for kicks by my carelessness, that is, by my not using yellow or green specs. Father gets hooked and Nigysobs me, and I end up with a payoff of feeling bad and angry and rebellious. I also realised that when mummy gave me the smile and I put on my yellow specs, I saw that mummy collects her strokes from playing Kick Me with poppa who Nigysobs her. I also understood that this is the origin of my Kick Me: I had learnt it from mummy. My option is to be in my yellow and green specs to avoid my con, i.e., carelessness, forgetful-

Jenny disliked ego state analysis and had difficulty in shifting energy from one ego state to another until she learnt about the rainbow specs and painted herself large cardboard ego state cut-outs of the different colours. One morning she was in her block about getting up. Usually she ended up with headaches and bad feelings whether she stayed on in bed or forced herself out of bed. At the next group session she reported how for the first time she ended up feeling good by analysing her journey through the colours. She discovered that her blue specs yelled, "Get out of bed." Another voice in her said, "I don't want to get up." This she discovered came from her indigo specs. She leaned out of bed and picked up her orange ego state card. As she ran her fingers along the edge she said to herself, "It's cold and you don't have to get out of bed." Then she got support from her other colours: from her yellow specs she said to herself, "There's nothing specific to do;" from red, "It's cozy," from green, "When you force yourself to get up and you don't want to, you are nasty to everyone for the rest of the day." Jenny stayed in bed and enjoyed it immensely and when she got up she was full of energy and had no trouble being pleasant for the rest of the day.

Later on while painting rainbows, Jenny was surprised to make two discoveries, firstly, that she had merged blue, indigo and violet together and made them dominate the top of her rainbow in place of red and orange, and secondly, that the yellow was a thin insignificant line. She also expressed surprise to find that blue, indigo and violet which represented the Controlling Parent, Rebellious Child and Adapted Child respectively, were all together as were orange and red representing the Nurturing Parent and Free Child. At another group session, Jenny reported that when she painted herself with mother and father, she coloured her mother yellow, her father blue and orange, and herself red! Through the colours Jenny began feeling parts of her ego states that had been suppressed. The words, "orange specs" now connected her to ways of feeling and thinking that she wanted to use more often in order to complete her therapeutic contracts, by removing contaminations and dislodging unwanted messages in Parent. She would shift energy away from negative Rebellious Child by saying, "Away indigo."

Mary has been head of department in a junior college for the past year and a half. At first she felt that using colours in place of the regular TA terminology was a bit contrived. Then she decided she would, "fake it to make it," and that practising a new behaviour could be a way to change ego states. On her job she had been using mostly

tried out her orange and red specs. A week later she narrated how the other staff members had moved their morning snack from the usual place to a new place without informing her. Very upset, she went to where they had gathered; arms akimbo and blue specs sparkling, she wanted to know what the teachers meant by changing the place and not informing her. The teachers began to defend themselves, to counter-attack, to make excuses, etc., and she suddenly realized that she was using her blue specs. She immediately changed to red specs and began to complain about it. To her amazement the whole group immediately became sympathetic, apologetic, welcoming, and including. She related in the group that the thought of using colours to identify where she was, had hooked her Child, and once her Child was hooked and the red specs firmly in place she was able to have fun and she got a complete change from the staff members.

### Discussion

(1) The discovery that they could use colours as ways of shifting ego states was an "aha" experience for the above persons. It reinforced their belief that they had options in situations that had otherwise been fixed.

(2) The colours of the specs are not ego states but are metaphors for (a) talking about ego states, and (b) identifying them by using behavioural and phenomenological validations (Drego, 1986, p. 31).

(3) Using the name specs instead of the actual names for the ego states, is a way of side-stepping defence and denial systems.

(4) Children seem to find it easier to identify ego states using the colours, and they can use coloured cards, coloured hats, and lots of other ways to recognise themselves.

(5) The colour also indicates that each ego state has an attitude connected with it, and the colour gives the attitudes a certain value for the person, so that in different circumstances one colour is preferable to another because the attitude it represents is preferable to another attitude.

(6) The use of the word specs with each ego state description on the behavioural model suggests an attitude of perceiving reality and of giving it attention. This counters the misconception that perceiving is always from the Adult ego state or that thinking is confined to the Adult (cf. Drego, 1981, p.128).

(7) The rainbow specs are a useful way of implementing Berne's behavioural validation of ego states. Using this process of validation, the Child ego state is used to intuitively identify which ego state is

always analysing yourself." In deciding to change from one colour specs to another, a person is facilitated not only to shift energy but also to coordinate the shift of energy with the specific way of perceiving and communicating which is associated with each colour. The colour change does not simply mean an energy shift, but changing ways of perceiving means and changing ways of communicating.

(8) Berne's own use of colour is related to the feelings that are collected as payoffs in games; he calls them trading stamps. The use of colour here does not replace Berne's use which remains colloquially handy as ever.

