

LIFE POSITIONS

ARE YOU OK?

1. VIEWS ON THE WORLD

When we are little people we interact with our parents, or guardians, and make decisions about how we trust people and how we value ourselves in relation to them. We did this (approximately) between the ages of 3 and 7 and our life story, which flows before us, reflects these decisions. Stewart & Joines describe life positions as *“One’s basic beliefs about self and others, which are used to justify decisions and behaviour.”*

For example, if a child views herself as lovable and good to have around she may take up a position of “I am OK with me and you are OK with me”. This is usually expressed as “I’m OK, you’re OK” and is a winning position from which to interact with others or react to tasks. However if a child views himself as unlovable and not good to have around he may take up a position of “I am not OK with me”, which is usually expressed as “I’m not OK”. As a result he may react to people in unhealthy ways.

We all had different experiences when we were little people and we have all taken positions on how we view ourselves and others. We will be in a given life position at any time, which will reflect the current view of **our self** and **others** and **life in general** at that precise moment.

Life positions are a useful tool to help us understand our own behaviour and so give ourselves the chance to react in healthy ways to people and tasks.

The four Life Positions are:

		You are OK with me			
		<u>I’m not OK – You’re OK</u>		<u>I’m OK – You’re OK</u>	
		“I believe I am inadequate compared to others”		“I feel good about myself and everyone else, even though I might not like their behaviour”	
		(Depressive position)		(Healthy position)	
I am not OK with me					I am OK with me
		(Futility position)		(Paranoid position)	
		“I think there is something wrong with me and everyone else – it’s that sort of world”		“I believe that I am right / know what I am doing etc and that others are wrong / stupid etc”	
		<u>I’m not OK – You’re not OK</u>		<u>I’m OK – You’re not OK</u>	
		You are not OK with me			

These four positions give us four options for dealing with tasks and people. We can choose to deal with the situation positively and transact in healthy ways or we can revert to our deep seated values and not often realise what we are doing. For example when faced with a new task or someone approaching your desk, do you:

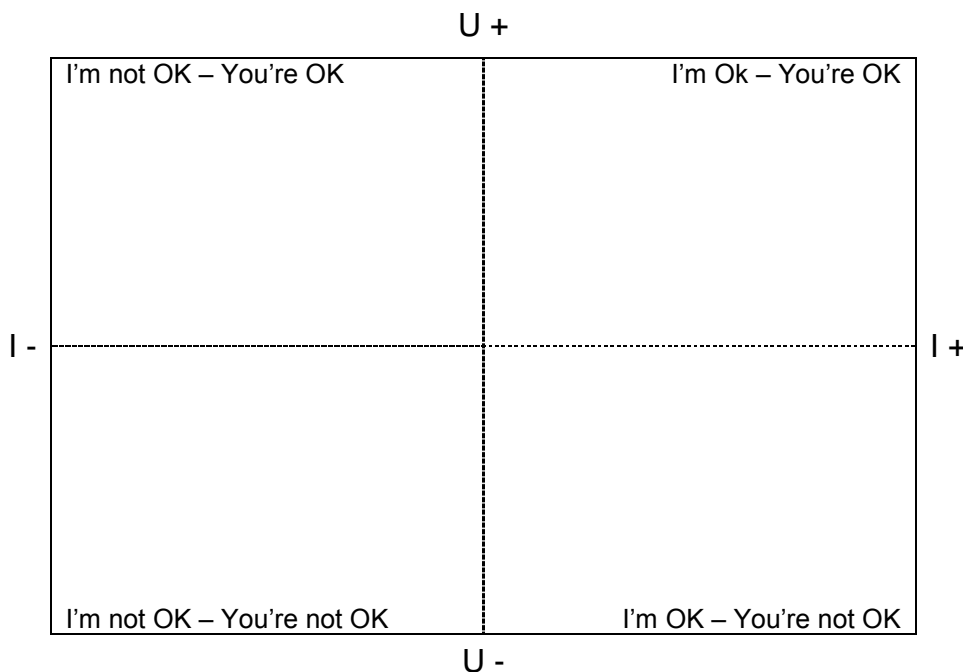
Get away from (GAF)	Get on with (GOW)
Get nowhere with (GNW)	Get rid of (GRO)

2. DRAW YOUR VIEW ON THE WORLD

Throughout each day we move into and out of life positions. We meet new people and have to face many different tasks. To help us understand ourselves and make sense of our feelings and thoughts it is helpful to 'draw' our life positions as a shape.

Please reflect on the previous 24 hours. Who did you meet, or speak to on the telephone? Which tasks did you have to do? What happened?

Now try and draw your own personal 'shape' in the grid below:



When we react to situations using not-OK language and gestures the other person will usually not feel OK. We can learn to communicate effectively (and achieve the same goals) by using positive language and gestures to get our message across in a healthy and OK way.

In each of the four quadrants below write down the not-OK language and gestures you have used with people. For example; What did your hands do? What expression was on your face? What was your body posture? What did you say to them?



Help yourself to remember these cues by picturing exaggerated examples. For example; if "get rid of" involves making a dismissive hand gesture then picture a huge hand sweeping the other person away. In future try to avoid these not-OK messages and think about what you could replace them with.

Take away message: Ask yourself "Am I Ok?"