

## **Advantages of Adult-Adult Behavior**

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My recent columns have described interactions between the Parent ego state, the Adult ego state, or the Child ego state of one individual with these same “ego states” in another. If you desire these previous articles for reference, please contact me for their titles and I’ll share them with you.

I hope that you have been able to envision the obvious advantages of the **Adult-Adult** working relationship. I welcome the opportunity to talk with anyone who has recently experimented with moving your relationships from a traditional **Parent-Child** approach to the more collaborative **Adult-Adult** approach. Please invite me to talk with you about both your successes and your failures!

Last week I described a deliberate and effective **Adult-Adult** method for dealing with discipline issues with a team member who repeatedly behaves irresponsibly. Let’s look at some advantages that make your (the manager’s) self-restraint worth the extra effort.

Perhaps the biggest advantage is that your behavior role-models the **Adult-Adult** decision-making process. Others on the team see its success in the most demanding of circumstances. However, it is unfortunate that much of the interaction is confidential and executed privately between you and the errant team member. Still, every move you make is scrutinized in situations like this. There is usually enough information leaked by the team member (and ultimately enough tough questions asked of you, the manager) that everyone on the team has a good idea of what has happened.

Other team members see the extra effort you’ve taken with the person. This assures that they will be treated with this level of respect if they ever find themselves in a similar situation.

Because the errant individual is provided with options and the freedom to make his or her own decisions, sometimes the choice is to resign. This is a pressure-reducing outcome for all involved!

If the person fails to resign but employment is ultimately terminated anyway, the result is clearly his or her choice, not the manager’s. The individual may claim that he or she was treated unfairly, but the other team members know otherwise. And you feel minimum guilt as the “bad guy” (or gal).

Managers who stick with this **Adult-Adult** approach gain a great amount of confidence. In future disciplinary situations, these managers respond sooner with appropriate actions. Dealing with the situation at a less adversarial level increases the potential of a beneficial outcome for the individual and reduces the likelihood of escalation to potential termination of employment.

If the errant team member chooses properly, he or she retains the job and can become a valuable contributor. I have seen this happen on several occasions. In contrast, the traditional **Parent-Child** approach to discipline causes bitterness in the individual and often some peers. The resentment can be so high, the individual is never able to rebuild a relationship with the manager or company.

Sometimes there are legal repercussions from the decision to terminate employment, such as EEOC discrimination charges or wrongful discharge civil suits. The clarity and specificity in the documentation--showing the options provided to the individual--give strong substantiation for the actions taken and will usually stand up to the scrutiny of jurisdictional/legal decision-makers.

I have often used these Parent, Adult, and Child concepts in training business leaders. The **Adult-Adult** relationship is generally the most productive in the workplace. It is always a joy to use one’s gifts creatively with logical, option-creating, problem-preventing team members and colleagues.

The collaborative planning and production of desired outcomes are not limited to the workplace. These concepts work very well within families. The main job of literal parents is to transform their children into fully functioning, contributing adults. I encourage creative parents to start **Adult-Adult** interactions with their growing children at a quite early age. It will significantly reduce the **Parent-Parent** rebellion that tends to come during the teenage years!