(9) The rainbow specs don't turn ego states either into concepts inside or objects outside the personality. They help clients to avoid treating ego states as conceptualisations (Summerton, 1986, p. 3) or roles that can be adopted or rejected. The colours are analogies for descriptive aspects of ego states. Changing from one colour to another, and with varying intensities, is an analogy for redistribution of cathexis.

(10) Each ego state is a reality of the Self, and the rainbow specs are a playful way to access the richness of that reality.

### Conclusion

Colours promote creativity and enjoyment in both the therapeutic and organizational settings. Colours as explained here also offer alternatives for dealing with awkward situations and people—"Take off your blue specs for a while and put on your yellow specs" is an alternative to "get out of your Critical Parent and cathect your Adult;" "Instead of indigo specs, how about trying your red specs," in place of "give your Rebellious Child a break for a while and jump into your Free Child", etc. Moving blue to orange is more intuitive than moving from Controlling Parent to Nurturing Parent! A simple comparison of the scientific use of colour by Lüscher (1969), and the popular use by De Bono (1988), is given in Table 2 together with the Descriptive

Ego State Descriptions	Colours	De Bono	Lüscher
Free	Red	Emotional	Vital
Nurturing	Orange		
Photographic	Yellow	Speculative	Light
Combining	Green	Creative	Elastic
Controlling	Blue	Controlled	Calm
Rebellious	Indigo		
Adapted	Violet		Bonding
	White	Factual	
	Black	Rejecting	Negating

Table 2.  
Colours and Comparisons

Analysis of ego states as proposed by Berne (1972) and Drego (1979). Colloquially, red can be connected with "seeing red" and with being "red in the face", which is preferable to being "black in the face" or having a "blanched look" or a "tinge of green around the gills", or "feeling blue", "collecting brown stamps." Psychologically, colour can be associated with personality traits, and this is a science in itself. Colour can also be used to promote lateral thinking. Structurally, the rainbow specs offer a relaxing way of shifting ego states. Transactionally, the rainbow specs suggest using colour for problem-identification and decision-making.

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**Special Note:** In 1992 a rainbow card was distributed with this article. It has the rainbow's colours stretching in an arc across the page. Within this arc, three circles are drawn, orange and blue for the Nurturing and Controlling Parent respectively; yellow and green for the Photographic and Combining Adult respectively, and red, violet and indigo for the Natural or Free, Adapted and Rebellious Child respectively. Two quotations enrich this picture: "I have set my bow in the clouds—a sign of the contract between me and earth" (Book of Genesis), and "Thou art a

rainbow from the distant sky bending o'er the dust" (Rabindranath Tagore). The other side of the card has a colour code for the different ego states. Tasi Members may acquire a copy of this rainbow card, provided they send Rs. 30 which will cover the costs of administration and registered mail, together with their name and address clearly spelt out, to the author c/o St Xavier's School, 4 Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi-110054.

## Hedges Capers' OK Miniscript

The OK miniscript grew out of Kahler's not-OK miniscript. Kahler had identified five counterscript slogans or drivers. He wrote, "This emphasises that each driver (not OK) has an allower (OK) complement, thus producing five counterscript polarities." As is described elsewhere in the article on the miniscript, a person who is operating from one of the drivers will shift into a position that Kahler calls the stopper, and from there into positions called the vengeful child and final miniscript payoff.

Hedges Capers wrote,

When a person sees his not-OK miniscript on the blackboard, he is faced with a decision either to hold onto it or to give it up and make some new choices. We have observed reactions from the "Wow! I can see that" and "I can change that" to the frightened person who says "Now what will I do?" When a person considers change, the Parent tapes play louder than ever. This is the phenomenon of the despairing patient who is now faced with the archaic fears which he previously warded off by playing games, thus fulfilling his script. "What can you substitute for the driver? Life-giving, nurturing allowers begin with "It's OK to ...." With humour and hope and support the therapist asks "What does your Child need? What does your Child want? For the driver, "Be perfect", the allower can be "It's OK to make a mistake; It's OK to fail; It's OK to get dirty. These reparenting messages selected by the patient, who knows his own needs, from the specifics for his allowers that are the antitheses to his drivers. It is not humanly possible to be perfect, or have others be perfect. He sets himself up for disappointment with that unrealistic driver. "It's OK to be human; You don't have to make an impression."

The "Hurry up" driver leaves the person trying to get some place else. His allower is "It is OK to live now, to take your time." "You have time to do anything you want to do." Instead of "Try hard", the allower is "It's OK to do it; it's OK to finish what you're doing; it's OK to do it well; "It's OK to win. I like you just like you are—you are beautiful, Life can be fun."

about by these individuals who develop and use their potential and leadership. Group members moving to a new environment act as catalysts for change even though lacking knowledge, experience, position.

## Reference

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When a person is in his "Please me", he needs to know it's OK to rely on his own judgements and to take care of his own needs. He needs to know he is lovable and his worth is not dependent upon other people's judgement. It is OK for him not to be responsible for other people's feelings. It's OK for him to accept the responsibility for his own feelings.

The antithesis to "Be strong" is the allower "Be open" to be close and feel and express feelings. "It's OK not to be strong." "It's OK to be human."

## Reference

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